

CELEBRITY CHEF TOM KITCHIN BACKS NEW NATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO SAVE YOUTH WORK SERVICES AS FIGURES REVEAL MILLIONS IN CUTS

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Youth work leaders in Scotland have launched a major national new campaign on Tuesday, calling for ALL political parties to ensure significant investment into the youth work sector.

The #InvestInYouthWork campaign is supported by youth work organisations across Scotland and has been launched with Celebrity Chef Tom Kitchin, who is a passionate advocate for the life changing impact of youth work.

The #InvestInYouthWork campaign are calling for:

- Return investment in youth work services to pre-austerity levels
- Strengthen the statutory basis for youth work services

As part of the launch, YouthLink Scotland, the national agency for youth work, has revealed the scale of the cuts.

According to Unison's recent report 'Youth Services at Breaking Point', youth service spending in Scotland has been cut by over £11 million in the last three years alone.

This report shows the continued trend of youth work cuts across Scotland's local authorities. In Unison's 2016 'Scotland's Damage' report, 83% of youth workers who responded to this survey said they had experienced cuts to budgets since 2010.

YouthLink Scotland's own member survey also shows a looming funding crisis in the sector. 70% of youth workers who responded said their budgets had decreased in the last three years, with 50% saying they had experienced severe cuts to funding.

Also, during this period 68% of youth workers said there had been cuts to staffing, impacting frontline services.

Within the survey comments from youth workers included:

"Funding projects out of my own pocket so as not to disappoint young people."

One youth worker made the plea: "Please do something proactive about it! Before it's too late."

Another youth worker commented that cuts to services in their area has led to there being "no opportunities left for these kids."

Commenting on the launch of the campaign at Citadel Youth Centre in Leith, Tim Frew, CEO of YouthLink Scotland, the national agency for youth work said:

"The positive impact of youth work is beyond doubt. However, it's clear from the figures that the funding being allocated to youth work is being reduced each year at local level. This is having a detrimental impact on many young people who are not able to access services they need. It also has a knock-on impact on the voluntary sector provision of youth work.

"This is a real tipping point for youth work in Scotland. We are calling on politicians of ALL parties to work with the sector to restore youth work budgets and strengthen the statutory basis for providing youth work services."

Celebrity Chef, Tom Kitchin, who works with Citadel Youth Centre, offering training opportunities in his restaurant to local youngsters said:

"My message to national and local politicians is, without youth work all over Scotland, the consequences are disastrous. Youth work offers safe spaces for young people, and helps them to go on and achieve great things in life. Some of the projects I have done with Citadel have been so rewarding, I've seen the incredible journey some young people take. It's massively important to invest in youth work."

Young people in Scotland are affected by the cuts to services, Joel Meekison, Youth Ambassador for #IWill explains:

"What's crucial to local and national government is that, if they want the generation of tomorrow to be one which is confident, passionate, making the changes our generation wants to see in here in Scotland, then they need to invest in youth work up and down the country."

This national campaign is supported by youth work leaders across the country, who believe now is the time to act to save youth work services:

Frank Thomson, Vice Chair of the Local Authority Youth Work Managers Network said:

"The impact of youth work cannot be underestimated. Youth work has never been as important as it is now in helping equip young people with the skills they need to be well and to stay positive about their future."

Barry Fisher, Director, The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scotland said:

"We are delighted to join YouthLink Scotland's campaign to #InvestInYouthWork. Youth work makes a real difference to lives of young people across the country and we should all care deeply about ensuring that the sector is able to support the demand for the diverse range of services that it delivers."

Ian McLaughlan, Chief Executive of Youth Scotland, said:

"This is a time when we need local youth work more than ever. The pressures and expectations on community-based youth work have grown throughout austerity. All of this life-changing work has value; now is the time to recognise that value. Now is the time to #InvestInYouthWork."

Kerry Reilly, Chief Executive, YMCA Scotland:

“Investing in youth work is an investment in the future of young people and our local communities. If Scotland truly aspires to be ‘the best place in the world to grow up’ then youth work is an essential partner in making this happen. We need to ensure that funding is in place to deliver this for all our young people.”

Research shows that investing in youth work leads to a significant reduction in mental health issues, youth offending and substance abuse, while it also increases educational attainment and leads to increased earnings later in life. This amounts to a significant contribution of at least £656 million every year to the Scottish economy, representing a return of £7 for every £1 invested in youth work.

Cutting youth work funding will adversely affect all these social factors and more for an entire generation of young people. This is why now is the time to #InvestInYouthWork.

Ends

For interview and media enquiries contact Sarah Paterson, Communications and Public Affairs Manager at YouthLink Scotland on 07804 603762 or 0131 313 2488 and at spaterson@youthlinkscotland.org

Notes to editors:

Organisations attended the event included: Girlguiding Scotland, YMCA Scotland, Local Authority Youth Work Manager’s Network, Scottish Youth Parliament, Youth Scotland, Duke of Edinburgh Award Scotland, #Iwill

For more information on the campaign: www.youthlinkscotland.org

For more information about Unison’s reports: Charlotte Jeffries C.Jeffries@Unison.co.uk 0207 121 5466

Unison Scotland Damage Series Report May 2016: <https://unison-scotland.org/growing-pains-a-survey-of-youth-workers/>

Research cited above relates to the 2016 Hall Aitken report: Social and economic value of youth work in Scotland: <https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/media/1254/full-report-social-and-economic-value-of-youth-work-in-scotland.pdf>