



Alexa Keen, Team Leader, Services for Young People CLD section, shares her perspective on the ingredients of successful partnership working between CLD youth work, third sector organisations, social work and schools in Perth and Kinross to support young people and tackle the attainment gap.

Local Authority youth work in Perth and Kinross is an integral part of the Children Families and Young People's Service, and we also work closely with the Through Care After Care Team and our Fieldwork Social Work teams to get the best outcomes for our young people. I think, when the service moved from Community Learning and was integrated within Social Work a few years ago, we were worried that our CLD approach might be overlooked. However, with hindsight, I realise that it has actually served to strengthen our voice at the table in decisions about support for young people. We are able to contribute to Child plans, Looked After care reviews, Children's Hearings and Child Protection.



“ The inclusion of Youth Work within Education and Children's services has had a huge impact within our communities. The drive for earlier intervention has allowed Youth Workers to focus on engaging with young people who are on the edge of statutory services to prevent further escalation in risk taking behaviours. The knowledge of resources at a local level has meant more young people being supported in their community and the skills youth workers have in relationship building has allowed for meaningful relationships to be established. Youth workers are seen very much part of young people's plans and offer long term support to young people within their community. ”

*Linda Richards,
Service Manager, Children, Families
and Young People Service*

We are also closely connected with colleagues in formal education. For many years, locality Youth Service staff have built strong relationships within schools. All staff attend Integrated Team Meetings in schools. I think our Directors of Education, Heads of Service and Service Managers truly have an understanding of the importance of youth work and how it can complement formal education and social work. Prior to the pandemic, our Director of Education often visited our base and engaged with our young people. Close relationships with education and social work allow a holistic approach to working with young people. We can design support together, and we also maintain a strong focus on attainment and awards like Hi5 and Youth Achievement, enhancing our offer to learners in a very tangible way.



“ The funding partners are keen that youth work providers are able to focus on the delivery of their services to young people rather than on an ongoing cycle of applying for funding and reporting annually. The structure of the funding is already enabling the agencies to learn from each other and grow stronger through training and sharing skills, experience and resources. ”

Bruce Renfrew, Trustee, Gannochy Trust

Close relationships with third sector partners are also fundamental to our effectiveness as a service. In 2019, the Strategic Youth Work Partnership, a funding collaboration between the Gannochy Trust and Perth and Kinross Council, made an initial 3-year investment of £900,000 in third sector local youth work agencies across five localities. The partnership has already had a significant impact, with nearly 2300 young people benefitting from 18,000 Universal Youth Work sessions in the first year of the programme. As the local authority youth work team, we work very closely with our third sector partners to support a range of local projects and opportunities, including the No one Left Behind

agenda. Building and maintaining relationships across the system is important, but joint planning and evaluation is essential to ensuring that our work with young people is effective. We work together with partners to clarify target outcomes for young people, and build in planned reviews to share with education or social work colleagues what the impact is for the young person. We also know when and who else to involve in a plan for a young person and are very good at making those connections within each locality. It's great to be able to work collaboratively to ensure that young people get the right kind of support at the right time. As the local authority youth work service we have a focus on Early and Effective Intervention for some of our most vulnerable young people. The service is targeted and based on referrals. Our third sector partners also offer a range of more universal early intervention activities and detached youth work. We come together to review referrals and agree on the best way forward. This also ensures that young people have continuity of support and can move between services, depending on their needs over time.





Recent collaborative work to support education recovery and renewal

When young people returned to school in August, a local authority youth service member of staff worked alongside a local third sector partner in each school location. CLD Services for Young People put together a wellbeing programme for young people in every secondary school in Perth and Kinross. This was tailored for young people in 3rd-6th year, with our Community Link colleagues delivering to 1st and 2nd years. Recruitment for this programme proved something of a challenge – we’d worked hard with partners to identify young people most likely to be in need of additional support on their return to school, but this turned out to be difficult to predict. Learning from this experience, and with additional funding support from Cashback, we’re developing a more diverse range support options for young people as schools re-open after the most recent lockdown. Again, this time we’re working with Education colleagues to collaborate with an even wider range of third sector partners including PKAVS and Perth Autism Society. Our focus will be on the many young people who are, for various reasons, disengaging from formal education. We’ll be offering services across every locality in Perth and Kinross and much of the support we offer will be based in the community, recognising that many young people will struggle to get back into school, at least initially.

We also now have some additional funding to support our Duke of Edinburgh’s Award team & Live Active Leisure to support our Primary School colleagues with recovery. Before Christmas, we ran a pilot programme where young people had the opportunity to work towards their John Muir award and the feedback was amazing.

Both teachers and children recognised the benefits of the approach for learning and for health and wellbeing – in particular re-establishing and strengthening relationships – both peer to peer and with teachers. So we’re co-designing and planning for this with colleagues in the Education team at the moment, and trying to determine where the need is greatest, so that we are ready to offer this as soon as schools reopen.

Based on my experience of the youth work service in Perth and Kinross, I’d say that the important ingredients of effective partnership working to meet the needs of young people and tackle the attainment gap are:

- **Leadership** – there is a recognition of the unique contribution that youth work can make across all services in the system.
- **Being clear and confident in our offer** as a youth work team. Careful attention to planning, programme design and evaluation all ensure that our offer is well-understood and taken seriously.
- **Pooling resources and expertise** - perhaps particularly as a rural authority, we make the most of all of the resources available to us, and rely on locality partners who know their communities best.
- **Strong relationships built over time** - there is a lot of trust and mutual respect here across the services. This helps with communication and effective partnership working, but it also makes it easier to take risks, learn from mistakes and stay alert and open to new / better ways of doing things.