

YOUTH WORK IN SCOTLAND

Youth work organisations make a significant contribution to improving the lives and life chances of young people in Scotland by providing a wide range of opportunities to nurture their ambitions, their sense of achievement and the skills they need to succeed in life.

Youth work provides myriad opportunities for young people to learn to: develop confidence; foster creative thinking; acquire leadership and negotiation skills; learn to problem solve; work well with others and to build teams. In the current economic climate, these are the key skills that employers across Scotland are calling out for.

What is youth work?

- It is recognised that, in Scotland, youth work forms a key part of Community Learning and Development.
- Youth work has three essential and definitive features:
 - Young people choose to participate
 - The work must build from where young people are
 - It recognises the young person and the youth worker as partners in a learning process
- Youth work is a shared enterprise with young people that works in partnership with them on their turf and on their terms.
- It is unique in that, as a means of positively engaging with young people, it gets to parts where other services do not in terms of times, locations and client groups.

What does youth work do?

- Youth work in Scotland positively engages with more than 300,000 young people, helping to build their skills, self-confidence, resilience, and sense of community cohesion through a range of exciting activities and personal development programmes.
- The flexible framework that youth work operates in, and the many benefits it delivers for communities and young people, means that it is ideally placed to contribute to and deliver on a range of Scottish Government policy agendas, including:

GIRFEC
Curriculum for Excellence
More Choices More Chances

16 Plus Activity Agreements
Local Citizenship initiatives
Participative Democracy programmes

What does youth work look like?

Youth work provides a raft of activities and opportunities, from clubs and groups where young people can meet in a safe environment to very targeted interventions aimed at those most in need and furthest from education or the employment market.

Youth work has many guises and takes place in a range of different types of locations and in a variety of different practices. The range, reach and diversity of the youth work sector in Scotland is staggering and includes the following:

- Work in Schools
- Work with Unemployed Young People
- Outdoor Education
- International Work
- Street Work or Detached Youth Work
- Home School Partnerships
- Transitional Programmes
- Youth Literacy Work
- Work with Ethnic Minorities
- Anti-sectarianism and Anti-violence Initiatives
- Intergenerational Work
- Accredited Programmes

- Senior Phase CfE Options
- Arts, Music and Drama Groups
- Holiday Schemes/Youth Exchanges
- Inclusion on Youth Issues
- Youth Participation and Citizenship Activities
- Youth Health Issues
- Sure Start and Youth Parenting Programmes
- Special Needs and Disabilities
- Diversity and Equality Issues
- Environmental Issues

Evidence to Support the Case for Youth Work

The Scottish Government is committed to supporting youth work and youth services, but there is still a need for much more direct and sustained investment that will allow the sector to properly support young people to achieve their full potential and make positive transitions into adulthood, employment and positive destinations.

Currently, negative public spending implications in Scotland following on from severe educational underachievement and disaffection are estimated to be around £1 billion per annum.

- A Scottish Government study estimated that a single generation of young people who are NEET (based on there being 35,000 Scottish 16-19 year olds in this category) costs £228 million in lower taxes and national insurance contributions, and £742 million in unpaid tax and benefit costs per year.¹
- In addition, the average cost of keeping one young person in a residential secure unit in Scotland is around £2,500 per week (£130,000 a year)², plus a further estimated amount of around £40,000 per young person in indirect costs to society incurred after an individual's release.³

These high costs to communities and society are in stark contrast to the fantastic value for money and social return on investment offered by youth work services that, for the many young people and communities they engage with every day, represent the ultimate form of preventative spend:

- The CashBack for Communities Youth Work Fund, administered by YouthLink Scotland, cost an average of just £9.50 per young person in 2008-9 and has positively engaged with more than 40,000 young people each year since its inception.⁴
- In addition, independent research carried out by Haldane Associates and Dundee University into a youth work peer mentoring pilot programme run by the YMCA Scotland showed a social return on investment of up to £13 for every £1 spent.⁵
- This ratio was further evidenced in the Scottish Government's own CLD Case Studies report in 2009.

The positive impact of youth work is that it reduces the number of young people likely to end up in a negative destination:

- Providing high quality, accessible youth work services across Scotland can reduce the need for acute spending on failure demand (remedial) services in the long run. It builds the capacity of young people to consider risk, make reasoned decisions and take control.
- Questionnaire and inspection evidence, drawn from CLD participants in 16 local authority areas, found that almost all young people who responded feel that they are better supported, are achieving more, are more active, more respected and responsible, and more included in their community. A majority of young people feel safer in their communities and healthier as a result of being involved in youth work.⁷

1 <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/01/28111819/0>

2 <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/youth/crimereview/summary.asp>

3 www.civitas.org.uk/crime/factsheet-YouthOffending.pdf

4 Based on analysis of the CashBack for Communities assessment tool (unpublished research by YouthLink Scotland)

5 YMCA Scotland Plus One Mentoring Peer Mentoring Scheme

6 <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/309017/0097292.pdf>

7 HMIE report 'Improving Scottish Education 2005-2008'