

YouthLink Scotland Annual Report 2023/24

#InvestInYouthWork



YouthLink
Scotland

A word from our CEO and Board

Tim Frew & Angela Leitch CBE

It gives me great pleasure to bring this annual report to you for the financial year 2023-2024.



YouthLink Scotland as the national agency for youth work, celebrated our 21st anniversary last year. Our story of impact as the key intermediary organisation between government, public agencies and the sector, one to be proud of and we are well recognised by key public figures in this country and beyond.

Check out our [anniversary film](#).

The year to March 2024 was one of rapid change in the political and economic environment. We had a change of First Minister after Nicola Sturgeon's resignation, and a new Minister for Higher Education, Further Education and Veterans (with responsibility for youth work) Graeme Dey MSP and a further change in First Minister following Humza Yousaf's resignation in April 2024. The cost-of-living crisis and the economic outlook for the UK put a significant strain on the young people and families that youth work supports. It also created a challenging environment for charities and the public sector, with central funding from government to charities down by 30% overall. Government's focus on equality, opportunity and community resonated across the public and third sector, especially the focus on child poverty.

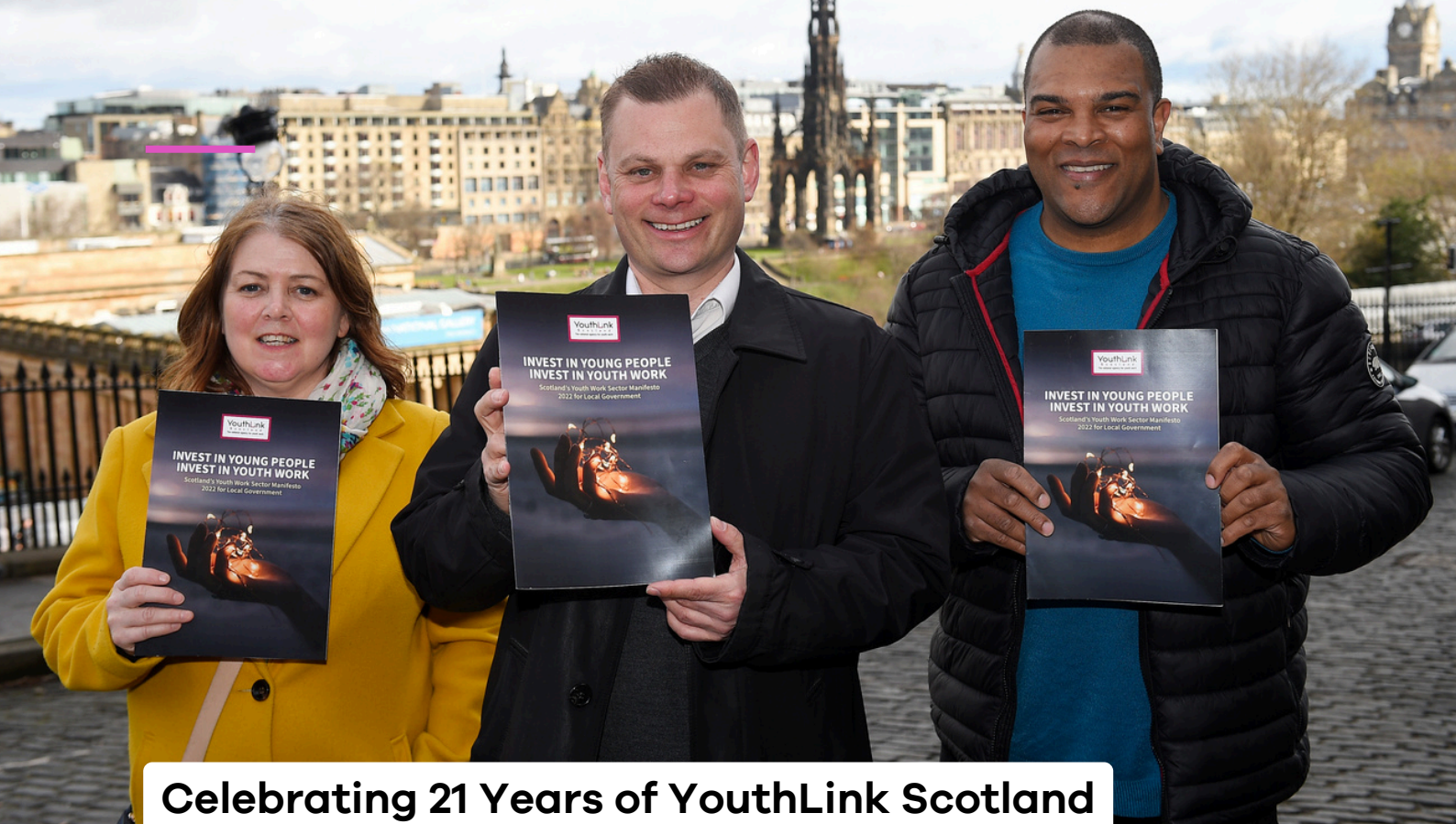
In this context, YouthLink Scotland's role continues to be a crucial one as we represent and advocate on behalf of our membership and the sector. We continued to work with government, other funders, and public agencies to lead high quality youth work throughout Scotland. In doing this we continue to address our three strategic outcomes as an organisation: attracting investment in youth work; developing and supporting the sector to deliver for young people; and improving the understanding of the value of youth work.

