



Youth Work

Education

Recovery

Fund

ReportFebruary 2022







"I was so determined to reach the goals I set myself – that feeling when I did was amazing. It's made me think differently about school and my choices going forward." Young Person

"To see his spark reignite – priceless."

Parent

"Youth workers
have skills – and
huge insight from the
relationships they
build with young
people in communities
– to help us engage
young people in
learning."
Teacher

"I hope this influences a culture change – not to see learning in isolation – young people own their own learning – it doesn't belong to school or community."

Youth Worker

"This is magnificent. What a model for others if we get the chance to do this again."

Highland Council

Executive Summary

Scope of the programme:

- Supported by £3 million in funding from Scottish Government
- 64 funded programmes across Scotland
- More than 17,000 sessions and 49,000 activity hours provided for young people
- 17,904 young people participated
- Support was targeted in areas of multiple deprivation where young people and families have been most adversely affected by the pandemic

Age of young people who participated

- 68% aged 10-14
- 30% aged 15-19
- 2% aged 20-24

The impacts of the learning experiences offered by youth work organisations were very positive

Evidence gathered from young people, teachers, parents, youth workers and other partners over the course of the programme shows that:

- 82% of participating young people developed their skills
- 79% of participating young people experienced improved physical health and wellbeing
- 78% of participating young people overcame barriers to learning
- 61% of young people were more engaged in learning
- 37% of young people achieved recognition of wider achievement attainment e.g. youth awards

A smaller number of projects measured four further outcomes. Here:

- 96% of young people improved their literacy and numeracy
- 81% secured positive destinations
- 55% showed improvements in school attendance
- 35% developed their readiness for work

A number of other positive impacts have emerged from the evidence gathered:

The work has helped to:

- Nurture peer support, enabling participants to build confidence and skills to help other young people, informed by their own lived experience
- Provide vital support for young people transitioning from primary to secondary school
- Build a stronger sense of community and belonging, which in turn supports young people in their learning
- Improve relationships and relieve anxiety in families
- Build a renewed sense of optimism about the future

The evidence also provides useful insights on how and why the youth work approach is effective in engaging and re-engaging young people in learning:

When partners and young people reflect on youth work practice, they highlight youth workers' unique ability to build strong, authentic relationships with young people and create positive conditions for learning where young people feel trusted, respected and listened to. Parents and teachers have also valued youth work organisations' flexible and inclusive approach to learning.

An exploration of collaborative working with youth work organisations, schools and CLD partners involved in the programme has highlighted wide ranging benefits – and a number of significant challenges

It's clear that funding of this kind can help support more equal and effective partnerships. However, it also demonstrates that ongoing support is needed across the system to develop and consistently embed effective collaborative practice. This will continue to be part of our national programme focus within the Youth Work and Schools Partnerships team at YouthLink Scotland, mirroring the refreshed mission for the Scottish Attainment Challenge which recognises the important role that youth work can play in education recovery, accelerating progress and ultimately improving outcomes for all young people.

Purpose and Scope of the Youth Work Education Recovery Fund

The Youth Work Education Recovery Fund was established to enable the sector to engage young people in some of the country's most vulnerable communities and support their educational, social and emotional recovery in the wake of the pandemic. Projects were awarded funding across all of Scotland's 32 local authorities and were designed to support effective partnership working between youth work organisations (statutory and third sector) and formal education. Many projects also included elements of outdoor learning and creative arts.

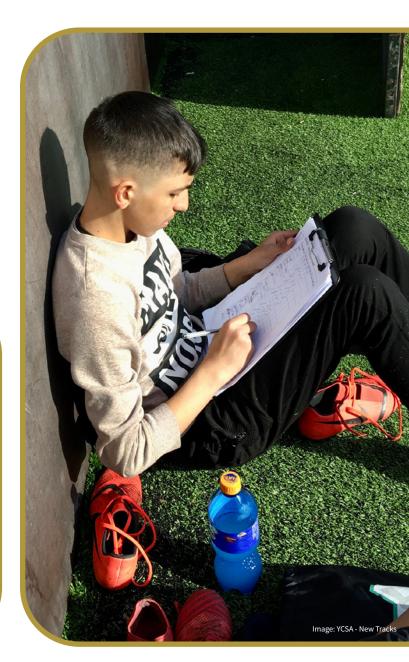
All of the projects sought to deliver at least three of the following outcomes:

- Developing young people's skills, including interpersonal skills
- Improving young people's physical and mental health and wellbeing
- Enabling young people to overcome barriers to learning
- Increasing young people's engagement in learning
- Improving school attendance
- Recognising young people's wider achievement and attainment (e.g. through youth awards)
- Improving young people's literacy and numeracy
- Building readiness for work
- Securing positive destinations

Image: Deaf Action Scotland

The report which follows, brings together data gathered from across the programme to give an overall sense of the direct impact of the Youth Work Education Recovery Fund on the lives of young people. In analysing the qualitative data, we have also reviewed how young people, parents and educators describe their experience of the youth work practice to clarify how and why the youth work approach is effective in engaging and re-engaging young people in learning.

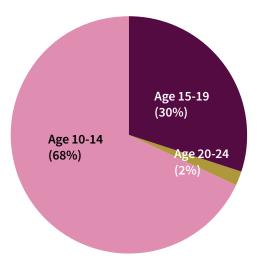
The report also provides perspectives from youth workers and formal educators on their experience of collaboration, as they designed, delivered and evaluated these projects together.



Programme Deliverables

Scope of the programme:

- · 64 funded programmes across Scotland
- More than 17,000 sessions and 49,000 activity hours provided for young people
- 17,904 young people participated
- Young people from a range of formal education settings were involved, predominantly secondary schools

