Evaluating Impact: Youth Work and School Partnerships

THE SCOTTISH ATTAINMENT CHALLENGE
LITERACY NUMERACY HEALTH & WELLBEING

YouthLink Scotland

Introduction

As part of the Scottish Attainment Challenge, youth work and schools are working together to close the poverty-related attainment gap. It's important to understand how these partnerships are improving health and wellbeing, readiness to learn and educational outcomes for children and young people. We know that, when we evaluate our work collaboratively, we help learners understand their progress more fully and gain a more robust insight into what's working for particular young people and why. This is fundamental to learning across the system and to our ability to accelerate progress towards tackling poverty.

A collaborative approach to measuring impact can also support wider self-evaluation and improvement – see How Good is Our School and How Good is Our CLD) and the Scottish Attainment Challenge Self-evaluation resource

Partnerships have clear agreements where the purpose, aims, roles and responsibilities are clear and understood by all involved. The school jointly plans and evaluates shared projects with partners.

HGIOS

Robust monitoring systems and clear targets are in place to support joint evaluation, planning for improvement and collective reporting to stakeholders. Partnership agreements are clear and improve the effectiveness and clarity of joint working. We undertake regularly shared learning and development activities which almost always leads to improved outcomes for learners and communities.

HGIO CLD

In reality, we know that collaboration presents new challenges and complexity. Everyone is busy. Finding time to do this work collaboratively is important, but it can feel daunting, especially in the early stages of partnership working, or where, historically, these conversations have not been part of established relationships.

This resource provides a practical, skills-based approach to collaborative evaluation. It contains advice a range of tools and examples from practice that you can adapt and use collaboratively as you co-design and evaluate the impact of partnership working. It is designed to be used alongside the other professional learning resources: <u>Developing Youth Work and School Partnerships</u> and <u>Lost in Translation</u>, produced through <u>YouthLink Scotland's Scottish Attainment Challenge national programme</u>.

Key Steps in Evaluation for Youth Work and School Partnerships

Effective evaluation of impact will be undertaken in a way that is aligned with the youth work approach – see accompanying [Youth Work and School Partnerships Evaluation Principles](#) resource for more details on this.

Impact evaluation involves a number of key stages:

1. Building shared understanding of desired outcomes – with all stakeholders: youth work, schools, young people, and others where appropriate.
2. Clarifying how progress towards these can be measured.
3. Collating and analysing data over the course of the work being undertaken, using school-based tracking methods and youth work evaluation tools.
4. Reflecting on data and insights with young people and other stakeholders.
5. Effectively communicating insights – and considering the implications of these for your collaborative practice.

Planning for evaluation

Work together as partners to define desired outcomes and plan your evaluation process BEFORE delivery with young people begins.

Together with school partners, the youth work team should create a joint plan to support the evaluation process (see resources below). This should define the outcomes and how progress towards these will be measured. The National Youth Work Outcomes and Skills Framework is a useful common language for agreeing outcomes and indicators to track progress – across formal and youth

work settings and with young people. It can provide evidence of impact in relation to the key SAC measures of literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing, and also help learners understand their achievement. It is also likely that you will wish to track Scottish Attainment Challenge indicators such as attendance, engagement and leaver destinations.

The simplest evaluation plans will focus on a single programme, but it is also possible to use the same plan across a number of programmes and settings, if the desired outcomes across these programmes are broadly similar.

Defining your focus should be a collaborative process involving youth work and school partners and young people, to ensure the focus feels relevant to everyone.

Ensure methods for data gathering are agreed from the outset – and that each partner understands the expectations e.g. that the school is able to provide relevant tracking data as an integral part of the evaluation process – for example from SEEMIS.