As we look forward, demand for youth work services will only continue and we are keen to explore the unique role that youth work has to play in prevention, especially in relation to child poverty, mental health and wellbeing and addressing educational inequalities through reform. We cannot allow the challenging economic environment to blunt our ambition to ensure all young people in Scotland have access to high quality youth work. YouthLink Scotland remains well-placed to continue its crucial role as the lead agency and key intermediary for the sector

Key Achievements 2023-24

- **Advocacy & Funding Partnerships:** Successfully advocated for increased investment, partnering with the Scottish Government on funding streams such as the Youth Work and Adult Learning Workforce Development Fund and the Youth Arts Open Fund.
- **Evidence & Impact Reports:** Demonstrated the value of key funding initiatives like Cashback for Communities, Social Isolation funding, and the Scottish Attainment Challenge CLD Tackling Child Poverty Fund.
- **Strengthened Networks & Membership:** Expanded our networks and welcomed new organisations, with 92% of survey respondents agreeing that we play a key role in cross-sector collaboration.
- **Publications & Policy Advocacy:** Addressed key policy areas, including child poverty and education reform, and contributed to the Scottish and UK Covid inquiries.
- **Link Magazine & National Conference:** The Link Magazine and National Conference on 'Impact and Influence' showcased sector progress, with successful contributions at the Digital Youth Work Conference.
- **Training & Capacity Building:** Delivered 2,557 learning places across 130 sessions and 68 themes, reaching 500 organisations. Nearly 1,000 online courses were completed
- **Youth Work Outcomes & Skills Framework:** Refreshed the framework with over 200 practitioners trained and developed new resources for youth work-school partnerships.
- **National Projects & Programmes:** Continued successful national initiatives like No Knives Better Lives, Action on Prejudice, iWill, YouthViP, and Action on Sectarianism.
- **Scotland's Young People's Forest:** This project won the Youth Champion Award at the Holyrood Climate Action Awards in 2023, recognising youth contributions to climate action.
- **Website & Digital Presence:** The new website, launched in April 2023, saw over 328,000 visits and 50,000 unique users, with over 8,300 downloads of resources and toolkits.
- **Campaigning & Advocacy:** Continued to build cross-party support in the Scottish Parliament, solidifying youth work's role in shaping policy.

- **Policy Contributions:** Responded to the Scottish Government's Independent review of CLD and hosted a successful policy convention on the Right to Youth Work.
- **Stronger Statutory Basis for Youth Work:** Advocated for a stronger statutory basis, gaining momentum in recent election manifestos and in our collaboration with the Open University Law School.
- **'Imagine a Man' Toolkit Launch:** Launched in May 2023, this toolkit addresses harmful masculinity, attracting media and political attention.
- **International Engagement:** Raised the profile of youth work through events like the Commonwealth Youth Work Conference and engagements with the European Council Symposium and delegations from the European Parliament, Finnish National Innovation Centre, and Tokyo's education department.
- **Research & Data Hub:** Continued growth with new research, including a study on mental health and wellbeing in Dumfries and Galloway, in partnership with the University of St Andrews and Northern Star.



Celebrating 21 Years of YouthLink Scotland

Last year we celebrated our 21st anniversary. Over the past two decades, we have become the national voice for youth work in Scotland, advocating for young people and the youth workers who support them, and creating a space for collaboration and innovation.

Our impact is evident in the words of key figures who have worked alongside us, and we thank them for their continued support. Here are a few of those birthday messages:

"YouthLink's been a key organisation for driving change within youth work, supporting that change effectively, not being afraid of challenge and certainly not being afraid to challenge when it feels that not enough emphasis is being placed on the key role of youth work. Their ability to create a forum where public and voluntary sectors can come together to discuss themes, challenges, and create partnerships for innovative working has been hugely successful."



Alan Sherry, Chair, CLD Standards Council

"One of the biggest achievements has been the building of networks across all of the bodies and the level of respect. It does mean that YouthLink Scotland can go in and talk on behalf of the whole sector. Government understands youth work and public bodies understand youth work because of YouthLink Scotland."

Maureen Mallon, CEO, OSCR, Scottish Charity Regulator



"I've certainly observed the contributions YouthLink Scotland has made to prevention, supporting young people at school, at college, and in community learning and development. They played a vital role during the pandemic, working with universities, colleges, and CLD, producing fantastic work on Covid recovery."



Professor Linda Bauld, Chief Social Policy Adviser, Scottish Government

"YouthLink Scotland has raised the professionalism of the service by creating that framework for outcomes for young people. They have been leading in terms of encouraging young people to have their voice within the public sector arena, and the drive they have had around equalities and inclusion has been incredibly important."



Kate Still, Scotland Chair, National Lottery Community Fund

"I remember the creation of YouthLink and thinking it was great – we finally have a national youth work agency. Without YouthLink Scotland and the sector pulling together and advocating for youth work, it could potentially be in a much worse place than it is now."



Dona Milne, Director of Public Health, NHS Lothian

"YouthLink Scotland is a collaborative, optimistic, and proactive organisation that works alongside children and young people, putting their needs and rights first. They amplify the voices of children and young people, as well as those of the sector working alongside them. They're amazing at highlighting good practice."