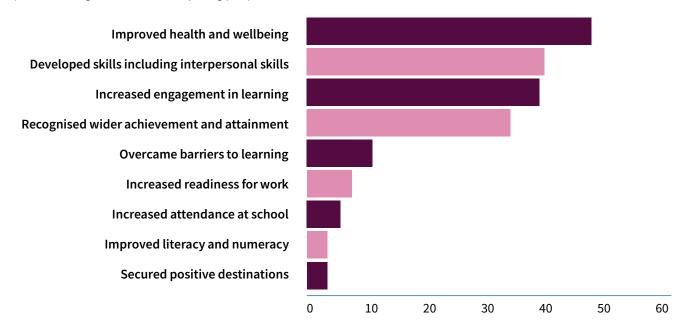


Age of participating young people



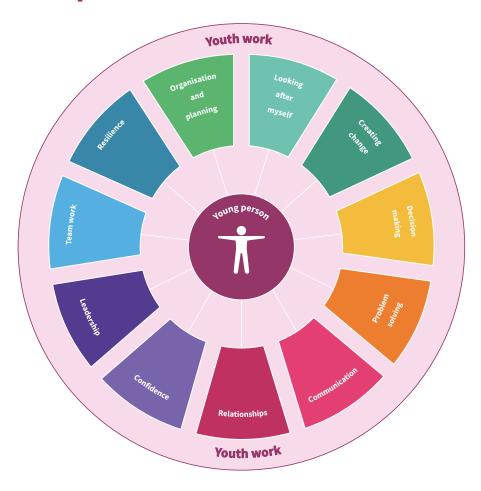
Impact on Young People

All funded projects were asked to measure three out of nine relevant outcomes, as outlined in the chart below. This means that the sample size of participating young people is different for each outcome – e.g. a group of more than 13,000 young people in the case of 'improved health and wellbeing, and a group of less than 100 in the case of 'secured positive destinations'. With this in mind, when detailing percentage impacts, we have highlighted those that involve participant samples including fewer than 1,000 young people.



Number of projects measuring this outcome

82% of participants developed new skills, including interpersonal skills



The Youth Work Skills Framework outlines the key skills that young people can develop though participation in youth work in Scotland.

It's clear that young people involved in projects funded through the Youth Work Education Recovery Fund have made progress in many of these skills.

Reflecting on the progress they have made, young people most commonly talk about the fact that the experiences have boosted their confidence: to take part in things, to speak up, to persevere even when things get difficult and to ask for help when they need it. They notice that they feel more comfortable building relationships and better able to manage group interactions. Some are starting to step up to, and enjoy, leadership roles.

Confidence

"I feel more confident – I know that I am a lot more capable than I think I am and other people think I am. I need to stop doubting myself."

"You made me more comfortable to talk about my feelings."

"I am more confident and speak up in group work more."

"I'm more confident sharing my thoughts and opinions."

"I managed to sing in front of people for the first time ever!"

Resilience

"This has shown me that anything is possible when you put in the hard work."

"I've learned you can mentally push through things even when you feel like giving up."

"Being part of this award has helped me to stay strong during hard times and to realise that we can work together as a team."



Communication

"Coming to the group has allowed me to use my voice. I don't usually speak out when I'm at school but I feel comfortable enough here to state my opinions."

"I am more confident listening to other people's ideas."

"I am more confident to ask for help."

Leadership

"I have learned to help younger kids think about others and how their behaviour makes them feel."

"I learned how to communicate with the younger ones and how to balance them having fun with me and also respecting me enough to behave and listen."

"I achieved being a leader and stepping up and being a good friend to my team members."

"I feel I can lead a group better and offer support to my peers."

"Getting involved has given me the confidence to volunteer at more places."

Looking after myself

See also separate Health and Wellbeing section on page 9 of this report for more details about the skills in self-care that young people developed through the programme.

Relationships

"My relationships with my teachers are improving."

"I learned to be more patient."

"I'm more confident in meeting new people and pushing myself out of my comfort zone."

"I'm not as shy as I used to be when I'm meeting new people."

"I've grown strong friendships and I can even act relaxed with the staff members."

"I learned how to deal with difficult people in a group and not walk away or leave."

I've learned eye contact is so important, this shows respect. I wish I heard about this when I was at school."

"I have developed long-lasting friendships."

"What helped me most was spending time with others in a group and making new friends."

Team work

"By being part of a team and overcoming my fears I've learned that I am capable of learning more than I thought I could."

"We learn to be kind in a team."

"I have Asperger's and don't normally like group activities but this helped me work better in a team and I really enjoyed it."

"I've become better at working with others".

Parents are delighted to see their children becoming more socially confident, successfully building relationships and integrating into groups:

"This has given my daughter new found confidence by making new friends and helping her to socialise with others. This helped with her anxiety and encouraged her to attend school."

"My son has grown in confidence whilst participating and achieved things he never thought he could."

"This has shown him you can achieve something which may seem too big and too scary if you just put your mind to it."

"Her confidence has absolutely rocketed."

"My son has gained some vital skills around patience and tolerance."

Teachers also see significant changes in young people's self-esteem, resilience and willingness to engage – with one another and with new activities. They notice that, as young people achieve things that may at first seem difficult or scary, they are able to hold on to that learning and apply it to make progress in other areas:

"It's clear that K's self-esteem has grown since taking part in the project...she is more keen to take part in challenging activities." "For weeks this was the only stable part of life routines for some of our young people and the confidence it has given them to try new things is outstanding."

"This was a wonderful skills progression route for these children, supporting their confidence and transition to high school"

"Children's social interactions improved on return to school"

"[As a result of this experience] young people feel empowered and have shown strong positivity and resilience"

"Young people are putting their skills into practice and their resilience levels improved as a result of completing something they were unsure that they would be able to – this has a positive effect on their learning in different subjects."

"These experiences really helped young people build resilience and deal with any additional stresses."

"This pupil has grown in confidence over the course of the year and is willing to take on additional responsibilities."

"I was delighted to see this pupil volunteering for [an award programme] and willing to mix beyond her social circle."

"Some of the quietest in the class are really taking a leading role in the programme which is great to see."

79% of young people improved their health and wellbeing

- Young people feel a sense of pride in the progress they are making in physical fitness. They notice links between physical and mental wellbeing
- They value the strategies they are learning to help them cope when they are struggling with anxiety, anger or low mood
- They say that they are finding it easier to talk to people about how they are feeling – and that they feel better at home and at school as a result
- Sometimes just being part of a friendly group makes a positive difference to how they feel
- Parents notice that young people are more able to regulate their emotions and behaviour
- They value the investment youth workers make in getting to know their child in order to support them better, and they see that, over time, this leads to a greater willingness to reach out for support
- Teachers value the skilled contribution of youth workers and recognise that this can help prevent the situation escalating



Young People

"I feel mentally better when taking part in exercise."

"it was a boost to my body confidence because I wasn't sure I would be able to cope but it went really well."

"I love going to the gym and doing boxing [with my youth worker]. It helped me get rid of all my anger."

"I feel like I have more energy after the session."

"[This has] helped me to think about my anxiety and set achievable goals that are personal to me."

"I can now recognise when I feel overwhelmed. I know there is help available in the school."

"I've learned how to better control my anger and that I need to talk to others and not let it build up."

"Before I started this group I couldn't speak to anyone else about what I'm going through and now I'm able to open up to my mum and other people."

"I can deal with my emotions much better now and feel supported if I have a bad day...I have also been helped with how to talk to teachers better now as I used to get chucked out of the class a lot for shouting back at them if they spoke to me in a way I did not like. Dealing with my emotions and anger in school has been one of the best things I learned to do."