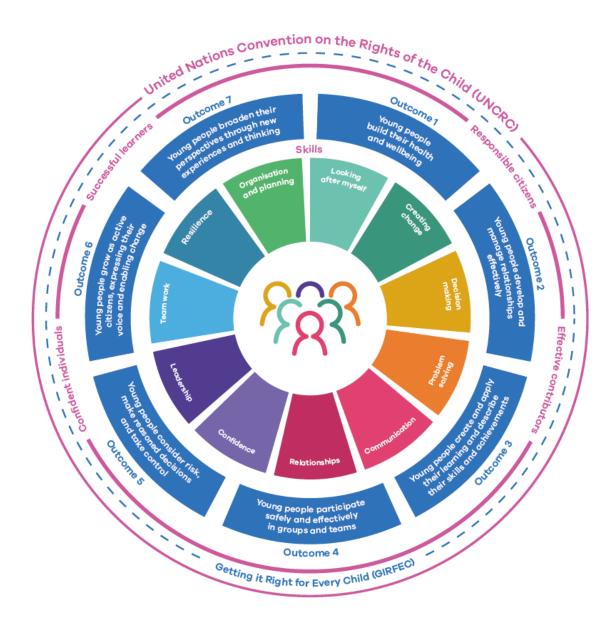## National Youth Work Outcomes and Skills Framework

The National Youth Work Outcomes and Skills Framework is a useful common language for setting goals and tracking progress – across formal and youth work settings and with young people.

The Framework been developed by the youth work sector in Scotland and articulates the key differences that youth works makes with, and for, young people in Scotland.

- The seven youth work outcomes describe the key overarching impacts of youth work in young people's lives.
- The eleven youth work skills describe key building blocks that enable young people to make progress towards these outcomes.
- A set of indicators associated with the development of these skills describe observable behaviours that help us set goals and measure progress with young people. These can be downloaded here.
- The framework also helps young people to understand the transferable nature of skills – making links to CfE and My World of Work.

Importantly, the framework does not set out to record every aspect of the change that youth work can make, but to describe the most significant

changes that young people commonly describe as a result of their involvement in youth work.

The examples below demonstrate how outcomes, skills and associated indicators can be integrated to support evaluation, but they are not intended to be prescriptive. Youth work and school partners can adapt and edit indicators to reflect context, programme objectives and individual needs. Many programmes may focus on just one or two youth work outcomes. And when it comes to defining the 'right' skills and indicators to focus on, youth workers, school partners and young people should work together to agree which of these it would be most beneficial to work on and measure progress against. A full set of examples can be found here.

Outcome 1: Young people build their health and wellbeing

RELATED SKILLS WITH INDICATORS

Looking After Myself	I can identify goals for my physical/mental health and take action to achieve them I can manage my feelings I can ask for help if I need it I can explain the consequences of harmful behaviour on myself I can understand the role of peer pressure in harmful behaviour I can understand my human rights and my rights as set out in UNCRC
Resilience	I can show determination to achieve my goals I can adapt and be flexible as the facts / situation changes I can keep going even when I'm finding things difficult I can show courage to take action even when the outcome is uncertain I can try again if I don't succeed the first time
Confidence	I can seek out learning opportunities and support I can participate in new opportunities and experiences I can use my learning and skills in different settings I can look for new challenges I can ask for information and support I can learn from my mistakes

Outcome 2: Young people develop and manage relationships effectively

RELATED SKILLS WITH INDICATORS

Relationships	I can recognise and seek out positive relationships I can make new friends I can manage friendships I can show respect towards others I can see things from another person's perspective I can engage with people outside my friendship group I can resolve conflict peacefully within my relationships I can understand professional relationships and boundaries
Communication	I can express my thoughts and feelings to appropriate adults I can speak in a group and share my opinions I can listen to other people's opinions I can take time to understand what someone is communicating to me I can recognise and address prejudice and discrimination I can construct and defend an argument I can ask for help if I don't understand I can communicate effectively using a range of methods I can use social media responsibly

