

## Statement on the Nature and Purpose of Youth Work

---



### 1. What is Youth Work:

Youth work is an informal, rights-based educational practice that supports young people's personal, social and educational development. Youth workers form developmental relationships with young people that help young people to explore their values and beliefs; address issues that affect them; develop skills for learning, life and work; develop their voice, influence and place in society; realise their rights and reach their full potential. Youth work practice is underpinned by CLD Values Competences, Code of Ethics and the National Occupational Standards for Youth Work.



### 2. The Nature of Youth Work:

#### Process:

The youth work process is primarily relational. The trust-based, voluntary relationship formed between a youth worker and a young person is the means by which the youth worker supports the young person's development.

Youth work provides safe spaces (physical or online) where young people have access to, and build relationships with, trusted adults and peers. The safeguarding of young people is central to the role of youth work.

Youth work treats young people with respect, valuing differences and promoting the acceptance and understanding of others. It is underpinned by the principles of social justice, equality and rights and embraces and celebrates diversity and interdependence.

Youth work can be targeted or universal. Targeted youth work involves focused and tailored interventions aimed at specific groups of young people to bring about often pre-agreed outcomes. Universal youth work can be defined as open access with an open purpose and curriculum however, universal youth work often has a specific focus responding to young people and community needs.

#### Place:

Youth work can be adapted across a variety of settings (physical and online), and typically engages with young people within their local community and communities of interest. Typically, youth work takes place at youth clubs/groups, on the streets (detached/outreach), in schools, and within uniformed groups and outdoor education.

The effectiveness of youth work methods has led to an increasing number of organisations developing youth work approaches, for example those working in youth justice and health improvement programmes.



### 3. The Purpose of Youth Work:

The purpose of youth work is to enable young people to develop holistically. Youth work facilitates young people's personal, social and educational development, enables them to develop their voice, influence and place in society and to reach their full potential.

In Scotland, the youth work sector has developed the National Youth Work Outcomes and Skills Framework which helps to articulate the impact of youth work for young people:

**Outcome 1: Young people build their health and wellbeing.**

**Outcome 2: Young people develop and manage relationships effectively.**

**Outcome 3: Young people create and apply their learning and describe their skills and achievements.**

**Outcome 4: Young people participate safely and effectively in groups and teams.**

**Outcome 5: Young people consider risk, make reasoned decisions and take control.**

**Outcome 6: Young people grow as active citizens, expressing their voice and enabling change.**

**Outcome 7: Young people broaden their perspectives through new experiences and thinking.**

As young people work towards the outcomes, they develop core skills for learning, life and work.



### 4. The Defining Characteristics of Youth Work:

Youth Work has three essential and definitive features:

a) Young people choose to participate:  
The young person takes part voluntarily. They choose to be involved, to relax, meet friends, have fun and access support. The young person decides whether to engage or not.

b). The work must build from where young people are:  
Youth work should be informed by the lived experiences of each young person. It is a person centred, needs led approach which builds from the young person's own feelings, values, views and principles.

Critically, youth work takes place within the context of a young person's wider relationships, community and culture.

c.). Young people and youth workers collaborate as partners in a learning process:

The young person is recognised as an equal, active partner who can, and should, have opportunities and resources to shape their lives. The relationship and dialogue between the young person and youth worker is central to the learning process.



### 5. Policy Context:

Although the primary focus of youth work is the young person and their lived experience and aspirations, youth work outcomes are relevant across, and contribute to, policy priorities in many areas including: Health and Wellbeing; Employability; Education; Youth justice; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; Child Poverty; Social Inclusion and Participation.

#### Human Rights/UNCRC:

As a rights-based practice, youth work has a key role in ensuring that young people's rights are upheld and supporting young people to access their rights. It also has an important role in supporting the incorporation of the UNCRC and wider human rights into Scots law, working alongside young people to embed the legislation in schools; in communities; in local authorities and the voluntary sector.



### 6. Age Range:

Youth workers predominantly work with children and young people between 11 and 19 years of age, but also support young adults up to the age of 25, depending on their need.

It acknowledges the need to connect effectively with early intervention programmes and provision which focuses on children under 11 years.