"It's given me more ways to help my anxiety stay low and not get to crisis point."

"Just getting to be involved with others and be included helped me feel so much better about myself."

"I made new friends and that helped me to feel better about myself."



Parents

"R is much calmer and able to cope now, she is less stressed and this has helped her to be in school and classes more."

"Our youth worker has been amazing at identifying my daughter's needs with mental health. This has enabled her to offer my daughter better and more personalised support."

"[This experience] has helped bring out my daughter's confidence – she is better able to communicate with us when there is something on her mind."

"Like a different boy, really came out of his shell."

"I really feel my son has a better understanding, knowledge and coping strategies for anxiety now."

"[This group] became a very safe place for her to be."

"[We] are so grateful to you for making [my son] feel so included. It hasn't always been that way for him in groups and we have noticed a massive difference in his confidence levels."

"She told me today she is going to speak to the school counsellor. She didn't even entertain that before starting the group, so I feel she has realised how beneficial the support is."

Teachers

"Youth Agency staff have excellent coaching techniques and counselling skills. They are trained and able to make early interventions in the mental health of young people, preventing escalation to specialised health services such as CAMHS."

"Emotionally some of our S1 and S2 pupils are still very young and this opportunity has allowed some of our most vulnerable young people to build their confidence and self-esteem, build relationships with their peers in a more informal setting while learning about themselves. The health and wellbeing element has enabled them to recognise when things get too much for them and given them confidence to ask for help when they feel overwhelmed at school."

"[Here] young people are confident and mature expressing their emotions."

"The difference in the young people is amazing. It has been great to see young people who have been isolated and struggled with their mental health, come together and make friends, creating positive support networks."

78% of young people overcame barriers to learning

- Young people value the structure these learning experiences have offered them – and the sense of returning purpose they have as a result
- Parents also talk about the importance of young people having support to rebuild confidence and positive routines
- Teachers and other partners, including mental health professionals, notice that young people, even those who have been isolated for some time, are able to relax in the youth work environment and gradually rebuild confidence to participate in social and learning experiences

Parents

"This service has been a life saver. My child has been really set back by everything that's going on with Covid...the youth workers have been great, she has really enjoyed the music activities and seeing her grow in confidence has been fantastic."

"I have seen my son getting better at understanding how to feel more relaxed and how to cope in school situations."

"Being on the mentoring project has made big changes to J – he is much calmer at home and has started to behave better in class. He thinks he will stay on at school now."

"She was dealing with a lot of issues which were impacting massively on her mental wellbeing... [this experience] has contributed hugely towards P regaining focus, confidence, happiness and a constructive mechanism to enjoy...this has been an important step towards integrating back into normal life."

Teacher

"I have witnessed at first hand the difference this has made to young people, instilling in them a much-needed self-belief. I feel privileged to access this service."

Young People

"I was really anxious, but having a plan helped me and I have also come to see that I can change what I am doing and reset my plan if I have to or want to. Feeling more positive now and less stressed."

"The course really helped me after lockdown. I hadn't done anything for a long time and I didn't take part in any online learning. I've left school now, so it was good to be able to do this course and get a qualification from it."

"It made me more open to trying stuff again."

"I was really nervous about not having the structure of school but with this...it's having that structure. 'Cause I will find myself days lying in bed doing nothing and then it's like with this I have to get up and go do this today. And you get to socialise without freaking out about it."

"You helped us settle into school after a long time off."

"I was staying up all night on my Xbox and sleeping all day which caused a lot of arguments with my mum. Coming along to the sessions has given me a reason to get up."

"Covid has totally disrupted my routine for getting back to school, but knowing you guys were taking this made me want to come in."

Delivery partners

"With your support a young person [who has not left the family home for several months] was able to attend one-to-one sessions in the Youth Café and particularly enjoyed the non-judgemental environment." Primary Mental Health worker CAMHS

"G took a huge step to get to yesterday's session getting on public transport. A really big thing for her as public transport causes her significant anxiety. I think this shows her commitment to the sessions." Youth worker

61% of young people show increased engagement in learning

- Young people discover that different kinds of often more practical – learning suit them better and that they thrive in a different environment
- Other young people just find school more manageable when they are able to spend some time away from the classroom, before they return with a renewed sense of focus
- Parents express a sense of relief that their children seem happier - and it is no longer a battle to get them out to school in the morning
- Teachers are delighted and sometimes surprised to notice a significant change in some young people who are typically quite disengaged

Teachers

"I loved the way that pupils, who are often disengaged with the learning process became fully involved, enthusiastic and grew significantly in confidence."

"The relationships created with [the youth workers] were key to young people engaging thereafter with the Health and Wellbeing Award back in school. We would be very keen to see this model employed again."

"We have seen a great improvement by one of the pupils we referred. In class he really struggled with his confidence. There has been a remarkable improvement [following the programme. He has become more confident taking part in activities and shown a keen interest in [the creative arts]."

"[There is] a renewed sense of purpose around learning."

"Three boys who had stopped engaging in school now attend [the youth work project] three times a week. A great relationship with staff is helping them to learn in a new environment."

"These are young people who never stay engaged in anything and yet they have never missed a week. We have seen a big difference in their engagement, in how they are relating to each other and their confidence is growing."

"This pupil was, by his own admission, drifting in education at times...This programme has allowed him to improve his confidence in his own abilities and take charge of his own learning."

"What an opportunity. The level of engagement by some is hard to believe."

Young People

"I was so determined to reach the goals I set myself – that feeling when I did was amazing. It's made me think differently about school and my choices going forward."

"I was really anxious but joining in made me feel happier and that I wanted to carry on doing other things."

"I much prefer being involved in practical work. I've learned how to refurbish a bike and strip a bike for parts and I've managed to use this learning to fix my own bike whilst I've been here. I've also started coming down after school to help more."

"I was getting into a lot of trouble, but this project helped me to find something that I'm good at and I've realised I am capable of achieving goals."

"I've learned there's a different way I can learn and that I can do things when I make goals and stay committed."

"School isn't for me but I realise that I can learn and challenge myself in other environments."

"This has to be the way school does timetables moving forward involving [youth work] more and more."

"I feel like taking part in the outdoor programme has helped me with my concentration in class. The break from the classroom relieved my stress and I came back to school feeling fresh and focused."

"I enjoy the opportunity to be outside and more active which makes me more settled in class."

It's so much easier to learn when you are with friends."

"I have started attending different youth groups here too which has led me to making new friends and trying new things."

Parents

"The difference in my son's behaviour is amazing. Since beginning this programme, he now gets up to go to school, he has applied for college and is volunteering at a local youth organisation he used to go to."