Tips for using the skills framework

1. The outcomes should be viewed together, not in isolation. It's difficult, for example, to imagine a youth work and school partnership approach that 'builds young people's health and wellbeing' and does not simultaneously grow their confidence to 'develop and manage relationships'.
2. Skills development is a continuous work in progress – for all of us, and usually over a whole lifetime! A young person who feels confident to speak out in a small group with people they know will, over time, become a young person who feels confident to present their ideas in large groups and to people they have never met before. So, the indicators that partners choose to measure progress in each context should reflect the age and stage of the young people you are working with – and will change as young people grow.
3. Indicators are a tool to measure progress. Don't be tempted to try to measure everything. As a rule of thumb, you can't expect to effectively measure more than 10-12 indicators in any given programme. So, make sure the indicators you and your partners focus on are both realistic and relevant to participating young people in any given context.
4. The new integrated framework builds on years of thoughtful consultation with youth practitioners, young people and sector partners and stakeholders. But it does not – and cannot – describe everything that youth work does. At best, it is an approximation, a carefully considered simplification that describes some of the important ways that young people develop and change as they participate in youth work.

Other relevant Scottish Attainment Challenge progress indicators in Youth Work and School Partnerships

In addition to measuring progress in relation to skills development, you will likely want to gather data that relates to, for example, school attendance, or, where relevant, positive destinations. But, bear in mind that tracking skills development alongside this quantitative data will provide richer and more nuanced evidence of impact – important in quantifying and supporting the progression of young people, particularly those who are most in need of support or furthest from the labour market.

In other cases, partnership work might also support progression in specific curriculum subjects - e.g. literacy or STEM. In these instances, youth workers should work closely with teachers to clarify relevant specific links with Curriculum for Excellence. However, broader skills development, linked to the Youth Work Skills Framework is likely to remain relevant in these partnerships too. See a recent example below from the Outdoor Education Recovery Fund programme:

Focus of Evaluation: Literacy Skills	
Skill from Youth Work Framework with relevant indicators of progress	**Additional specific indicators of progress connected to Curriculum for Excellence**
Communication: • I can speak in a group and share my opinions • I can listen to other people's opinions • I can construct and defend an argument • I can communicate effectively using a range of methods	• I enjoy exploring events and characters in stories and other texts and I use what I learn to invent my own, sharing these with others in imaginative ways. LIT 0- 09b / LIT 0-31a • As I listen and take part in conversations and discussions, I discover new words and phrases which I use to help me express my ideas, thoughts and feelings. LIT 0-10a • As I play and learn, I enjoy exploring interesting materials for writing and different ways of recording my experiences and feelings, ideas and information. LIT 0-2

Sometimes, the focus of your programme might require some more 'niche' indicators of progress – for example, in outdoor learning you might also want to consider tracking young people's 'connection to nature' over time, or a shift towards pro-environmental attitudes and behaviours. However, it is likely that the Youth Work Skills Outcomes and Skills Framework will still provide a complementary reference point for measuring progress:

Focus of evaluation: Connection to Nature	
Skill from Youth Work Framework with relevant indicators of progress	**Additional indicators of progress, based on RSPB Connection to Nature Survey**
Looking after myself • I can identify goals for my physical/mental health and take action to achieve them • I can manage my feelings • I can ask for help if I need it Team work • I can work with others on group tasks • I can support other young people in a group • I can give and receive feedback • I can follow instruction	• Taking notice of nature and wildlife • Enjoying the sights and sounds of nature • Regularly choosing to spend time outdoors • Noticing how being in nature impacts positively on own mood • Taking care of plants, animals and the natural landscape • Considering the impact of own actions on the natural world

Core Resources to help with deciding on evaluation focus

A template to support the process of prioritising the outcomes, skills and indicators you want to focus on can be found <u>here</u>. See the accompanying document for a range of templates to support the evaluation process.

Recent examples from practice can be found here:

Outcomes and skills focus defined by five youth work and school partnerships involved in a collaborative enquiry connected to the West Partnership Regional Improvement Collaborative <u>here</u>

Outcomes and skills focus defined by three local authority youth work teams trialling a new Learning for Sustainability programme supporting primary to secondary transitions <u>here.</u>

Outcomes and skills focus defined by two youth work and school partnerships involved in a collaborative enquiry connected to the South East Improvement Collaborative <u>here</u>

Implementing the Evaluation Process

Once the development focus for young people is clear, and the measurable indicators that will allow you to assess their development have been agreed, as outlined above, you can decide what methods you are going to use to monitor progress. The aim here is to gather a compelling set of evidence to demonstrate the impact of your work as effectively and efficiently as possible, and to do this in a way that feels collaborative and inclusive to everyone involved – particularly young people.