Nicola Killean, Children and Young People's Commissioner

"What my constituents tell me is the value that they get from youth work, and youth workers get a huge amount of support from YouthLink Scotland. All of that combined shows that we've got a really strong sector, punching above its weight."



Pam Duncan Glancy MSP, Labour Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

"It's not really about what I think, it's about what I see. The national agency for youth work is having a huge unifying impact on the youth work sector by providing a unified voice, ensuring that everyone is acting together, especially when decisions are being made about funding cuts."



Liam Kerr MSP, Former Conservative Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

"Well, YouthLink Scotland is the national agency. It brings youth work organisations together, stewards campaigns, and brings youth work into the heart of political consciousness. We can't lose it."



Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP, Scottish Liberal Democrat Leader

"YouthLink Scotland is invaluable when it comes to uniting the sector. It's great to see one organisation bringing together all of the local authorities and youth work organisations, showcasing the best of youth work to decision-makers."



Molly McGoran, Former Chair of the Scottish Youth Parliament

"YouthLink Scotland plays an important role in the wider youth work setup in Scotland, and your 21 years of success is something to be celebrated."



**Graeme Dey, Minister
for Higher and Further
Education**

"I know that YouthLink Scotland does a fantastic job ensuring that best practices in youth support from around Scotland are shared across all 32 authorities, helping improve frontline staff."



**Cllr Tony Buchanan, COSLA
Children and Young People's
Spokesperson**

These endorsements highlight the invaluable role YouthLink Scotland has played in shaping the landscape of youth work in Scotland, and the impact we continue to have. Here's to the next 21 years, supporting our youth work sector creating positive change!



YouthLink Scotland Youth Work Sector Survey Report 2024

	Local Authority Youth Services	Voluntary Youth Work Sector
Full-Time Paid	403	2,500
Part-Time/Sessional Paid	713	4,629
Volunteers	571	44,691
Total Staff/Volunteers	1,687	51,820

Young People Accessing Youth Work in Scotland

- Local Authority Youth Services: 146,611
- Voluntary Youth Work Sector: 358,110

Training Needs

- 78% of organisations provide youth work induction training.
- 95% have training and development processes for staff and volunteers.
- 49% report unmet training needs, including workforce development, health/wellbeing, youth work practice, and UNCRC knowledge. Challenges include: limited access for sessional staff, few options for accredited courses, and funding constraints.

Youth Work Practice Priorities

Current top priorities are health and wellbeing (90%), mental health (78%), youth volunteering (75%), participation/citizenship (72%), employment (68%), and school-based work (68%).

Upcoming priorities include education/employability, youth voice, mental health, workforce development, and increasing youth work reach.

Impact of YouthLink Scotland

- **92%** of respondents say YouthLink Scotland's training, events, and toolkits enhance youth work practice.
- **95%** consider YouthLink Scotland a trusted source for research, information, and policy guidance.
- **96%** value YouthLink's research on the role and impact of youth work.

Influence

- **95%** say YouthLink Scotland effectively gathers and shares evidence to influence policy.
- **92%** feel YouthLink Scotland provides strong cross-sector leadership, promoting collaboration across education, health, and more.



Why a National Youth Work Agency Matters

The sector's feedback highlights the importance of a national youth work agency in promoting youth work's impact, connecting with government, and creating a collaborative hub for youth work across Scotland.

"YouthLink is vital to youth work's present and future in Scotland. It provides a central voice, advocates for change, and supports the sector with a clear link to government and other stakeholders."



"In the current political, social, and economic landscape, we need a strong, clear, and authentic voice for youth work—a place within the national conversation that celebrates, promotes, and dignifies youth work as a skilled profession and agent of change."



"YouthLink serves as a bridge between the public sector and third-sector agencies, a driving force that connects us to decision-makers and other stakeholders, ensuring that youth work remains a priority."



"YouthLink Scotland represents our members with integrity and believes in young people, promoting their needs and rights, and consistently demonstrates an inclusive and accessible approach."



"YouthLink Scotland brings the sector together and is constantly improving its approach, listening to members, and responding to needs."



"A national youth work agency is essential for promoting the voices and needs of young people and for helping us all recognise youth work as a professional field that shapes Scotland's future."





Policy and Research

Policy Engagement and Response

In 2023-2024, YouthLink Scotland actively engaged with members and stakeholders to contribute to 30 public policy discussions impacting young people and youth work in Scotland. Below are key highlights of our policy engagement:

1. Engagement

YouthLink Scotland spearheaded sector engagement in Education and Skills Reform, crafting policy recommendations for major discussions. These included:

- The National Discussion on Education
- The Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment
- Consultations on the Education (Scotland) Bill
- The Independent Review of Skills Delivery Landscape

2. Policy Special on the Human Rights Bill

We organised a policy session with members and the Scottish Government Bill team, enhancing our policy response by incorporating a broad range of stakeholder insights into the Bill consultation.

3. Equality and Human Rights & Suicide Prevention Strategy

YouthLink Scotland submitted responses to the Equality and Human Rights and Civil Justice Inquiry on COSLA's Suicide Prevention Strategy (2022-2032). We continue to work with COSLA to understand and enhance youth work's role in suicide prevention.