"My child has matured and been more responsible this year with support from staff – the difference is amazing."

"I can see a big change in [my child's] attitude. My child seems happier going to school."

37% of young people gained recognition of wider achievement and attainment

- This percentage reflects the number of young people who completed an award or qualification during the lifetime of the fund. A number of projects have highlighted that young people are still working towards awards, but have not yet completed them
- Young people express a sense of achievement and pride in gaining awards and qualifications
- Parents notice the confidence this helps to instil
- Teachers also see that the awards help to grow confidence – and that sometimes higher levels of achievement and attainment are possible when they work closely in partnership with youth workers

Teachers

"This project ensured young people were able to achieve qualifications they wouldn't otherwise have had the opportunity to engage with. For one of our pupils in particular, this project was the first time he had engaged with productive learning in two years. He now has skills and qualifications to achieve a post-school destination."

"The impact has been profound in the sense that the young person has accumulated Saltire hours, this impacts on his self-esteem which consequently impacts on attainment and achievement in school."

"This is the first time I have seen pupils taking part in individualised and personal awards. I will think of using these awards in future to help attainment."

All of the above cohorts of young people were sizeable. The largest is a sample group (health and wellbeing) which includes more than 13,000 young people. The smallest (overcoming barriers to learning) is still of a significant size – 4,400 young people. The remaining outcomes below were only gathered from a relatively small number of young people:

Greater readiness for work: 823

Improved school attendance: 300

Improved literacy and numeracy: 157

Secured positive destinations: 70

Projects were asked to choose at the outset of the programme which three (of nine possible) outcomes they would measure. These smaller group sizes simply reflect that fewer projects chose to measure these outcomes. It's hard to draw any informed conclusions about this, except to

Young People

"I feel proud because I got a Saltire award."

"I didn't realise I would enjoy it this much and still get certificates for taking part."

"I liked being creative doing the awards."

"I can see how training, taking part in the activities and the awards have been good for me."

"I got the chance to volunteer during Easter for the activity club which helped me to complete the play work certificate because I was actually working with the wee ones. Even though I found the certificate really difficult [the youth worker] really helped me."

Parents

"[My son] has got a youth achievement award now – this has helped to give him more confidence."

Youth worker

"One school recognised that their young people were capable of achieving a Nat 5 in PE but lacked confidence to believe that themselves. By attending homework clubs at [an outdoor centre] teachers were able to gather evidence to support young people in achieving qualifications."

say that the positive destinations outcome would only ever be relevant to young people aged 16+, and that perhaps 'readiness for work', whilst more universal, would not be the most obvious choice of the measurement available when targeting younger age groups in this context.

Whilst school attendance was only measured in a few cases, it's clear from the qualitative feedback that there was some improvement in young people's attendance in many of the projects. This is also underlined by the progress made in learner engagement above. Likewise, young people in a number of projects are reported to have made progress in curriculum areas, particularly STEM. It's possible that youth organisations felt less confident to measure the success of their projects based on these outcomes. Possibly they are considered more challenging to attribute. But given the positive results in these areas, perhaps it is important to build more confidence in the sector to measure these more often, in partnership with school colleagues.

96% of young people improved literacy and numeracy skills, where these were measured

Young People

"I worked well in groups, solving problems. I learned that a triangle shape gives the most strength and balance."

"I developed my coding skills. From making easy games, I'm now learning to make more advanced games, I never thought I would be able to do this."

"I've been inspired and I can actually feel proud of my writing."

Teachers

"STEM-based activities got them interested in science activities in a new way – kids who struggle at times really enjoyed this."

"All young people have improved their writing. All have volunteered to share their writing with the groups."

Parents

"I can see her confidence has come on and practising her scripts has made her read better."

"The bike project has been a life saver...my son actually really enjoyed learning science in this way."

"I see a huge difference in my son. He's a lot more confident. He's learned how to do written work and therefore he can help us too."

"[My daughters and son] are more happy and confident and they have better English."

55% of young people improved their school attendance, where this was measured

Young People

"I made new friends that I talk to every day...It has helped my attendance."

"I enjoy coming to school now...I feel less anxious and more confident going to class. [My youth worker] has helped me to feel confident to come to more classes."

"My attendance has improved in school. The programme made me want to learn more."

"This helps with attendance because I am excited to come in."

Teacher

"The difference has been transformational – these youth workers make real change in the young people – attendance and learning increase, issues reduce."

Parents

"Before, it was a fight to get her out the door, and after completing this, she looks forward to going to school."

"My son is much more open to discussing things that are causing him anxiety and most significantly he is back in school full time."

"My daughter has struggled with school attendance over the last few years. Knowing that the youth worker will be there for her [at school] has meant she has felt confident to attend."

"S was encouraged to attend the lunchtime group so she could meet more people if she felt stressed or anxious. It was a place for her to speak to staff and get support. She has gained confidence and made new friends. Her attendance is now over 90%."

"Getting him to attend school has been very challenging. He's been on a reduced timetable since before Covid and this group has helped to increase his attendance. He would honestly come here every day if you let him."

81% of young people secured positive destinations, where this was measured

Young People

"I left school at 15 as I didn't like it and I wasn't good at it as I have bad dyslexia. I struggled for a year or so because home wasn't very good, there were real problems going on. I used to help my grandad strip down engines and thought I could try to get work doing something like that. Through the bike project, I have actually got 2 levels of City and Guilds Awards. I never thought I would get anything like that. The staff have really helped me. I am much happier with things and they helped me to apply for an apprentice. I got it and I am going to be a real apprentice mechanic."

"I enjoyed the employability sessions. They helped me work out how to get a job. I got a JOB!!! I actually got a job as a lifeguard. Cheesin'!"

Parents

"My son was part of the employability group and got a job from it...I see he is more responsible. I can see he is more mature and he is happy with the job he currently has."

35% of participating young people developed greater readiness for work, where this was measured

Young People

"I feel I'm more ready for college because I've had to work on my timekeeping. It helped me feel more confident and more responsible."

"This has helped me grow as a person and encouraged me maybe to get a job with science."

"This course helped me to understand what it's like to be a child play worker or primary teacher...I love working with children. I think I'm good at it."

"I have become a more confident person which will help me with future interviews."

"I've learned so many new skills and I'm thinking about a career as an outdoor instructor."

"It's made me realise that my strengths really are in all things physical. I now know I just need to get on with my exams and hopefully get those grades so that I can get a job or even get into college to do some sort of sports coaching as a plan for the future."

"I want to help with [the baby classes] when I go back to school and I want to go to college to study childcare."