Evidence of progress is usually a combination of numerical (quantitative data) and feedback (qualitative data) from participants and from relevant stakeholders (youth workers, teachers, parents etc).

Youth work teams will have a tried and tested set of tools for gathering evidence of progress. However, each time you design a new piece of work / work with a new group of young people, your evaluation planning process

should include a review of the tools you are using to measure impact, to ensure that your data is as robust as possible – and that the process of gathering it is as engaging as possible for young people and other stakeholders.

Think creatively about the different methods and media you use to gather data. These might include:

Quantitative (numerical) data	Qualitative data
Baseline and follow-up surveys / questionnaires tailored to focus on key indicators of progress Standardised measurements that align with indicators SEEMIS data (school attendance; behaviour) Wellbeing wheel Administrative data (e.g. attendance at youth work sessions / SIMD data)	Surveys can also gather qualitative data Structured interviews with young people / other key stakeholders Visual feedback Video diaries / reflections Interactive online activities to support conversations Story gathering with participants / other stakeholders Individual case studies School reports Youth worker / teacher / parent / carer observations

It is important to consider how the youth work and school team will work *together* to measure the impact of the work. For example, youth work data can offer helpful insights for schools exploring 'what works?' in relation to improving school attendance. And, as highlighted in the examples above, the school will hold vital information that can help to enrich youth work data-gathering, and young people's self-reported progress.

Sometimes the school's information will back up the picture that is emerging from your data. In other cases, it may offer a contrasting perspective. In all

cases, this information is an important piece of the picture that will inform next steps for the young person, and in some cases also youth work programme design and delivery. Both youth work and school partners need to be able to tell the story of attainment and achievement in their context – what's working, for whom and in what circumstances.

What this looks like in practice

Let's take a concrete example two skills you might focus on: for example, 'looking after myself' and 'confidence', along with associated indicators you might choose to measure:

Skill	Indicators
Looking after myself	- I can identify goals for my physical/mental health and take action to achieve them - I can manage my feelings - I can ask for help if I need it
Confidence	- I can participate in new opportunities and experiences - I can use my learning and skills in different settings - I can look for new challenges - I can ask for information and support - I can learn from my mistakes

Both youth work and school partners should then consider what data they can gather over the course of the programme, connected these indicators.

Relevant data that might be gathered via the SCHOOL:

Looking after myself
- Wellbeing tracking reports – e.g. some schools use Wellbeing Wheel.

Confidence
- Subject / class reports – to track levels of confidence to participate and contribute in class.

Both skills
- Update from guidance / pupil support teacher in consultation with class / subject teachers.

Relevant data that might be gathered via the YOUTH WORK TEAM:

Looking after myself:
- Self-reporting programme questionnaire completed by young people (baseline, mid-point, end of programme).

Confidence
- Structured interview with young people at the beginning, middle and end of the programme.
- Video diaries recorded by young people using prompts relating to confidence indicators.
- Progress towards youth work award and associated reflections by young people at key stages.

Both skills
- Youth worker observations
- Parent / carer observations

PUT YOUNG PEOPLE AT THE HEART OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

- The primary reason we measure progress is to support the development of young people. Create opportunities for young people to explore the language of skills and experiment with a variety of approaches to support reflection on learning.
- Ring-fence time for individual and collective progress review.
- Where possible, use a range of media to enable young people to share what they are learning directly with key stakeholders.
- Create conditions that ensure that both young people and partners feel they can be honest about progress made / not made. Often important learning will come from asking good questions about what's not working, as well as what is making a positive difference.