Parliamentary Representation

YouthLink Scotland represented the sector at several Parliamentary Committees, providing insights into key youth work issues:

- Education, Children's and Young People's Committee: Presented on youth work's role in international exchange schemes (May 2023).
- Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee: Shared perspectives on youth violence and youth work's preventative support (February 2024).
- Cross Party Group on Children and Young People: Presented a briefing on positive masculinity in Scotland, contributing to the national conversation on masculinity and youth (April 2024).

Policy Briefings and Advocacy

YouthLink Scotland provided members with policy briefings, ensuring effective sector engagement with public policy. Key briefings highlighted youth work's role in:

- UNCRC support: Engaging stakeholders on the role of youth work in supporting children's rights.
- Volunteering and Poverty: Partnering with Volunteer Scotland to advocate for youth work's role in volunteering and poverty alleviation.
- Social Isolation and Loneliness: Presented recommendations to the Scottish Government Ministerial Group on youth work's role in addressing these social issues.

Policy Convention

Over 150 participants attended the YouthLink Scotland Annual Policy Convention in December 2023, exploring critical education in times of crisis and formulating a potential policy roadmap to secure youth work for all young people in Scotland. The convention's key themes included education reform and youth work's pivotal role in Scotland's future. Participants rated the event highly, with positive feedback on its relevance, engagement, and diversity of perspectives.

Research Initiatives

YouthLink Scotland advanced participatory research projects to deepen understanding of youth work impacts:

1. Low-Level Mental Health Support in Schools

Published findings on youth work's impact on low-level mental health support in Dumfries and Galloway (November 2023).

2. Youth Work and Cyber Resilience

Engaged young people from four youth groups in cyber resilience discussions, with findings published in collaboration with the University of St Andrews (April 2024).

3. Youth-Led Research on Positive Masculinity

YouthLink Scotland trained 12 young researchers who engaged 367 young people in developing the Imagine a Man toolkit, promoting positive masculinity (launched May 2023).

4. Research Priorities and Studies

The Scottish Youth Work Research Steering Group conducted a priority-setting consultation to define the top research questions in youth work for the next five years. In partnership with the University of Edinburgh, YouthLink Scotland has launched a participatory study on the future of youth work, engaging multiple youth groups in Scotland.

5. Third Sector Research Collaboration

YouthLink Scotland contributed to the Third Sector Research Forum, leading discussions on participatory research methods and ethics in the third sector.

Network Events and Engagement

- **Members Network Events:** YouthLink Scotland engaged with members through targeted events, including sessions on the Human Rights Bill, youth work's role in #KeepingThePromise, and an April 2024 event on the National Youth Work Outcomes and Skills Framework.
- **Career Mentorship:** YouthLink Scotland mentored Bonnie, a young intern from the Career Ready programme, who completed a 4-week internship, strengthening career pathways in youth work.



YouthLink Scotland took significant steps to promote the essential role of youth work in education, skills development, and employability. Our initiatives reached a wide audience, influenced policy, and strengthened the sector's capacity to support young people across Scotland. Key achievements are highlighted below:

#EducationNeedsYouthWork Campaign

Through our [#EducationNeedsYouthWork campaign](#), we reached over 475,000 social media accounts, amplifying the critical role youth work plays in Scottish education. Additionally, we published [a report of evidence and stories](#) that highlight youth work's impact on young people affected by poverty, especially through volunteering opportunities.

Supporting Careers Services

We advocated for youth work as an integral part of Scotland's career services, contributing to the delivery of recommendations from the Careers Review and promoting youth work as a foundation of Scotland's lifelong learning system.

Policy Influence

YouthLink Scotland led the youth work sector's engagement with [education and skills reform](#), calling for access to youth work as a fundamental entitlement. Our work contributed to policy discussions on enhancing lifelong learning opportunities and building a stronger education system.

Provided support and guidance to promote equity and improve outcomes for learners and to strengthen collaborative working to accelerate progress alongside Regional Improvement Collaboratives, local authorities and learning communities, including a [rights-based approach to understanding and improving attendance in Edinburgh](#).

Showcasing Effective Practices

[Three new video case studies and an infographic](#) were produced to showcase effective practices, supporting school improvement planning and guiding the use of the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF). These resources have helped disseminate impactful approaches across the sector.

Capacity Building and Professional Learning

YouthLink Scotland delivered high-quality professional learning resources to 513 practitioners and reached an additional 347 through external events, helping educators build their capacity and support continuous improvement.



Integration of National Frameworks

By fully integrating the National Youth Work Outcomes and Skills Frameworks, we enhanced the sector's capacity to support young people in identifying, developing, and articulating their skills. This integration included a collaboration with the [West Partnership Regional Improvement Collaborative](#) and JP Morgan's Force for Good team, resulting in a prototype digital impact dashboard to help the sector demonstrate its impact more effectively.

Through these initiatives, YouthLink Scotland reinforced the importance of youth work within Scotland's education, skills, and employability landscape, ensuring that young people have the support and opportunities they need to thrive.