"Since the training and the volunteering, I have something to put on my CV."

Vocational worker

"[This experience] gave J a new outlook on life. She has been difficult to engage in the past but she is engaging more with our service and setting clear goals to work towards. We have developed a plan for her to return to education. Having previously turned down a college place, she is now ready to reapply."

Teachers

"Since returning to school, there has been a huge change in attitude with an increase in attendance to class. The project helped to give these young people confidence and belief in possibilities after leaving school."

Additional Impacts

As well as the outcomes the programme set out to measure, some other positive outcomes have emerged from the feedback submitted from young people, parents, carers, educators and other delivery partners:

Positive impacts from the programme ripple out into families

The feedback from parents and young people about the impact of this work on their families is both powerfully optimistic and, in some cases, stark.

Young People

"I like that my mum sees me here and that she's joined the women's choir too. She's happier now and we're going to be in a show in November."

"Doing the fishing, I never thought I would be able to do that and when I got home and the family saw the pictures and what I caught, they were all really proud of me, especially my Grandad, so it was a good feeling."

"I really enjoyed learning about healthy cooking as it has allowed me to be able to cook at home for my gran and show her what I've been learning...She says she is proud of me. I liked her saying that and I'm trying to make her feel that way more about me now."

Parents

"This has improved my relationship with my son. It gave him a sense of purpose to get out of bed in the morning and I know he is in a safe place there."

"I can't believe the change in my boy. He actually wants to talk to me about [the programme] and I get to tell him how proud I am of him."

"Every day when M came through the door, he couldn't wait to update me with what he'd been doing that day. He had been running sports activities at his local youth drop in: paddle-boarding and open water swimming. These things amazed me because he has never expressed any interest in these things before."

"I was quite worried about A attending – he's been struggling at school and has been a bit of a nightmare stuck in the house, but he learned how to cook and as a family we have been cooking the recipes he learned at the group. It has helped us come together as a family."

Parents (continued)

"He's done really well in the summer group learning about cooking. We have now joined a parent and child cooking group at the school."

"My son came home with resources about health and wellbeing and it got us discussing mental wellbeing and self-care in a way we never have before."

"It's hard to ask for help and we were not doing very good, prices for gas and electricity are so high and I need to buy additional food as no breakfast clubs... the support allowed us to feel valued, cared for and less anxious."

"I'm finding it hard to find the words for you to understand how much your kindness saved my son, we both lost our jobs through this pandemic and Christmas was cancelled. I wanted to go to sleep and not wake up. [This youth project] was an amazing support to me and my family."

The approach has nurtured peer support

Young people tell us that these projects have helped them to build positive relationships with peers. Importantly, young people also express a sense of agency in their developing ability to offer support to their peers.

Young People

"It's a space to be open and honest without feeling like the odd one out or like a burden. I'm with people who understand."

"The best bit was I got to meet other care experienced people, didn't feel I was the odd one out."

"I was so scared at first but having my friends there to support me and talk me through my fears was good – I don't think I could have done it without them."

"I can't wait for the group to start and I can mentor young people."

"I think the things we've learned will help other people. I can't wait to run our own workshops and help other people who might be in the same position I was."

"working with my mentee has supported me in my development and helped me to stay motivated for the sake of others."

"[Mentoring] has allowed me to connect with the younger school and look out for those who may need that extra wee bit of support."

Young people's involvement in youth work helps to build a stronger sense of community and belonging which supports their learning

Young People

"It has helped me get to know my hometown a lot better, and be engaged with everything going on."

"It helped me to understand what other people have been through and it makes me feel a bit better about myself."

"It's exciting to be more independent...we got to know more about places in [our local community] and finding our way around."

'it makes me feel connected to other things – not just family and home life."

"Helping the community has helped me to feel really happy because we need to think about people who need support."

"I just feel part of a big massive family."

Parents

"He's so proud that he will have the tools to help people. It's nice to see him so passionate about something."

Youth workers

"The activities helped young people's sense of connection with others through being part of a community project."

"Our activities strongly connected to the community... and work delivered in schools linked back to community-based youth work."

Parents and teachers, in particular, have valued the very inclusive approach of youth work organisations

Parents

"I had my concerns at the start as K has Asperger's but the plan we discussed with you, we didn't even need as he enjoyed it that much that he didn't have any issues."

"My son has autism and struggles to join groups but has loved attending the programme. He has made new friends and learned new things. I initially stayed for the sessions but he told me to go because he was having a good time."

"My daughter is blind. I had no idea she would be so taken with [outdoor learning]. She is totally into water sports now."

"My daughter has juvenile arthritis – I was a bit reluctant about her taking part initially, but she really pushed me because all of her friends were going. She had so much fun. Thankfully she had no injuries and discovered the swimming helped ease her pain so now she attends swimming 2 nights a week to strengthen her muscles."

"[My daughter] struggles with self-limiting beliefs because of her disability...[here] she was able to take part in everything...her dream has been to join music theatre group and now, after this, she is part of one. It's brilliant!"

"My child has sensory disabilities and misses out on a lot of activities available to their siblings. It was great that the arts project included their siblings."

Programme lead

"Hearing siblings and CODA are welcomed and gain much from the experience of being in the hearing minority for a few days."

Teachers

"This particular group with a number of pupils with ASD developed at an extraordinary rate in their final term thanks in no small part to [the support of the youth organisation]."

"Staff adapted programmes to ensure that [children with additional support needs] get the same experience.... It has been beneficial for them to be involved."

Parents, in particular, comment on the importance of youth workers offering regular, accessible support in school – and opportunities to learn outside the school environment

Parents

"Regular timetabled support offered a safe space for my child to work, chat and work on social skills and achievements."

"Knowing he had some time out of the classroom setting allowed my child to focus on his lessons when needed and then have regular productive breaks with his youth worker."

"It is very important to our daughter that the youth worker is available for her to go and see and get support when she needs it."

"It has been an absolute godsend – we just wish it could go on!"

"I liked how it was outside the school environment. It helped foster a sense of independence."



As a result of their experiences on the programme, many young people say they feel more optimistic about the future

One of the striking things that young people say again and again in the feedback is that their Youth Work Education Recovery Fund learning experiences have helped them to see past the challenges of the present, and of the last two years, and feel hopeful and excited about the future. It is hard to quantify the impact of this, but it may prove to be the Fund's most important and lasting legacy.

Parent

"You guys can relate to the kids on a different level and you inspire them. Nobody from any of our families ever talked about going to uni."



Young People

"I feel more positive about my future."

"My youth worker has helped me with my future plans."

"The course allowed me to see my potential and I feel more confident about my future."

"I got some inspiration for the future."

