

YouthLink
Scotland
The national agency for youth work

INVEST IN YOUNG PEOPLE INVEST IN YOUTH WORK

Scotland's Youth Work Sector Manifesto
2022 for Local Government





“

Youth work is human rights work

Bruce Adamson, Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland

“

To invest in youth work is to invest in Scotland's young people, and that should be our nation's top priority as we recover from the impact of the pandemic

Tim Frew, CEO, YouthLink Scotland

INTRODUCTION

We are asking all parties to stand with us during this unprecedented period in our nation's history, to support the youth work sector at local level.

We know councils across Scotland face tough decisions, however our plea is that you invest further in local youth work services to ensure that additional burden is not placed on this younger generation.

Any cuts to current provision and a lack of investment will have serious long-term consequences for young people, who, more than any other part of our society, need our support as we go forward.

Scotland's youth workers want a commitment to the continuity of youth work services, now and post Covid-19. There is greater demand for these services, with many young people adversely affected.

Their collective concern is that any further cuts to youth work budgets, at a time when their sector continues to be a lifeline for young people, will have a detrimental effect, on young people, their education and mental wellbeing.

We know that to close the educational attainment gap we need to empower children and young people to be partners in their own learning, to achieve better mental, physical and emotional outcomes. We need to look beyond the classroom, working with the youth work sector, to build a resilient, engaged and confident youth population.

Councillors are delivering essential services, making difficult decisions and acting often as the first point of contact with children, young people and families who need help and support. Investment in youth work will always save money and reduce pressure on other council services. We ask you, on behalf of Scotland's youth workers and young people to commit to the following policy asks.



1

A right for all young people to access youth work opportunities

- Strengthen the CLD regulations to prevent cuts to youth work provision and ensure further investment.
- Ensure all young people have the right to access youth work opportunities, including universal, targeted and outdoor learning provision.
- Take a maximal approach to incorporation of the UNCRC into Scots law, ensuring more young people have access to youth work opportunities.

2

Investment in youth work services

- Commit to increasing investment in the youth work sector at local authority level.
- Ensure youth work services and organisations have access to school facilities to strengthen the positive impact of Youth Work in Schools.
- Find a long-term sustainable solution to the lack of access to indoor spaces and facilities for youth work in your council area.

3

Formal recognition of the positive impact of youth work across public policy areas

- Ensure there is formal recognition of the positive impact of youth work within the strategies and policies of local authorities.
- Children and young people should be at the heart of policy. Encourage a participative approach to service design and budget spend in your local authority.
- Commit to a preventative approach to policy and service design for young people, with youth work as an integral delivery partner.

A right for all
young people
to access
youth work
opportunities



1

A right for all young people to access youth work opportunities

Youth work has an important role to play in both supporting young people to understand and employ their rights, and in being a key provider of services for children and young people.

Young people have a right to a whole education, and they should have a right to access youth work as an essential part of their education.

- Strengthen the CLD regulations to prevent cuts to youth work provision and ensure further investment.
- Ensure all young people have the right to access youth work opportunities, including universal and targeted provision, including outdoor learning.
- Take a maximal approach to incorporation of the UNCRC into Scots law, ensuring more young people have access to youth work opportunities.

The statutory basis for youth work sits within the Community Learning and Development (CLD) Regulations (2013). This places a legal requirement on local authorities to secure the delivery of CLD in their area. We want to see the CLD regulations strengthened to prevent cuts to youth work provision, ensuring further investment, and recognising the contribution of youth work to the implementation of the United Nations Convention on Children's Rights (UNCRC) into Scots Law.

Strengthening the statutory basis of youth work and supporting voluntary youth work providers, is critical to young people realising these rights.

A recent consultation with over 1,000 young people about the future of youth work found that:

- 97% believe that youth work should be a right for young people in Scotland
- 97% feel there should be more youth work opportunities available to young people in Scotland
- 96% state there should be more funding for youth work
- 96% think young people in Scotland should have the right to be supported by skilled, competent youth workers who take account of their wellbeing

Overwhelmingly, those young people stated the main priorities should include:

- More funding
- More youth groups (available across all of Scotland)
- Focus on mental health and wellbeing

The Scottish Youth Parliament's 'Youth Work and Me' survey found that youth work is important to young people because it provides opportunities, support, greater confidence and self-esteem, friendship, skills, a voice, access to non-formal education and independence.