Funding



Funding

1. Youth Work and Adult Education (CLD) Workforce Development Fund

The Scottish Government's Youth Work and Adult Education Workforce Development Fund supports Community Learning and Development (CLD) third sector organisations to develop their workforce, equipping staff and volunteers to better serve young people and adult learners across Scotland. This fund emphasises areas essential to social impact, including tackling child poverty, enhancing education and skills for marginalised groups, and promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI).

Fund Highlights:

- Total Investment: **£442,873**
- Awards Granted: **44**
- Beneficiary Organisations: **43**
- Funded Projects: **76 distinct initiatives**

Organisations Supported:

- Youth Work Organisations: **35**
- Adult Learning Organisations: **8**
- National Intermediary Organisations: **37**

Geographic and Focused Impact:

- National Organisations: **22**
- Regional/Local Organisations: **20**
- Specialist Equalities Organisations: **15**

2. Youth Arts Open Fund

The Youth Arts Open Fund, administered by YouthLink Scotland as part of Creative Scotland's broader support for young people, was designed to enhance access to the arts for children and young people who face barriers to such opportunities. This fund enabled freelance artists and organisations to deliver empowering, high-quality arts programming that enhanced young people's well-being, personal growth, and self-expression.

A funded organisation expressed the impact: ***"This fund has allowed us to expand our creative arts programming, establish new partnerships, and offer fantastic experiences to young people."***

Fund Reach and Impact:

- Total Available Funding: **£960,000**
- Awards Granted: **78, totalling £952,316**
- Applicant Profile: **73 awards to organisations; 5 to freelance artists**
- Local Impact: **Awards made across 27 local authority areas**
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The fund was widely appreciated for its supportive process and accessibility, as shared by an applicant: ***"The YouthLink team has been fantastic, with a proportional application process that greatly benefits small charities like ours."***

YouthLink Scotland's Contributions to the Violence Prevention Framework

~~No knives~~
Better lives

Weapons Carrying

Through the No Knives, Better Lives (NKBL) initiative, we targeted the drivers of weapons carrying, such as harmful masculinity, poor mental health, emotional illiteracy, and conflict resolution skills. Practitioner training days, peer education, e-learning, interactive VR games, and toolkits included specific content on this issue.

Social Media

In partnership with Scottish Violence Reduction Unit and Medics Against Violence, YouthLink Scotland led a social media campaign using participatory workshops with young people, creating resources to address the link between social media and youth violence. Findings were incorporated into reports, e-learning resources, and presented at the Digital Youth Work Conference.

Care Experience

Our efforts targeted care experienced young people, equipping YouthLink Scotland staff through training and engaging young people in immersive VR experiences at the Good Shepherd Centre and Youth Just Us group.

Progress and Impact

In 2023-24, YouthLink Scotland achieved record practitioner and youth engagement, upskilling 703 practitioners and benefiting over 7,000 young people through training, with 959 e-learning course completions on the Learning Hub. Practitioners reported positive impacts, including a reduction in police charges among some young people following NKBL training. Direct engagement with 274 young people built emotional literacy, peer education skills, and provided an interactive VR experience.

Imagine a Man (IAM) – Scotland's First Positive Masculinity Programme

Launched on May 11, 2023, the Imagine a Man event saw 100 attendees and 17 press engagements. The accompanying policy briefing was published online, and 1,000 copies of the toolkit were distributed. The Dundee rollout involved a transformative evaluation with training for 76 staff across eight secondary schools. In total, face-to-face IAM training included 551 practitioners from various sectors, with additional reach through e-learning courses: 121 participants in Imagine a Man and 60 in the IAM Toolbox.

IAM also led the agenda at the First Minister's Round Table discussion on January 31 2024 credited with influencing this national focus on positive masculinity. The Imagine a Man Steering Group evolved into the Positive Masculinity Alliance, expanding membership to include academics, funders, and other influencers.

Restorative Approaches and Insights to Wellbeing

- Delivered conflict resolution training across Aberdeen, Falkirk, and West Lothian, with the Insights to Wellbeing project engaging 79 practitioners, fostering mental health awareness and support for young people.

Milestone Achievements

- No Knives, Better Lives (NKBL): Record engagement across practitioner sectors; 703 practitioners trained, VR experiences delivered.
- Imagine a Man (IAM): Toolkit launched with extensive press coverage, training reached 551 practitioners; Dundee rollout and policy influence demonstrated.
- Peer Education: Launched modules for social action, upper primary education, and girls' violence, engaging 103 practitioners.
- Workforce Development: Released 7 e-learning courses and held five regional practitioner days with Police Scotland, supporting professional growth and community safety.

Throughout 2023-24, YouthLink Scotland's multifaceted initiatives in violence prevention, peer education, and positive masculinity training significantly impacted young people across Scotland, equipping practitioners with essential skills and influencing community and policy agendas. Read more: [Home - NKBL](#)



Influence

Impact and Influence: Stats and Stories

The National Youth Work Conference, held in Glasgow on 1st November, brought together over 200 youth workers to focus on the profound impact and influence of youth work on young people, communities, and society. Attendees shared best practices and showcased the transformative nature of youth work through a compelling mix of statistical data and powerful stories.

This conference provided valuable insights into building sector capacity, enhancing professional development, and harnessing the power of collective influence. Youth work professionals connected, networked, and exchanged innovative ideas to shape the future of the sector. Participants explored effective methods for measuring youth work's impact and turning impactful stories into powerful advocacy tools.

