



Background

In recent years there has been growing interest across the Youth Work sector in developing an evidence base to demonstrate the impact of practice. For many practitioners the value of youth work in terms of improving the life experiences of young Scots is a given. However, there exists limited evidence to support these common assumptions. There is consistent and wide-ranging recognition of the significant impact youth workers can make to creating positive outcomes for young people. The overall value of this work is however difficult to discern and indicators of change often fail to capture the tangible direct impact on the lives and lifestyles of participating young people.

- In 2014 the Edinburgh Youth Work Consortium in collaboration with the University of Edinburgh secured resources to undertake a critical literature review of Universal Youth Work. The [findings of this research](#) were published in April 2015.

“Universal youth work has the potential to contribute to a range of important outcomes and achievements for young people, in particular health and wellbeing, educational attainment and employment. [That said,] the youth work sector need to be more informed about the nature and purpose of their impact through ongoing longitudinal research.” (2015, p.1)

- The launch of this document was uniformly well-received across the sector as the first major research publication on this topic to be published in Scotland. This was an opportunity to engage interested parties and a series of workshops were held to identify what should happen next. It was agreed to establish a Scottish Youth Work Research Steering Group. The group then secured £25k of funds from within the youth work sector and from public sector supporter and private individuals to develop a national research programme.
- We have produced a [Youth Work Research Overview](#): this document is designed to give an overview of the research landscape of relevance to the youth work sector in Scotland. It includes details of research which has been completed, which is progress, or is in planning. It also includes the potential impact and implications of this research for the youth work sector.
- The SYWRSG has identified three main strands of research to pursue:
 - Utilise the Growing up in Scotland Study for Youth Work related questions
 - Consider existing data within Birth Cohort Studies to design a quantitative retrospective study of youth work connection to long term life outcomes
 - Commission qualitative research of contemporary universal youth work practice to further the evidence found in the Literature Review.

Promoting Quantitative Analysis in Education

Growing up in Scotland – Youth Work Questions

Status: Ongoing

Youth Work Data Report: Spring 2018 (Subject to funding)

Growing Up in Scotland is the longitudinal research study tracking the lives of children and their families in Scotland. Thousands of children and young people have taken part in the survey since birth (they are now in their early teenage years). Whilst most youth work organisations will have a ton of stories about the impact of youth work on young people they work with, it is difficult and costly to track the outcomes of youth work

on a national scale. Working with the GUS team gives us that option. There are two ways we are working with GUS. The first is to analyse the findings from previous surveys and the second to shape future sweeps of the survey – we have now agreed a small number of questions that will be included in future waves of the survey. The findings could be used to track the routes into participation in youth work and may point to groups of young people who are excluded from taking part. This is an exciting development and will contribute to a longer term view of the impact on young people of taking part in youth work.

Birth Cohort Retrospective Study

Status: In planning

The SYWRSG is currently planning use of an analysis of the Twenty-07 Glasgow cohort study, and an initial bivariate analyses based on baseline (1987) data has been completed. The group is also considering an analysis of youth work questions from the 1970 Birth Cohort Study (BCS70), similar to that undertaken recently in the [Be\(ing\) Prepared Study](#). Further work is currently underway about the potential value of birth cohort data to contemporary youth work.

Evidence on What is Working Effectively

Universal Youth Work – Transformative Evaluation

Status: Ongoing – to report in September 2018

The purpose of the qualitative project is to investigate the impact of Universal Youth Work in a community setting through analysing data gathered through a participative evaluation project engaging youth work practitioners as researchers. We have three youth work organisations from Scotland involved in this research. They will work alongside young people to record their experiences of participating in youth work. This will be achieved through practitioners working face-to-face with young people and engaging them in a conversation geared towards jointly creating ‘Significant Change Stories’. The project will utilise an established Transformative Evaluation (TE) Process which draws on the theoretical model of *Appreciative Enquiry*.

The project is a collaboration involving members of SYWRSG and University of St. Mark & St. John Plymouth who are training, advising and supporting the youth workers engaged in the project. The work being undertaken across Scotland is a parallel project building on a broader European project funded through Erasmus Plus which includes partners from England, Italy, France, Estonia and Finland. This will enable some comparison with other countries, particularly England.

Improving Knowledge Utilisation

Members of the SYWRSG includes interested individuals from: NHS Health Scotland, NHS Lothian, University of Glasgow, University of Dundee, University of Edinburgh, LAYC, EYWC, Youth Scotland, CLDSC, Education Scotland, Scottish Government, YouthLink Scotland.

The group are interested in building relationship between academics, researchers and the field of practice. Conversations are underway about how undergraduate and postgraduate research studies can reflect the needs of the field; and how this information is disseminated to practitioners.

The youth work research overview document is one step in helping the youth work sector access current research and evidence. Further resource is required to create a fit for purpose digital solution which is desired by the group.