- Be creative in the way you approach evaluation with young people – experiment with different approaches help them reflect on and articulate their progress. Set time aside for this – make it clear that this is an important part of the learning process.
- Where progress has been made, explore with young people what it is about their experience of youth work that has helped with that. Where progress has not been made, ask young people (and school partners) to offer observations on why that might be the case. This will help to inform next steps for young people – and sometimes also programme design.

Core Resources to help with planning and implementing your Evaluation

The following documents are designed to help with the evaluation planning process – you'll find a selection of helpful tools in the accompanying 'Evaluation Templates' document here, including:

1. A template for collaborative evaluation planning (see page 2 here) https://www.youthlink.scot/wp-content/uploads/Workshop-handout.docx
2. An example of a document to gather relevant 'baseline' data from a school https://www.youthlink.scot/wp-content/uploads/Referral-information-to-inform-evaluation.docx

Optional Additional Examples to help with planning

1. An example of an evaluation plan for the Youth Work Education Recovery Fund
    https://www.youthlink.scot/wp-content/uploads/Evaluation-plan-Youth-Work-Education-Recovery-Fund.docx
2. An example of an evaluation plan for the Outdoor Education Recovery Fund
    https://www.youthlink.scot/wp-content/uploads/Evaluation-plan-Outdoor-Education-Recovery-Fund.docx
3. An example of an evaluation plan for a Learning for Sustainability programme
    https://www.youthlink.scot/wp-content/uploads/Evaluation-planning.docx
4. A number of documents developed by Evaluation Support Scotland to help
    organisations choose appropriate evaluation methods
    ESS-principles-for-good-evaluation_June-2022.pdf (evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk)
    ess_sg2a_-_designing_evidence_collection_methods_feb_2018.pdf
    (evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk)

5. Some potentially useful evaluation methods from Evaluation Support Scotland's
    toolbox:

    a. pdf_method_-_evaluation_wheel.pdf (evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk)
    b. ESS Evaluation Tool: Evaluation Wheel - template - Evaluation Support Scotland
    c. method_-_capture_casual_april_17.pdf (evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk)
    d. emotional_touchpoints_method_sheet_april_2017.pdf
        (evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk)
    e. ESS Evaluation Method: Focus group - Evaluation Support Scotland
    f. Method-Choosing-Pictures-updated-2021.pdf (evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk)
    g. ESS Evaluation Method: Meeting record - Evaluation Support Scotland
    h. ESS Evaluation Method: Observation - Evaluation Support Scotland
    i. ESS Evaluation Method: Questionnaire - Evaluation Support Scotland
    j. Method-Relationship-Map.pdf (evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk)
    k. pdf_method_-_sticky_wall.pdf (evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk)
    l. strethc_statements.pdf (evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk)
    m. ESS Evaluation Method: Using case records - Evaluation Support Scotland
    n. ESS-Not-just-a-story-workbook.pdf (evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk)

6. An example of an evaluation tool used by Shetland Council's Youth Work and Schools
    team to gather evidence of impact on young people
    https://www.youthlink.scot/wp-content/uploads/Shetland-My-Journey-Young-Persons-feedback-form.pdf
7. An example of a skills wheel used by Dundee City Council to gather evidence of impact
    on young people
    https://www.youthlink.scot/wp-content/uploads/Dundee-Youth-Work-Skills-Assessment-Wheels-Dec.pdf

Tips for a partnership approach to gathering evidence of progress

- Make sure the tools you use for measuring progress respond directly to the indicators of progress you want to measure.
- Ensure progress against chosen indicators is reported by young people themselves, and all partners.
- Be realistic about what young people and partners have time to contribute.
- Remember, evaluation isn't something you do at the end of the programme: create regular opportunities for young people to reflect on what they are learning, and plan to check-in with school partners / other key stakeholder at agreed intervals.
- Create a written plan for your evaluation to sit alongside your partnership agreement, clarifying who will be responsible for gathering data, and when that needs to happen – ensure this is circulated and signed off by everyone who has a role to play in the evaluation process.
- It's important to make sure that the data gathered is specifically focused on the progress you have agreed you will measure – not generic reflections on the young people's enjoyment of the youth work experience update / broad brush comments about the value of the experience.
- Review your plan regularly over the course of any given programme to ensure you are on track and adapt as necessary.