Serving as a platform to celebrate the immense value of youth work, the conference strengthened the sector by sharing achievements and expanding collective knowledge.

2023 National Youth Work Awards: Celebrating Scotland's Youth Work Champions

The National Youth Work Awards again celebrated Scotland's outstanding youth workers and youth work teams across 14 categories, including Arts & Creativity, Equality & Diversity, Health & Wellbeing, and Youth Worker of the Year. This year's event celebrated the diverse and powerful impact of youth work, with each winner showcasing dedication to supporting young people in Scotland.

The evening featured awards sponsored by prominent organisations like BBC Children in Need, Education Scotland, and Young Scot, whose support was instrumental in making the event a memorable success.

Congratulations to all the winners and finalists who exemplify the transformative power of youth work!

Read about our [winners and finalists](#)

Sector Magazine – The Link

The Link Magazine is all about the youth work sector's impact and influence. We know as a sector that measuring impact is a complex task, but a task we cannot shirk. In this edition, we tackled the complex but essential task of measuring youth work's impact. By sharing best practices, innovative methods, and success stories, the content aims to strengthen sector capacity and professional development, inspiring youth work professionals to turn powerful stories of influence into effective advocacy.

Read the magazine [here](#)



Cross Party Group on Children and Young People

We provide the joint secretariat for the Cross Party Group with Children in Scotland. Last year the CPG met four times on the following issues:

- **A Rights-Based Approach to Education Reform in Scotland**
- **Challenges in the delivery of ELC and School Age Childcare**
- **UNCRC Incorporation Bill**
- **Poverty and the Impact on Children and Young People's Health**

Political Influence and Advocacy

This year, YouthLink Scotland strengthened its commitment to advocating for the youth work sector across all political levels, ensuring youth work remains prominent on Scotland's policy and political agenda. A key highlight was hosting a parliamentary reception, bringing together MSPs, stakeholders, and youth work representatives to emphasise the sector's impact and discuss priorities for future support.

Throughout the year, we attended all party conferences, engaged regularly with policy teams,

and met with COSLA to advocate for youth work's vital role in communities.

We also prepared key messaging for Scottish Parliament debates and committee discussions, contributing to critical conversations that shape services for young people.

Our primary goal remains that all young people in Scotland have access to high-quality youth work. By building strong, cross-party relationships and maintaining a steady presence in government and local authority networks, we continue to push for policies and resources that support a sustainable and impactful youth work sector.

Digital Communications

Digital communication plays an essential role in how we connect, engage, and support the youth work sector across Scotland. Our online presence allows us to reach a vast audience, providing critical resources, news, and updates that keep the sector informed and connected.

Last year YouthLink Scotland's digital platforms have proven invaluable in amplifying the work of the youth sector and enabling collaboration and learning. Our **website** has seen significant growth, with over **50,000 unique users** and **328,000 web hits**, reflecting the increasing demand for information and resources. Key sections such as the **Youth Work Outcomes & Skills Framework** and the **Funding Directory** continue to attract thousands of users, demonstrating the importance to youth workers and organisations across Scotland.

- **3,400 unique users** of the Youth Work Outcomes & Skills Framework
- **12,700 hits** for the Skills Framework page
- **25,000 hits** for the Funding Directory

Our **social media presence** has been equally impactful, reaching a broad audience and engaging youth workers, young people, and other key stakeholders in meaningful conversations. In total, we gained **1.65 million impressions** and over **11,000 engagements** across our social media platforms. This surge in engagement reflects the sector's growing reliance on our digital channels to stay informed, share insights, and connect with others.

Significant growth across our social media platforms includes:

- **9% increase in Twitter followers**, reaching a total of **23,576**
- **5% increase in Facebook followers**, with a community of **7,076**
- **23% increase in #IWill Scotland engagements**, further enhancing youth-led action and advocacy in Scotland
- **876% increase in LinkedIn impressions** and an **883% increase in LinkedIn engagements**, underlining the growing importance of professional networks in the youth work sector

The youth work briefing continues to prove successful with the sector:

- **over 40,000 youth work briefing emails** sent over a **365 day period**
- open rate up **46%**, an **increase of 20% year on year**
- **click rate is 14%**, more than **triple the industry average of 3.8%**
- **1,576 youth work briefing subscribers**, an increase of **30% year on year**

These increases in both reach and engagement highlight the expanding role of digital communications in empowering the youth work sector, ensuring youth workers and organisations can access the resources, training, and networking opportunities they need to improve their practice and outcomes for young people.

The Impact of Digital Youth Work

Digital youth work has transformed how young people in Scotland connect, learn, and grow. By using digital tools and platforms, youth work can effectively reduce feelings of isolation, improve well-being, and equip young people with essential skills for safe online navigation.

The statistics are impactful, 86% of participants in digital youth work reported reduced loneliness, and 77% experienced improved well-being. Programmes vary widely, including online safety workshops and virtual youth groups, which encourages resilience and confidence in the digital landscape.

We are supporting youth workers to help young people to navigate their online lives. Find out more about the impact of #DigitalYouthWork, keeping young people safe online and giving them the skills and confidence to thrive in the digital world.

