



Shetland Islands Council Youth and Employability Services



Visible Impact

Teachers and young people in Shetland have a clear view on the difference that resident youth workers are making in their schools.

Youth Development Workers are based in secondary schools in Shetland where they deliver development programmes that complement other learning opportunities, supporting young people to overcome challenges, develop a wide range of skills and gain accreditation for their learning. Kevin Gillick and Loren Manson Youth Development Workers in Anderson High School and Brae High school work closely with school leadership teams and young people to build individual learning plans and design and deliver a range of targeted programmes to meet needs in each context. This year, programmes included:

Enhanced Transitions: encompassing a summer school (this year offered via a range of online learning opportunities), a breakfast club and nurture groups.

School Splits: designed to meet the needs pupils aged 12+ with a history of poor attendance at school and social emotional issues, School Splits offers a personal learning pathway which combines elements of the core curriculum alongside additional vocational activities out with the school.

Club Achieve (The Prince's Trust): where young people in S3 and S4 work towards an N4 in employability skills.

Widening access to **Duke of Edinburgh's Award.**

In addition, the youth workers have facilitated the co-design and development of Equality and Diversity strategies within the schools and supported the development of pupil councils to enable young people to play a more active role in school improvement and decision-making. 21 young people at Anderson High School undertook training this year to complete Participative Democracy Certificate, building their confidence and skills to lead consultation processes, and engage other young people as agents of change in their school community.

Strong relationships have been established between the youth workers, teachers and young people in both of the schools, and plans are in place to continue to develop provision of youth work services in the schools next year to reach new groups of young people and their families, and extend the range of accredited qualifications on offer to young people. There is an interest in developing support for young carers, and also in widening access to the service more generally:

“ I would like to see it being something that a wider range of learners in the school have contact with - at the moment it is specific groups or individuals but hopefully as more projects, qualifications and groups as organised and coordinated through Youth Work then we can look at the groups of learners who rarely have the opportunity to be involved in things or who rarely put themselves forward for things because of confidence or self-esteem and see how over time we can get them more involved. ”

Teacher,
Anderson High School



Recent feedback from teaching staff and from young people suggests that they place a high value on the contribution that youth work is making within their school community, and recognise the positive impact that this can have on the quality of relationships, on individual achievement and attainment and on school culture.

Teachers attribute the success of youth work in the school setting to the visibility, energy and commitment of the youth workers involved, as well as the quality of the programmes they are offering. Young people say they feel more supported, are more likely to ask for help when they need it and better equipped to deal with setbacks. Most feel more confident to meet new people, work in groups and express their own ideas and opinions. Some say the support that youth work offers has made a big difference to the way they feel about school and how they manage in the classroom.

“I have gained more confidence because before I started breakfast club, I would be really nervous about coming to school and sometimes refuse to go. It has also helped me with being able to work in a group with other people.”

S2, Breakfast Club volunteer,
Brae High School

“It’s made me feel like I’ve actually achieved something. It’s made me want to do better in school.”

S4 pupil, Club Achieve Participant,
Anderson High School

“[The youth work service is] very important, invaluable - has helped and supported so many pupils who may otherwise slip through the net. More time is available to support certain pupils with work done by youth worker and we’ve seen increased attendance and attainment with some pupils who are becoming more confident and who feel more supported by the school.”

Teacher,
Brae High School

“Youth work has made a big difference – brought together different groups of pupils and staff to talk about various issues. Many pupils that before perhaps didn’t feel they had a voice now have one and [the school is] more inclusive for all.”

Teacher,
Anderson High School

“youth work has been really transformative for the school as we develop wider opportunities, pupil voice and LGBT+ education in our school improvement planning.”

Valerie Nicolson,
Head Teacher, Anderson High School

“Our Youth Development Worker has played a vital role in many school improvement initiatives in our school, such as, tackling the attainment gap by supporting increased attendance and taking an active role in our pupil support and safeguarding teams... and contributing to many wider achievement opportunities.”

Logan Nicolson
Head Teacher, Brae High School

