



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
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Preventative Grassroots Youth Work Fund

September 2026



"We can see on a daily basis the difference that youth work makes to young people and their families and how valuable it is to us as a school."

Head Teacher

"We have a community where it can sometimes be difficult to reach families and our youth workers are able to support us to make those links. That has just been transformational, getting young people back into school."

Depute Head Teacher

"It comes down to being a part of the community, being a part of something, having somewhere to be. It's made them more open to learn."

Youth Worker

"I feel like, before, I would have just said no to things I wasn't comfortable with, but now I'm more likely to just give it a go. Being in a supportive space made it easier to try new things without worrying about getting it wrong."

Young Person



Introduction

The Scottish Government's Preventative Grassroots Youth Work Fund provided grants totalling £44,000, enabling ten youth work teams¹ across Scotland to enhance their targeted support for young people facing barriers to engagement in learning. The youth work support took place over a three-month period from January – April 2026. During that time, 174 young people took part in 164 youth work sessions.

Support was focused in areas of multiple deprivation and in communities impacted by criminal activity and anti-social behaviour.

The funding aimed to deliver the following outcomes

- Young people are developing their well-being and skills (e.g., confidence, resilience, relationship-building, communication, and team working).
- Young people are more engaged in learning.
- Young people's attendance in school is improving.
- Young people feel a greater sense of belonging in their communities.

[1] Big Hearts, Dumfries and Galloway Council, Girvan Youth Trust, Govanhill Roma Youth Project, Moray Council, Recharge, Scrans Academy, Torglen Community Youth Project, YMCA Bellshill, YMCA Tayside

Evidence of Impact: Skills

Evidence gathered from schools, young people, parents and youth work teams suggests that the support offered through the programme had a significant impact on young people's skills development:

- 90% of participating young people developed one or more skills ^[2]
- 64% grew in confidence
- 59% developed stronger communication skills
- 57% built more positive, trusted relationships with adults and peers
- 55% improved their decision-making skills
- 51% demonstrating greater resilience
- 48% enjoying working more effectively in groups and teams

54 young people achieved qualifications and awards, including:

- Dynamic Youth Awards
- Hi5 Awards
- John Muir Awards
- Saltire Awards
- SCQF Level 3 qualifications



Evidence was gathered using 'Youth Work Skills Track', a digital tool built around the National Youth Work Outcome s and Skills Framework.

[2] Qualitative data provided from all settings; numerical data received from 8 youth work settings; sample size 147 young people

"I'm better at choosing what to do now instead of just waiting on somebody telling me. I feel more comfortable coming in, joining things and speaking up more."
Young Person

"J's verbal communication, teamwork, relationship building, his confidence, and overall his self-esteem. His self-esteem has been rocketed through the project, so we are delighted."
Teacher

"I'm better at sticking in now when things get hard. Before I would just stop, but now I try and keep going."
Young Person

"I'm better at asking for help now. Before I would just leave it, but now I can go to staff and stay with it."
Young Person

"I've noticed K's ability to resolve conflicts that he was experiencing within the school has really changed and really adapted kind of handling disagreements within the school in a more kind of constructive manner."
Teacher

"Relationships with peers have definitely, definitely improved."
Teacher

"This [youth work programme] has helped [my child] reconnect with school and others and become less dependent on their sister."
Parent



Evidence of Impact: Learning Engagement and Attendance

- 69% of young people made improvements in engagement and participation in the classroom over the course of the programme period³
- 55% of young people showed improved school attendance over the programme period⁴

"Of the six pupils who attended consistently, all six have demonstrated improved school attendance and increased motivation to attend school, with this uplift extending beyond programme days."

Teacher

"R and T have been out of school since August so getting them back into the school has been a big achievement, as they were not willing to do this before [the youth work team's involvement]."

Head of Support for Learning

"P has improved his attendance as he was had disengaged before [the youth work team] started to work with him. The support giving not only in the sessions but with the positive relationship they have with the family has been vital in reengagement with school."

Head Teacher

"K has shown improved attendance and behaviour after engaging with the [youth work] project. The informal, supportive approach helped her to feel more settled and ready to learn."

Teacher



"I know I can be hyper and struggle to focus, and I think the project has definitely helped me to listen more than talk and to make sure I'm not overpowering in a team setting and everyone gets a chance to lead and speak."

Young Person

"I enjoyed working as a team and feel like I'm better at this now and I'm also better at sharing my opinions in a group, especially with people I know less well."

Young Person

"Through the activities we did, particularly around teambuilding and communication, I was making a real effort to speak up and make sure my voice was heard. I think this is the skill I have developed the most... [before] I was more of a bystander than participating and I think that has definitely changed now."

Young Person



[3] Qualitative data provided from all settings, numerical data received from 6 school settings, sample size 58 young people

[4] Qualitative data provided from all settings, numerical data received from 7 school settings, sample size 114 young people

Evidence of Impact: Building a Sense of Belonging

The evidence of the progress that young people made over the course of the programme is compelling. Almost all the young people made positive progress, developing valuable skills and relationships that will support them as learners going forward. Many of the young people who participated were beginning to develop strategies to regulate their emotions and ask for help when they need it, which in turn enabled them to engage more positively with peers and in school.

However, it is important to highlight that not all young people made huge strides. Twelve weeks is a short period of time, and all the young people had different starting points. Relationships between young people and youth workers in some of the project settings were more established at the beginning of the project than they were in others. Levels of emotional dysregulation amongst some groups of young were particularly challenging at the outset. The complexity of additional support needs was more pronounced in some settings, and it is certainly not useful to compare the relative impact of work in one locality over another.

The reality is that work like this takes time to make a sustainable impact, but change is possible when trusted relationships are established. The evidens shows that young people, across all ten projects, had begun to feel a sense of safety and belonging in each of the youth work settings from which they could build.

"I just liked being part of something."

Young Person

"It's helped me with my confidence and being in a new group and feeling safe."

Young Person

"Everyone is included and it's very welcoming for everyone."

Young Person

"I haven't got a hugely positive view of the Police, but it was nice to sit down and chat with them and they spoke about how they work to help young people. I was able to ask questions in a safe space which meant a lot to me."

Young Person

"We are seeing them becoming more involved in what happens in their wider school community and probably just having a wee bit more pride in their school community."

Youth Worker

"Young people's ambition has changed. Many of these young people believe that what they face is their 'lot' in life - with support from the youth work team, their ambition has increased and they are looking out and seeing what else they can do."

Depute Head Teacher





#YouthWorkChangesLives



YouthLink Scotland
Caledonian Exchange
19A Canning St.
Edinburgh
EH3 8EG
T: 0131 202 8050

E: info@youthlink.scot

W: www.youthlink.scot

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