"In a time when it felt like everything was closed off to you, to be part of something so positive, with a focus, looking forward and progressing. It offered a real purpose."

"It's made me realise I have goals and ambitions."

"I have decided I want to be more positive in future. I want to try new things."

"It's made me feel hopeful."

"The leaders who are deaf help you learn more about your deafness. You can look up to them and you can see how they are successful, and it just helps you know that things later in life are going to be good."

"I've got even bigger and better expectations for the future now."

The programme has provided vital support for young people transitioning from primary to secondary school at a particularly difficult time

Young People

"This group was amazing – I now only feel 10% scared and 90% excited [about starting high school]"

"I've learned how to play the piano [here] so this is something I want to learn when I start high school – [this experience] has made me more confident for starting high school."

"I am lot more confident speaking to other people which will help me when I start high school."

"It was really good having someone to chat to because everywhere is closed...I feel much better about starting high school."

"I felt so much better to go to high school...I learned how to communicate with others so I would just ask for help."

Teachers

"[The youth organisation] provides an exciting opportunity for children to learn about and prepare for change in a positive way...as well as an opportunity to be more independent."

Parents

"I cannot express how much this has supported my son as he transitions to high school. At the start of the summer, we were experiencing violence at home and his participation in the sessions has helped him to turn around his emotional behaviours, given him a sense of belonging and given himself-esteem."

"It's worrying him starting high school, so him coming in and telling me all the things he's learned [at this group] has been really positive. He has started going to other youth groups at night with the friends he's met which is a huge improvement."

"The friends [my daughter] made at this group made her transition a lot smoother than either of us anticipated and those friendships have continued and enabled her to feel safe in her new environment."

Young people have enjoyed exploring their creativity – and its therapeutic qualities

Young People

"Being creative during lockdown has been extremely important. It has allowed us to break free from our isolation, helping us to cope better...It has given me a focus."

"I have been drawing to distract myself from negative ways I react. I have been drawing and it has been working for me."

"Having a musical instrument in the house is like having a distraction from feeling panicked. If I'm down or anxious music helps me to feel better. It makes me feel I can express myself without having to speak."

"The best part for me was the art activities. I learned how to make comic books and use different art materials. This was a good way to talk about how we felt during Covid."

The new challenge of outdoor learning has been embraced by participants, parents and outdoor educators

Young People

"The highlight for me was the [outdoor learning experience]. I've never done anything like that before and I never thought I could have done that. I was so proud when I managed to do all the activities."

"Taking part in new activities really helps me to believe in myself and that I can do things and try new things without being scared."

The Value of the Youth Work Approach in Engaging Young People in Learning

In the outcome data above, young people, parents and educators have offered their perspectives on the value of the youth work approach and the contribution it can make to engaging young people as confident individuals and successful learners.

Young people, who most often witness the practice of practitioners 'in the moment', provide more detailed reflections on what makes youth workers effective educators:

Building Relationships for Learning

Young people sense authenticity in their relationships with youth workers and this helps to build trust

"I can express myself...I like that people talk to me and are genuinely interested in me."

"You can talk to the youth workers about anything as they are really genuine and trustworthy which helped when I was struggling with things."

"The leaders were really friendly and interested in us all."

"Coming to these sessions feels like a weight off my shoulders. It's good to have a safe place to vent and feel supported. I trust everyone here."

Young people perceive the support from youth workers as 'unjudgmental' – this helps them to feel safe and open up

"I've been struggling with my identity for a long time. The youth workers have listened without judging and they have also given me websites which have really helped me."

"I feel like I can be myself here which is hard to do in school."

"What we like is that it's not a school environment so there are less rules...you can just be yourself."

"This is the first time I have been open and not scared I would be judged."

"The staff make me feel safe, secure, unjudged."

Parents also notice young people's positive response in this environment

"The group has accepted my daughter at the point where she is in her life and she says she feels safe there as she can speak about how she feels...She looks forward to coming – someone who would normally dread something new."

"The youth worker has been able to create an environment where our daughter's feelings and emotions are validated and she feels comfortable to talk."

"The relationship that staff developed with my son meant he felt safe enough to go away from home for the first time and when he was feeling scared, he trusted staff enough to be able to tell them how he was feeling."

"My son has trust in your team and feels listened to and understood."

Once that trust is built, youth workers support young people to step out of their comfort zone

"Covid has made my anxiety really bad. I get nervous at the thought of putting myself out there. With my youth worker's support, I really pushed myself to get involved and had a fantastic experience."

"I feel like this is somewhere I could do anything."

The continuity of relationships, and accessibility is important in supporting development over time

"I was very upset when my grandad died but I was able to talk to K, S & A about my feelings and what I was going through. They gave me ideas for how to help when I was upset or stressed including keeping a diary that I could share with them each week if I wanted to. I still write in that diary and bring it to the youth group so I can share my feelings with them."

"I feel I can trust [my youth worker]. She is always there to speak to when I need her."

"I was able to make a wellbeing plan with my youth worker which has really helped me at school as when I am struggling I know I can speak to my youth worker."

"I found talking to the worker really helpful. If I wasn't talking about things it would build up. 'Cause I would normally let it build up and feel sad and bad."



Creating positive conditions for learning

Young people feel respected and listened to

"I feel valued by staff and other young people [here]."

"I feel more relaxed and I feel respected."

"For the first time I feel comfortable sharing ideas in a group and know that I am being listened to."

"On this course you are listened to more and the people are significantly friendlier than in school."

"I didn't think I could do it but everyone else gave me the confidence in myself."

Young people enjoy the sense of agency that comes with 'having a say' in what you learn

"I liked that we got to decide on the activities and this has helped me to learn to listen to everyone's ideas and agree on what we wanted as a group."

"I liked how independent I felt."

"You get to choose what you want to do."

Young people respond to the trust that youth workers put in them (whilst still feeling safe enough to ask for support if they need it)

"We're treated like adults and given responsibility."

"I enjoyed learning how to problem solve and figure things out for myself but also asking for help."

"I liked how independent I felt."

Youth workers are skilled at positive reinforcement

"I felt uncomfortable [to begin with] because I'm not used to compliments, but now it makes me feel confident."

"I got good feedback and remembered it so that I could use it next time."

"I discovered I can do things on my own if/when I need to."



Reflections on Partnership Working

The Youth Work Education Recovery Fund was designed to encourage an effective collaborative approach to education recovery. Many of the projects have involved a range of organisations from different sectors: statutory and third sector youth work, schools, colleges, health providers, leisure, culture and sport.