There needs to be significant investment in youth work to ensure there are the resources and experienced staff and volunteers available to support young people effectively and deliver high quality services.

2

Investment in youth work services at local level

- Commit to increasing investment in the youth work sector at local authority level. Youth work budgets in every local council should include designated monies for sessional staff, support for volunteer and youth forums, as well as support for third sector youth work organisations.
- Ensure youth work services and organisations have access to school facilities to continue and strengthen the positive impact of Youth Work in Schools.
- Find a long-term sustainable solution to the lack of access to indoor spaces and facilities in your council area, ensuring that youth work services, whether local authority run or provided by the voluntary sector are able to operate at full capacity.

Research shows that investing in youth work leads to significant improvements in mental health and wellbeing. It provides positive interventions to help reduce youth offending. It also increases educational attainment, leading to increased earnings later in life. Investment in youth work saves money.

Investing in youth work is an investment in the future of young people and our local communities. If Scotland truly aspires to be 'the best place in the world to grow up' then youth work is an essential partner in making this happen. We need to ensure that funding is in place to deliver this for all our young people, including workforce development and support for volunteers.



Numerous research studies into the impact of Universal Community-based Youth Work shows the majority of young people improve their health and wellbeing, educational outcomes and employment prospects.

Research from Hall Aitken shows that investing in youth work leads to a significant reduction in mental health issues, youth offending and substance abuse, while it also increases educational attainment and leads to increased earnings later in life. This amounts to a significant contribution of at least £656 million and up to £2.2 billion every year to the Scottish economy.

UNISON asked respondents from the youth work sector how they felt cuts in youth services and other relevant services were having an impact on young people:

- 80% said they thought young people feel less empowered
- 71% said it was now harder for young people to stay in formal education
- 65% said young people were finding it harder to get jobs
- 77% reported increased mental health issues among young people, and 70% rise in alcohol and substance abuse
- 83% reported increased crime and anti-social behaviour



3

Formal recognition of the positive impact of youth work across public policy areas

- Ensure there is formal recognition of the positive impact of youth work across public policy areas by embedding youth work's contribution within the strategies and policies of local authorities.
- Children and young people should be at the heart of policy. Encourage a participative approach to service design and budget spend in your local authority.
- Commit to a preventative approach to policy and service design for young people, which has youth work provision as an integral part of local strategies.

Youth work in Scotland is deeply embedded within the policy landscape. The sector makes a significant contribution on equality and inclusion, prevention, early intervention and improving outcomes for children and young people.

One of the key roles of youth work is to ensure the rights of children and young people are respected and enhanced. We believe all young people should be protected from the disproportionate impacts of Covid-19. This must be reflected across key policy areas.

We know that council budgets are increasingly under pressure. However, we can demonstrate to you how continued investment in youth work can ease pressure on future budgets and give your young people the skills and confidence they need for life.



Hall Aitken – Social and Economic Value of Youth Work in Scotland

Youth work outcomes	Costs and Values
Better literacy, numeracy & language	Reduced costs to education system
Attaining qualifications	Personal earnings from better qualifications
Engaged in education	Reduced costs to education system
In employment or training	Personal earnings from being in employment Reduced wage scar from youth unemployment
Positive health behaviours	Reduced incidence of mental health problems Reduced incidence of obesity Reduced incidence of STIs Greater productivity due to reduced absences
Less offending	Reduced costs of criminal justice interventions
Less dependent on welfare	Savings on welfare payments
Positive parenting	Reduced risk of children going into care

Reports consistently show that as much as 40% of public service spending is on interventions that could have been avoided by prioritising a preventative approach.

Youth work contributes to Scotland's national outcomes, policies and strategies, including, but not limited to, the National Performance Framework, National Youth Work Strategy, Curriculum for Excellence, Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) and UNCRC. We are guided by the National Youth Work Outcomes, the nature and purpose of youth work, National Occupational Standards and CLD competencies ethics and values.





YouthLink Scotland’s members ask all political parties to deliver our key asks for local government.

We represent over 100 youth work organisations, both voluntary and statutory. Find a full list of members on our website.

#YouthWorkManifesto22



YouthLink Scotland
Caledonian Exchange,
19A Canning Street, Edinburgh EH3 8EG

T: 0131 313 2488
E: info@youthlinkscotland.org
W: www.youthlinkscotland.org

YouthLink Scotland is a Company Limited by Guarantee.
Registered in Scotland No: 164547. Charity Ref: SC003923