[What is #DigitalYouthWork? Why is it important? Watch our film from our 2024 DYW Conference to find out.](#)



A young person shared their perspective on the impact:

“One-to-ones [with my youth worker] have been easier as it’s easier to type what I want to say. It’s allowed me to have a quick chat with my youth worker more regularly.”

Key Statistics and Findings

- **86% of young people in digital youth work report reduced feelings of isolation.**
- **70% of surveyed youth work projects utilise digital technologies to engage with young people.**
- **27% of digital projects focus specifically on building cyber resilience.**

Cyber Resilience and Digital Challenges

From January to April 2024, we gathered insights from young people across Scotland on cyber resilience and online safety. They highlighted significant issues, including cyberbullying, pressure to stay connected, location-sharing concerns, grooming, phishing scams, and digital addiction (especially regarding social media and gaming). Youth workers play a vital role in supporting young people through these challenges, helping them navigate online risks and build resilience.

To learn more about young people's experiences, read our report: [Youth Work and Cyber Resilience: What Young People Said](#).

Key Digital Youth Work Resources

- Digital Youth Work Heroes – Cyber Resilience: [Watch on YouTube](#)
- Circuit – A new network of makerspace hubs across Scotland supporting young people with care experience to use digital tools: [Watch on YouTube](#)
- [Ofcom Children's Media Literacy Report 2024](#): This report reveals that 31% of young online gamers communicate regularly with strangers, and 87% of users aged 8-17 feel pressure to be popular online. Read the full report for detailed insights.

Publications and Research

[Youth Work and Cyber Resilience: What Young People Said, YouthLink Scotland \(2024\)](#)

[Children's Media Literacy Report, Ofcom \(2024\)](#)

[Digital Youth Work Survey Results, YouthLink Scotland \(2023\)](#)

Digital youth work not only broadens access but creates a safer, more supportive online space where young people can thrive. Through continuous engagement and research, YouthLink Scotland remains committed to advancing digital youth work to meet the evolving needs of young people.



Our Networks

YouthLink Scotland facilitate and support a number of youth work sector networks. These networks provide opportunities for youth work practitioners, managers and other stakeholders to explore and learn from the latest ideas, information and practice, ensuring young people in Scotland continue to access the best quality youth work opportunities. They also provide a platform for the youth work sector to collaborate and influence key decision makers.

Members Network

The Members Network is open to representatives from our membership. It's a chance for those who have responsibility for managing and delivering youth work services to share and discuss best practice from the sector.

Local Authority Youth Work Managers Network (LAYWM)

YouthLink Scotland facilitates the LAYWM group to provide managers responsible for youth work in a local authority the opportunity to influence and shape youth work at a national level, support local authorities to take forward youth work developments, enter into professional dialogue and use expertise to advise on emerging policy, practice and workforce developments.

National Voluntary Youthwork Organisations Scotland Network (NYVOS)

The network allows national voluntary youth work organisation CEOs to meet on a regular basis in order to facilitate peer support on management issues and enable discussion and response to key policy issues which impact on voluntary youth organisations.

Policy Planning Group

Through key supported meetings and events, the Policy Planning Group facilitates networking and collaboration among key stakeholders.

The group provides critical reflection time, helping to create policy positions reflecting the needs and aspirations of young people and youth work leaders. It promotes national and international good practice and is responsible for YouthLink Scotland's Annual Policy Convention.

Media & Communications Network

The network is a forum for sharing information and best media practice, as well as an opportunity to meet with others from the sector to share information and examples of best practice and campaigning from within the sector.

Digital Youth Work Network

The Digital Youth Network is a network open to all practitioners who use digital tools and online spaces in their work with young people. This includes within youth work and other types of engagement with young people, e.g. health, information, campaigning and careers. This network is led and co-facilitated by YouthLink Scotland and Young Scot.

Equalities, Diversity & Inclusion Community of Practice

To promote equality and diversity in the youth work sector by informing policy and practice and supporting the implementation of inclusive youth work to encourage an inclusive and representative sector that is accessible to all young people.

Youth Work Health & Wellbeing Network

The network brings together youth workers and other stakeholders together to learn about emerging areas of practice in relation to the physical and mental health and wellbeing of young people.

United Voices

To promote and influence anti-racist youth work practice in the youth work sector. To share practice and learning in supporting young people facing racism and antisemitism and to create a support network for youth workers engaging in this work.

NKBL Community of Practice

We bring together violence prevention practitioners and partners from across Scotland in our community of practice.

This extends to those in a variety of settings including youth groups, schools, local communities, residential units and youth projects. It works as a platform for sharing information and good practice, as well as providing opportunities for networking and national events.

Outdoor Learning Network

The Outdoor Learning Network is a YouthLink Scotland network of third sector charities and social enterprises working with thousands of young people every year through the provision of outdoor learning opportunities to inspire and empower them to develop the qualities, skills and attributes they will need in their futures.

Scottish Youth Work Leaders Forum

To represent the interests and aspirations of the youth work sector and champion the value of youth work,

working alongside national partners to develop youth work policy and challenge government at national and local levels to invest in youth work.

Youth Work Training Forum

YouthLink Scotland's Youth Work Training Forum is a national network focusing on the strategic development of workforce and training for the youth work sector. It is also a space to share practice, identify sector priorities and address common challenges.