Whilst it was not an integral expectation of the work that YouthLink Scotland was commissioned to do as administrators of the fund, our Youth Work and Schools Partnerships Team provided additional support to grantees over the course of the last 12 months to ensure that youth work, school and other community partners played an active role in evaluating the impact of this fund on partnership working, and that we learned as much as possible about barriers and enablers of collaboration in the system. This will inform workforce development priorities in the youth work sector, and potentially also future funding opportunities. A brief summary of views and insights gathered to date is provided below.

Funding application process

Youth work organisations understood and appreciated the rationale for the requirement to apply for funding in partnership. A number talked about this being the incentive they needed to focus on a more collaborative approach – across the CLD sector and with schools:

"Everyone understands the benefits of partnership on paper but when we had this additional funding, it became more real."

"The focus on a partnership model of funding from the outset was great. Even in quite a fraught time we've proved it's a highly effective model."

"People can talk for years. The benefit of having investment like this coming into local areas is that we learn by doing it. My only criticism is that the funding is short term. To take a strategic view of partnership, and invest in making it work effectively takes time and commitment."

"The funding being led by youth work organisations allowed for a new understanding of youth work – youth work cannot be an afterthought – it should be a key partner and potential lead in blended learning for some young people."

Benefits of the Partnership Approach

Reflecting on the process at the end of the programme, youth work organisations, their CLD partners and schools are all articulating the benefits of a more integrated approach.

CLD Partners tell us:

- More effective referral processes ensure the most vulnerable young people are reached
- More comprehensive "partnership intelligence" means there is a fuller picture of young people's lives and the challenges they and their families are facing, enabling partners to respond to needs more effectively, and in a more holistic way
- Sharing resources and expertise leads to enrichment of experiences for young people and it is easier to signpost young people to other support
- Young people have access to a wider range of positive role models in their community
- Young people are building relationships with youth workers from other services and are more likely to access them beyond the lifetime of the project
- All of the youth work partners have been focused on a clear, consistent set of outcomes and invested in delivering these, so the experience of youth work should feel coherent to young people
- · Links into families are stronger
- · Links with employability practitioners are stronger
- There are enhanced opportunities to offer activities that are more representative of the cultural heritage and traditions of different groups of young people within the community

"When we work together we can take a more preventative approach – get the right support to young people sooner."

"Young people and families identified literacy and numeracy issues within the family. Moving forward, we are starting an adult literacy group in the New Year."

A number mention that, a year on, this experience is now also impacting positively on:

- More collaborative strategic planning
- Enhanced self-evaluation and review processes

In the majority of locations, relationships between youth work and formal education have evolved in a positive direction, with both sets of partner organisations seeing benefits as result.

- Youth work teams say they are better connected with a broader cross-section of the school team than they were at the start of their project
- Roles are better understood and there is more clarity about how youth work complements formal education, and a better understanding of youth work purpose and practice
- The fact that youth work organisations were able to 'bring funding' rather than 'ask for funding' changed the conversation with some schools in a positive way, evening out a perceived power imbalance, and creating more of a level playing field for co-design and more acknowledgement of youth workers' understanding of the needs of young people
- Some schools have become more enthusiastic about building the outdoor learning offer within the core curriculum

School partners are clearly articulating the skills youth workers bring and the value they offer – as well as the results they can deliver. Formal educators recognise they need support from youth workers, perhaps more than ever, to offer a more diverse range of learning experiences, in particular to young people who are struggling to engage with the mainstream school 'offer'. Teachers recognise the importance of the relationships that youth workers are able to build with young people and their families in communities.

Both youth work organisations and schools talk about the importance (and the challenges of) a closer dialogue between youth work and schools. Youth workers would like to have a closer understanding of local need from a school perspective, and be part of conversations around school improvement priorities. Teachers recognise that they might be able to better meet the needs of the hardest to reach young people if they could draw regularly on youth workers deeper understanding of young people in the contexts of their families and communities.

Youth Workers

"School staff contacted parents to have young people out of core subjects so that they could be a part of these groups. This took trust in the youth work staff and the expected outcomes."

"The project and fund have created an opportunity for youth work to be a real leader in reducing the poverty related attainment gap through blended learning."

"The school has requested that we work with more groups in the future as well as with younger groups to try to provide an earlier intervention route."

"For the first time, all [of our] secondary schools have referred young people to participate in programmes outside the school setting."

"This has allowed us to revisit our relationships with schools where there was little or no CLD involvement and to offer targeted youth work support in other areas across those schools."

"The current youth work partners now have better relationships with the schools – the question now is how do we spread this so that all youth work organisations in the local area have this same relationship."

"As youth workers we were a bit afraid that by working in an institution like school, we would become 'not cool' but young people recognised us from their communities and understood we were working with them in a different way, even though we were in school."

Schools

"[The school-based youth worker] has excelled in developing relationships with pupils and staff...Her ability to build bridges and relate to young people is resulting in positive outcomes across the board."

"It has been good to have [youth workers] in class.[They] have picked up on things that we would not notice so much. The young people seem to have connected with [them] and shared things with [them] that they would not have shared with teaching staff about their feelings and aspirations."

"The team clearly have an excellent relationship with the young people and a good knowledge of the issues that affect their lives."

"I have learned so much more about these young people's experiences and struggles because they have felt able to share with the group."

"This has given me a lot of ideas about how to involve youth workers in the curriculum."

Challenges

Some partnerships have encountered problems and challenges when delivering work in partnership. Often, these connected specifically to circumstances related to COVID: different views on guidance and risk; less face to face contact; access to school building (in some areas); delays and stop/start nature of the work due to lockdowns; distraction of alternative certification assessments for schools; fatigue with online meetings and delivery.

"This was a very difficult programme to deliver because we just didn't get permission to work in the schools."

"The negative has been the ongoing pressure on schools / staff due to Covid reducing the school's ability to work with others."

More general challenges in relation to partnership include:

- Communication need to communicate often and clearly, especially in new, untested partnerships where differences in perspective and approach can be stumbling blocks
- Short term nature of the funding processes to support partnership working need investment and it's harder to justify the investment for short-term projects
- Slow to get going clarifying responsibilities and ensuring a consistent approach takes time
- · Clear rules around data sharing and privacy
- Finding safe, youth-friendly digital platforms for delivery that are accessible to all
- · Logistical complexities of geography

Challenges that relate specifically to collaboration between youth work and schools include:

- Difficulties with establishing relationships with schools at the outset
- Limited opportunities for joint planning with many schools
- Formal and informal educators see things differently and that can cause tensions
- Teachers are busy and some don't see youth work partnerships as a priority – slows things down
- Youth work is not seen by some schools as a contributor to Curriculum for Excellence – it's seen as additional and therefore some schools are reluctant to prioritise young people having access to youth work during the school day

"Relationships are connected with one individual in school – when that person moves on, you are back to square one again."