Reviewing and Communicating Impact and Insights

Data gathering and review

As part of the planning process above, youth work teams and school partners should agree on an appropriate review cycle that allows them to gather data, understand impact and use this information to inform future programme design. The timeframe for this will vary by setting. Sometimes it will make sense to review evaluation data each time a programme comes to an end. In other settings, it may be more efficient to do this annually, as a precursor to planning for the next school session and to inform school / youth work service improvement plans. Reviews might encompass some or all of the following:

- A review of young people's progress and discussion about their next steps.

- A review of the youth work programme/s impact as a whole, summarising all of the data and insights gathered through the evaluation process.
- Process evaluation (how is the partnership working? What could be improved going forward? – see our resource <u>Developing Youth Work and School Partners</u> for advice and tools to support partnership learning).

Insights from the evaluation should inform decisions about further support for young people, the development of the youth work 'offer' in school and the ongoing improvement of processes that underpin partnership working between youth work and school – including the evaluation process itself.

Communicating impact and insights

Beyond the youth work and school partnership team, it may be helpful to share a summary of each evaluation with:

- Parents / carers.
- The wider school staff team.
- Other partners within the school community.
- Relevant teams within your local authority.
- Education Scotland e.g. Attainment Advisor
- Funders / prospective funders.
- Prospective future participants (young people).
- Local / national media.

As you decide how best to share details of the impact of the work – and who to share it with - it is helpful to consider:

- What are the benefits of investing time / other resource in communicating the difference our work is making, and what we are learning about partnership working?

- Who do we want to influence and why?
- Do we want to engage them in a conversation or simply broadcast our results?
- What kind of format is most likely to engage them?
- Are the young people who participated in the project interested in sharing their experiences? How would they feel comfortable to do that (visually / via audio / film / in person?

It's easy to get stuck in a pattern of circulating the same short written report after every programme. Exploring creative ways to share what you are learning – and how young people are benefiting – can be very rewarding and need not be resource intensive, particularly if you this is part of your evaluation plan from the outset. Options might include:

- Individual case studies – written / audio.
- Filmed interviews / testimonials from young people and other stakeholders.
- Colourful artwork by young people / others reflecting on their experience.
- Digital resources.
- Learning events / workshops (face-to-face / online) where insights can be explored in more detail to prompt action.

A range of recent examples can be found in the resource section overleaf.

Resources to help with analysing and communicating impact

Here you'll find advice and examples of collating and presenting evidence with stakeholders in formal education in mind.

1. Evaluation Support Scotland guidance on analysing, storing and disseminating evidence of impact:
   - ESS-SG2b-Storing-evidence-July-21.pdf (evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk)
   - ess_sg3a_-_analysing_information_for_evaluation_updated_march_2020.pdf (evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk)
   - supportguide4.1learningjul09.pdf (evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk)
2. Dundee City Council template for sharing programme impact data https://www.youthlink.scot/wp-content/uploads/Dundee-Youth-Work-Impact-Sheet.pdf
3. Data 'snapshot' form https://www.youthlink.scot/wp-content/uploads/Template-data-snapshot.docx
4. Case study examples Attainment Good Practice | YouthLink Scotland
5. St Mungo's film example Attainment Good Practice | YouthLink Scotland
6. Kirkintilloch High School film example Work with Regional Improvement Collaboratives | YouthLink Scotland (wpengine.com)

You may also want to think about how best to share evidence of collective impact
- In written reports – see Youth Work Education Recovery Fund example Attainment Good Practice | YouthLink Scotland.
- With support from research professionals – see South Lanarkshire Pathfinder report example https://www.youthlink.scot/wp-content/uploads/Pathfinder-report.docx.
- In short film format.

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