



About YouthLink Scotland

YouthLink Scotland is the national agency for youth work. We are a membership organisation, representing over 100 regional and national youth organisations from both the voluntary and statutory sectors. We champion the role and value of youth work and represent the interests and aspirations of both the voluntary and statutory sector.

Scotland's youth work sector is as rich and diverse as the nation itself. Our sector has a workforce in excess of 75,000 – including over 70,000 adult volunteers. We reach in excess of 380,000 young people in youth work opportunities each week. Youth Work has three essential and definitive features:

- Young people choose to participate
- Youth work must build from where young people are
- Youth work recognises the young person and the youth worker as partners in a learning process

The activity, venue, and approaches utilised to deliver this are varied – and include youth clubs, youth projects, specialist or targeted provision, social activism, outdoor learning, awards programmes, uniformed organisations, and democratic participation.

YouthLink Scotland champions the role and value of youth work, challenging government at national and local levels to invest in the development of the sector for the benefit of our young people. Our vision is of a nation which values its young people and their contribution to society, where young people are supported to achieve their potential.

As the national agency for youth work, and in our role as an intermediary we have endeavoured to respond to this response in the best interests of the youth work sector, however the views contained within this response may not be held by each of our individual members.

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

General Comments

YouthLink Scotland is supportive of the Scottish Government's Youth Employment Strategy and of the ambitions to increase and improve the pathways into the labour market for young people, especially for disadvantaged young people. Our belief is that the pathways to employment should work primarily for young people. The Apprenticeship Levy is a great opportunity to make the provision, participation and pay of Modern Apprentices in Scotland more equal. The following response focuses both on the opportunities for the youth work sector and for young people in Scotland.

In order to achieve wider ambitions of ensuring Scotland is the best place to grow up, of which youth work is a crucial element, we must ensure the youth work sector has access to

high quality development and training opportunities. A principle ambition of the *National Youth Work Strategy 2014-19* is to build workforce capacity. Furthermore, YouthLink Scotland's strategic plan aims to create a workforce that is confident, skilled, well led and effective.¹ Youth work in Scotland engages over 75,000 people as volunteers and paid staff. As part of this, the MA in Youth Work gives a clear pathway for young people, many of whom will have volunteered as youth workers to embark on a career in youth work.

Furthermore, the shared ambition of the Scottish Government, YouthLink Scotland and the wider youth work sector to offer youth work opportunities for all young people in Scotland that are accessible, equitable and inclusive² necessitates that there are more skilled youth work practitioners in Scotland. The MA in Youth Work provides a clear pathway for increasing the number of confident and qualified youth workers.

Another key element of the National Youth Work Strategy is putting young people at the heart of policy making. To this end, YouthLink Scotland suggests that the Scottish Government should endeavour to capture the views of young people currently engaged in Modern Apprenticeships. The National Society of Apprentices Scotland offers a forum in which to do this.

Q1. Should the Government's commitment to 30,000 Modern Apprenticeships starts a year by 2020 a) be maintained or b) be increased?

YouthLink Scotland welcomes the Scottish Government's ambition to increase the number of Modern Apprenticeships to 30,000 by 2020 and the increased pathways into the labour market this will provide for young people. The quality of these opportunities is paramount and must not be compromised. To this end, YouthLink Scotland believes the number of apprenticeships committed to should be maintained at 30,000 in order to sustain high levels of quality.

Q2. Should Apprenticeship Levy funding support growth in the number of Graduate Level Apprenticeships in Scotland?

YouthLink Scotland believes that Graduate Level Apprenticeships would be beneficial for building the workforce capacity of the youth work sector.

People engaged in youth work training or qualifications tend to be older which often means they have more commitments outside of their studies. A more flexible pathway to get a youth work qualification would successfully widen access to the profession and ensure those interested in pursuing a career in youth work can gain appropriate qualifications. This will also allow upskilling of the current youth work workforce.

Q3. Should Apprenticeship Levy funding be used to establish a flexible skills fund to support wider workforce development?

YouthLink Scotland would be supportive of funding to facilitate upskilling the youth work sector. Of particular benefit would be funding to develop and host digital skills development for youth workers aged over 25. This training would align with SCQF level 6 Digital (for example Information Literacy, Network Literacy). This is a critical skill for youth work

¹ *YouthLink Scotland Strategy*, <http://www.youthlinkscotland.org/Index.asp?MainID=19180&UserID=1479>

² *National Youth Work Strategy 2014-19*, <http://bit.ly/2aJ92Ql>

practitioners to engage with and currently there are limited funded opportunities to do so. Ensuring the provision of learning opportunities for staff and volunteers to improve their competence and confidence in using digital technology and social media is one of the Digitally Agile CLD National Principles.