"There's no clear route into schools. It's massively time consuming trying to find a way in. Once you find the right person, things move along fine."

"You tend to get passed around from one person to the next in school. School 'gatekeepers' are often protective of staff and don't differentiate between commercial offers and funded statutory and voluntary sector service providers."

Despite the challenges, most youth work organisations involved in the process are optimistic about the opportunities this funding represents for the future. They believe that partnerships, especially those where organisations invest for the long term, will help to ensure that support for young people is more timely, coherent and better tailored to meet their needs. Many say this kind of investment is crucial, both to embed the best of partnership practice and to offer young people the continuity and quality of service they deserve. They are motivated by the potential for partnership to make services more inclusive, equitable and connected – and they notice how strong collaborative working to meet the needs of young people can also lead to enhanced services in other connected areas – for example in family and adult learning.

YouthLink Scotland's Youth Work and Schools Partnerships Team, funded by the Scottish Government through the Scottish Attainment Challenge, will continue to work with both the youth work and the formal education sector to:

- Develop frameworks and tools to support partnership working and impact measurement
- Share positive examples of partnership in practice and gather evidence of the impact of youth work on attainment
- Create opportunities for information sharing and dialogue between youth work practitioners (statutory and third sector) and formal educators
- Develop capacity-building approaches with a particular focus on joint planning and evaluation
- Facilitate practitioner enquiry processes to build shared vision and co-design new processes to support partnership between youth work and schools

More information about the work of the Youth Work and Schools Partnerships Team can be found here: Youth Work & the Attainment Challenge (youthlinkscotland.org)

What we've heard from partners delivering projects supported through the Youth Work Education Recovery Fund reflects the potential and the challenges of collaborative work between youth work and schools in the wider system. It's clear that funding of this kind can help support more equal and effective partnerships. However, it also demonstrates that ongoing support is needed across the system to develop and consistently embed effective collaborative practice. This will continue to be part of our national programme focus at YouthLink Scotland – mirroring the refreshed mission for the Scottish Attainment Challenge which recognises the important role that youth work can play in education recovery, accelerating progress and ultimately improving outcomes for all young people.



Youth Work Education Recovery Fund Awards by Local Authority

Local Authority	Lead Partner	Awarded Amount
Aberdeen City	Aberdeen City Council	£43,350.00
Aberdeenshire	Aberdeenshire Council	£60,000.00
Angus	Showcase the Street	£37,736.00
Argyll and Bute	Argyll and Bute Council - Community Learning Service	£39,856.00
Argyll and Bute	Oban Youth Cafe	£28,190.00
City of Edinburgh	Muirhouse Youth Development Group	£38,043.00
City of Edinburgh	The Broomhouse Centre t/a SPACE	£59,511.00
City of Edinburgh	Citadel Youth Centre	£20,000.00
City of Edinburgh	Friends of the Award (Edinburgh and the Lothians)	£32,659.00
City of Edinburgh	Deaf Action	£59,835.00
Clackmannanshire	Clackmannanshire Council	£59,669.00
Dumfries and Galloway	Dumfries & Galloway Council- Youth Work Service	£59,328.00
Dundee City	The Prince's Trust Scotland	£35,208.00
Dundee City	Dundee City Council	£68,318.00
East Ayrshire	Field Studies Council	£41,125.00
East Ayrshire	Centrestage Communities Ltd	£30,900.00
East Ayrshire	YMCA Plus Kilmarnock	£45,546.00
East Dunbartonshire	East Dunbartonshire Council	£35,000.00
East Lothian	East Lothian Council	£60,000.00
East Renfrewshire	East Renfrewshire Council	£44,008.00
Falkirk	Community Learning and Development Service, Children's Services, Falkirk Council	£45,436.00
Fife	Fife Council	£24,257.00
Fife	Clued Up Project	£34,682.00
Fife	Fife Council	£26,762.00
Fife	Kirkcaldy YMCA	£55,103.00
Fife	Fife Council	£35,140.00
Glasgow	Govan Youth Information Project	£21,793.00
Glasgow	Junction 12	£45,826.00
Glasgow	The Urban Fox Programme	£45,910.00
Glasgow	The Hut (SCIO) (formerly Temple Shafton Youth Project)	£22,741.00
Glasgow	Youth Community Support Agency (YCSA)	£59,971.00

Glasgow	Glasgow Kelvin College	£20,822.00
Glasgow	Glasgow Life	£60,000.00
Glasgow	Glasgow Watersports Limited	£40,064.00
Glasgow	The Village Storytelling Centre	£58,252.00
Glasgow	Toonspeak Young People's Theatre	£59,460.00
Glasgow	The Outward Bound Trust	£41,479.00
Highland	Youth Highland	£60,004.00
Highland	High Life Highland	£56,957.00
Inverclyde	Inverclyde Council	£35,582.00
Midlothian	Midlothian Council	£27,874.00
Moray	Moray Council	£59,055.00
North Ayrshire	North Ayrshire Council	£59,735.00
North Ayrshire	National Galleries of Scotland	£60,000.00
North Lanarkshire	North Lanarkshire Council	£31,704.00
North Lanarkshire	Getting Better Together Ltd	£21,750.00
North Lanarkshire	YMCA Bellshill & Mossend	£59,069.00
North Lanarkshire	Venture Scotland	£57,680.00
Orkney Islands	Community Learning and Development, Orkney Islands Council	£59,850.00
Perth and Kinross	YMCA Tayside on behalf of the Perth & Kinross Strategic Youth Work Partnership	£84,400.00
Renfrewshire	Renfrewshire Council	£100,000.00
Scottish Borders	YouthBorders	£59,781.00
Shetland Islands	Shetland Islands Council - Youth and Employability Service	£49,593.00
South Ayrshire	South Ayrshire Council CLD	£59,777.00
South Lanarkshire	Regenfx Youth Trust	£51,096.00
South Lanarkshire	Youth, Family, and Community Learning Service	£43,362.00
South Lanarkshire	Youth, Family and Community Learning Service - South Lanarkshire Council	£27,903.00
South Lanarkshire	Youth, Family, and Community Learning Service (Hamilton Locality)	£34,963.00
Stirling	Stirling Council - Youth Participation Team	£71,096.00
Stirling	The Conservation Volunteers	£38,812.00
West Dunbartonshire	West Dunbartonshire Council	£62,730.00
Western Isles	Cothrom Ltd.	£23,614.00
West Lothian	Rural & Urban Training Scheme (RUTS)	£20,204.00
West Lothian	CLD Youth Services	£36,800.00













