

YOUTH WORK AND SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

ALTERNATIVE PATHWAY PROGRAMME, WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE

CONTEXT

The Alternative Pathway Programme, West Dunbartonshire is a partnership between West Dunbartonshire Council's Education Service, Working 4U Youth Service and YSortit - a local third sector youth work service provider. The programme was first piloted in 2021-2022 with funding from the Youth Work Education Recovery Fund and is offered to young people in the senior phase who are struggling to attend mainstream school. Twenty-six young people joined the programme this year.

WHAT WORK WAS UNDERTAKEN?

All young people are offered mentoring support from a skilled youth worker from one of the partner organisations. They are supported to access tailored health and wellbeing support and support for literacy, numeracy and wider skills development, when they are ready for this. Youth Connections offers an opportunity to help support the wider family through Working4U Family Opportunity Hubs, helping to address key drivers of poverty outlined within the local Child Poverty Action Plan. Young people have the opportunity to co-design the programme of activities that they want to engage in and action plans are developed based on their needs and interests. Support is open-ended to maximise potential for a positive outcome, and recognising that for these young people this will take time. The emphasis is on learning - not on going to school. The programme is helping to link services together - and ensuring young people are reached sooner, before they are in crisis.

WHAT IMPACT HAS THE WORK HAD?

The work aimed to re-engage young people in education. Young people's progress has been measured in relation to their wellbeing, their engagement in learning, their skills development and new qualifications gained.

QUANTITATIVE FEEDBACK

77% of participating young people showed an improvement in confidence, self-care, resilience, communication and organising and planning skills.

54% of participating young people developed their confidence and capacity to make decisions.

Most of the work with this group has been one-to-one, but 8 young people have also taken part in group activities - 6 of the 8 have improved their teamworking skills as a result. Some young people on the programme have qualifications and accreditations, where this was not anticipated at the outset.

QUALITATIVE FEEDBACK

Young people

"They listen to you & help you out. [my youth worker] has helped me get through my arts award & with my college portfolio."

"I feel confident coming to the group and I couldn't have done that before. I even do my online learning. It's helped me with planning because I have bad anxiety and I need to know what we are doing or where we are visiting so that I can plan it for myself."

"It has made a big difference in my personal life in that I went & had two college interviews & got into college. I have attended the IL lessons & will get Nat 4's in English & Maths"

"I've never liked school with all that's happened over the years. This isn't like school at all, it's better. I've always liked art but never thought I was good enough to get a qualification & I have, it really feels amazing."

"Youth workers bring high-quality, personalised approaches to nurture and learning loss - and they also offer flexibility: they are there in the evenings and during the holidays when there is still a need for the support."

Gill Graham, Involvement and Engagement Officer, West Dunbartonshire Education Services