The previous CLD Upskilling Programme funded by the Scottish Government between 2009 and 2011 had proven impact on increasing practitioners' confidence, skills, knowledge and understanding.³ Dedicated funding from the Apprenticeship Levy to build on the success and learning from this programme would again stimulate sector enthusiasm and strategic incorporation of CPD.

Q4. Should Apprenticeship Levy funding be used to support the expansion of Foundation Apprenticeships?

It is critical that Foundation Apprenticeship pathways function for the young people they are designed to support. They must be flexible and target the young people who are furthest away from employment.

Anecdotal evidence has shown us that it is often high achieving pupils who take up Foundation Apprenticeships in order to boost their personal statements for university admissions. YouthLink Scotland believes that if Foundation Apprenticeships were taken up by those who were unlikely to move onto further or higher education the impact of the scheme would be greater.

YouthLink Scotland believes that the Scottish Government should explore how Apprenticeship Levy funding could ensure that Foundation Apprenticeships are targeted more efficiently to young people who are furthest from the labour market.

Q5. Should Apprenticeship Levy funding be used to help unemployed people move into employment, and to help meet the workforce needs of employers?

With ever tightening funding budgets and increasing pressure to provide services to those in need, the third sector is always looking for ways to innovate. Using the Apprenticeship Levy to boost the number of Modern Apprentices working for charities, social enterprises and voluntary organisations would increase the capacity and capabilities of the third sector in Scotland. This aligns with the ambitions of Developing the Young Workforce to encourage more employers, particularly small and medium enterprises to participate in the MA scheme. This will also allow more young people to begin a career in community development and social justice, a path that often favours those with the resources to dedicate to volunteering.

YouthLink Scotland believes this could be carried out through a scheme similar to Community Jobs Scotland through SCVO.

Q6. Are there any additional suggestions on how Apprenticeship Levy funding might be used?

YouthLink Scotland has previously raised the issue of lower pay for apprentices under 18 years. This continues to be a deterrent to young people applying for apprenticeships. In the

³ Blake Stevenson, *CLD Upskilling Programme: Evaluation and Final Report*, p. 17, <http://www.gov.scot/resource/doc/1046/0121344.pdf>

BIS *Apprenticeship Pay Survey 2014* younger apprentices were found to be more likely to be earning less than the national minimum wage (NMW). Nearly a quarter of those aged 16-24 were being paid at non-compliant levels (13 per cent).⁴ Not only is this a deterrent for young people, but it is also a deterrent for employers who have committed to paying minimum wage or are accredited Living Wage employers. Current funding from Skills Development Scotland does not allow employers to pay apprentices minimum wage. One local authority will not be offering MA in Youth Work in the foreseeable future as they do not have the additional budget to top up SDS funding in order to pay the minimum wage. As an accredited Living Wage employer, YouthLink Scotland would support further efforts to increase the number of Modern Apprentices receiving a living wage,⁵ including those under 18.

Furthermore, the BIS report showed the level of NMW non-compliance is higher for those apprentices in fields that currently engage a higher percentage of women (e.g. hairdressing, children's care, health and social care).⁶ This disproportionate impact on young women is not in line with the Scottish Government's statements that equality and social justice are key elements of a strong economy.

The Apprenticeship Levy presents an opportunity to fund further initiatives that aim to make Modern Apprentices more equal for all young people in provision, participation and pay. YouthLink Scotland would be supportive of funding initiatives to reduce the unequal participation in Modern Apprenticeships by young people from BME communities, disabled young people and care leavers as committed in the Skills Development Scotland *Equalities Action Plan*. Additionally we would welcome funding initiatives to reduce the apprentice gender pay gap caused in large part by stark occupational segregation.

Improved support for Modern Apprentices outside of the workplace would likely increase the retention and success rates. Mentorship or coaching would also be beneficial to young people's mental health and career progression. This aligns with the aim of *Developing the Young Workforce* around providing better careers advice and would also contribute to increasing the retention of apprentices.

For further information please contact Emily Beever, Senior Development Officer (Policy and Research). ebeever@youthlinkscotland.org or 0131 313 6815.

⁴ *BIS Apprenticeship Pay Survey 2014*, p. 161, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-pay-survey-2014>

⁵ Living Wage rate as calculated by the Living Wage Foundation <http://www.livingwage.org.uk/what-living-wage>

⁶ *BIS Apprenticeship Pay Survey 2014*, p.133, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-pay-survey-2014>