

## Development of the Youth Work Skills Framework

This paper outlines the process undertaken by YouthLink Scotland to develop the Youth Work Skills Framework.

### Background

In 2015, the [National Youth Work Outcomes Model](#) was published. Developed by the sector, this framework supports young people to recognise and articulate their development across a range of outcomes. It also provides a common language for youth workers to plan, to self-evaluate for improvement and to measure and communicate impact.

As part of the Scottish Attainment Challenge, YouthLink Scotland was funded to deliver a Youth Work and Schools Partnerships Programme. This programme, delivered from October 2018, aims to strengthen collaboration between youth work and schools, to close the poverty related attainment gap. Within this work, a need was identified to find a shared language to work with schools. Skills was suggested as a shared language because skills form an essential part of the national youth work outcomes. In developing skills, young people acquire the building blocks on which the youth work outcomes are achieved. Being able to coherently articulate and measure the key skills that young people develop through youth work would strengthen understanding of youth work's role and contribution to Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) and the Scottish Attainment Challenge, and provide a common language to collaborate.

Findings from HM inspections also influenced the desire to focus on skills within youth work. Common themes from school inspections indicated that more could be done to help children and young people reflect on, value and track skills development. Additionally, [Improving life chances and empowering communities Community learning and development in Scotland: Findings from inspection evidence 2016-19 \(January 2020\)](#) also identified that *"in a few local authorities, the tracking and monitoring of young people's achievement is not sufficiently systematic"*.

In June 2019 YouthLink Scotland began discussions with the Scottish Youth Work Leaders Forum around the skills agenda. Skills Development Scotland presented to the Forum in December and members agreed that YouthLink Scotland would establish a short life working group to consider the possible development of a youth work skills framework, to build on the National Youth Work Outcomes Framework.

### Development of the Youth Work Skills Framework

YouthLink Scotland established a short life working group, which met for the first time in March 2020. The working group had representation from YouthLink Scotland's Local Authority Youth Work Managers Network (LAYWM) and National Voluntary Youth Work Organisations Network (NVYWOS), the Awards Network, Education Scotland and the SCQF Partnership. The working group agreed that the development of a youth work skills framework would support youth workers' work with young people. It would also strengthen the sector's role within the learner journey, as part of CfE and in the employability and skills agenda.

Northern Star Consultants were commissioned to:

- Research and collate existing evidence regarding the key skills developed through youth work in Scotland
- Develop an accessible skills framework for the youth work sector
- Incorporate revisions following comment from the working group and consultation with wider youth work sector
- Identify and collate existing skills frameworks and map where youth work contributes

The working group provided feedback, advice and guidance on the draft framework in May 2020. YouthLink Scotland consulted the wider youth work sector in June 2020. Revisions were made to the framework by Northern Star, with support from the stakeholder working group.

Additional materials and guidance were developed by YouthLink Scotland, to support use of the skills framework. This includes case studies from the sector and video clips demonstrating the development of skills through youth work experiences. A flyer, explaining the framework, was produced to facilitate awareness raising with school colleagues and an interactive, downloadable PDF is also included.

The final resource was approved by LAYWM and NYVOS and subsequently launched at the Scottish Youth Work Leaders Forum in December 2020.

### Youth Work Skills Framework

The framework is hosted on YouthLink Scotland's website. Its purpose is to support youth workers in providing opportunities for young people to develop and apply skills, to recognise and articulate these skills across contexts and throughout the learner journey. The framework also offers a common language to collaborate with partners, including schools. This may include planning across the curriculum, Developing the Young Workforce (DYW), and tracking and monitoring of achievement.

There are 11 key skills identified in the framework. A broad definition of skills is used in the framework and includes what would traditionally be classed as skills as well as behaviours and qualities. Users can click on each of the skills on the website, or through the interactive PDF, to gain more information on the skill.

The framework builds on the National Youth Work Outcomes, identifying the skills which form an essential part of the outcomes. The skills framework identifies and explains what a young person is able to do, and the youth work outcomes explain the difference this makes for young people. Each skill has therefore been mapped to the relevant youth work outcomes. The framework also shows how each skill contributes to CfE and My World of Work. This mapping is primarily intended to help youth workers support young people to recognise the transferable nature of skills development, and profile across contexts. Mapping will also facilitate joint-working with partners in formal education and the wider skills/employability agenda.

### Further developments and supporting use of the framework

YouthLink Scotland held an online information session for youth workers in March 2021, to explain the ways the framework could be used. We have also offered to support additional, local conversations.

The Youth Work Skills Framework has potential to be a strong tool that strengthens recognition of youth work's role within CfE and the skills agenda. YouthLink Scotland has therefore been promoting the framework in discussions to support collaboration with formal education and DYW colleagues, nationally and locally. It has already been helpful in demonstrating youth work's contribution to the development of skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work, as a core element of CfE.

[Curriculum for Excellence Building the Curriculum 4](#) demonstrates the central place skills development has within the curriculum – and as essential ingredients to help young people to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. Building the Curriculum 4 is also clear that skills should be developed across the curriculum and in all the contexts and settings where young people are learning. It also explains the need for young people to be aware of, and understand, the value of the skills that they are developing, across all stage and settings, including in the wider community. This emphasises the need for this resource for the sector – supporting young people to recognise and track their progress.

The [CfE Refreshed Narrative](#) reinforces understanding that the curriculum is planned and experienced across four contexts. Personal learning and achievement is one of these contexts for learning. Youth work has a strong role to play in providing opportunities for personal learning and achievement, including working with [Awards Network](#) providers to recognise achievement. The Youth Work Skills Framework can help strengthen understanding of youth work's role in delivering opportunities for personal learning and achievement and the equal importance this should have as part of the totality of learning.

The framework also supports youth work's role within DYW. In essence, DYW aims to ensure children and young people have opportunities to develop the skills and experiences that prepare them for the world of work. It is also clear that young people should be able to profile skills in relation to their future career aspirations and pathways. YouthLink Scotland is working closely with Education Scotland DYW colleagues to further strengthen youth work's role within DYW, including the use of the skills framework.

As part of Scottish Attainment Challenge, YouthLink Scotland is working closely with formal education colleagues to support the use of skills as a common language to jointly plan and measure progress towards closing the poverty related attainment gap. Locally, YouthLink Scotland are engaged in conversations regarding tracking achievement of skills across school and community contexts.

YouthLink Scotland also worked with the SCQF Partnership to pilot online delivery of the My Skills My Future workshop and resource with a small group of youth workers. Once the resource is fully operational, online, we will seek to promote the opportunity more widely. This will provide an additional tool for youth workers to support skills focused reflection and profiling with young people. The SCQF Partnership have also included information about the Youth Work Skills Framework within their School Ambassadors Programme materials. This will help raise awareness about the skills young people develop through youth work and the contribution to attainment and achievement.

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