National Youth Work & Schools Collaborative

Youth work is part of Scottish education. This includes playing a vital role in the Scottish Attainment Challenge mission to close the poverty-related attainment gap. The Youth Work and Schools Collaborative provides regular online events to share practice, exchange knowledge and disseminate learning around youth work and education.

Scottish Youth Work Research Steering Group

The Scottish Youth Work Research Steering Group (SYWRSG) works to further the interests and needs of research in the youth work sector in Scotland. To critically examine the long-term impact of youth work on the lives and lifestyles of young people and the wider communities across Scotland, identify what young people learn from participating in youth work provision and to gather data reflecting the broad outcomes of youth work as defined by young Scots.

Youth Social Action and Volunteering

This year, we made significant strides in promoting youth social action and volunteering, supporting young people to make a positive impact in their communities:

- **Youth Volunteering Champion Schools Resource:** We successfully launched and piloted this multimedia resource aimed at supporting schools and youth work in developing a stronger culture of youth volunteering across Scotland.
- **Ministerial Visit:** The YouthVIP consortium hosted a visit from Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice. This provided an invaluable opportunity for young people involved in the project to share how volunteering has positively impacted their lives.
- **Youth and Volunteering Briefing:** In partnership with Volunteer Scotland, we co-created and launched a joint briefing on young people and volunteering. This was unveiled on the Power of Youth Day. You can access the [YouthLink Scotland and Volunteer Scotland Joint Briefing - Young People and Volunteering here](#)

Learning for Sustainability

Our commitment to environmental and social sustainability continues to grow, with a focus on empowering young people to take action:

- **Learning for Sustainability Action Plan:** We played an instrumental role in influencing the development and supporting the launch of the Learning for Sustainability Action Plan.
- **Scotland's Young People's Forest (SYPF):** In collaboration with Young Scot, Green Action Trust, and the Woodland Trust, SYPF was a finalist in the SCVO Scottish Charity Awards in the Climate Conscious Category. We were also thrilled to see the project win the Youth Champion Award at the Holyrood Climate Action Awards.
- **Engaging Young People with Green Spaces Webinar:** We hosted a popular webinar on how to engage young people with green spaces, sharing valuable activities through the SYPF toolkit.
- **Webinars with Learning for Sustainability Scotland:** In partnership with Learning for Sustainability Scotland, we delivered informative webinars to engage the youth sector on key sustainability issues and help integrate the action plan into their work.
- **Policy Consultation on Just Transition:** We ran a policy consultation programme for the Scottish Government's Just Transition initiative, engaging 428 young people to ensure their voices were heard by the SG Net Zero team.

International

YouthLink Scotland continues to represent the youth work sector on the international stage, advocating for youth involvement and cross-border collaborations:

- **Erasmus+ Loss Impact:** We represented the youth sector, providing evidence to the Education, Children and Young People's Committee of the Scottish Parliament on the impact of the loss of Erasmus+ on youth exchanges and opportunities.
 - **UK-German Connection:** We participated in a review of the UK-German Connection programme, highlighting priorities and support needed for bilateral youth exchanges between the two countries.
 - **Scottish Educational Exchange Programme:** We worked with the Scottish Educational Exchange Programme Team to emphasise the importance of youth work opportunities within the new programme.
 - **Commonwealth Youth Work Conference:** We coordinated a Scottish delegation and delivered a workshop at the Commonwealth Youth Work Conference in Reading, showcasing Scotland's commitment to youth work on the global stage.
 - **Council of Europe Symposium & Bonn Process Meetups:** YouthLink Scotland represented the sector at key international gatherings, including the Council of Europe Symposium and Bonn Process Meetups, while also hosting visits from Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and Tokyo's Education Department.
-



action on
prejudice

Action on Prejudice (AoP)

In the past year, Action on Prejudice delivered impactful training and resources to youth workers across Scotland, equipping 173 practitioners with the knowledge and skills necessary to tackle racism and discrimination.

The training sessions included Introduction to Racial Literacy, Introduction to Intersectional Youth Work, Sight Loss Awareness Training, and the EDI Community of Practice.

Feedback from participants highlighted the value of the sessions:



“Great conversations and information shared. Great guest speakers and I always enjoy attending these events.”

“This morning has been really thought-provoking, and just having the opportunity to connect with other youth work professionals. I will take away lots, especially from the first-hand stories we heard.”

“It was a really supportive space – I was worried it would be confronting and uncomfortable in a negative way, but it wasn’t.”

“I think it was good to have different discussions with people who work in similar backgrounds. The session leaders acknowledged current conflicts and didn’t shy away from them.”

“It was a much more open and collaborative training experience than I expected. It offered the perfect amount of opportunity to mingle and reflect. Really great coverage of terms/definitions.”

The training and resources provided have had a significant impact, with 23,000 views on our website and 2,723 users accessing the materials. This shows strong engagement, with users returning multiple times to explore the resources further.



action on
sectarianism

Action on Sectarianism (AoS)

Action on Sectarianism continued to address sectarianism in communities, providing 78 practitioners with in-depth CPD training on the tools available to support them in engaging young people on the issue.

The training was well-received, with feedback such as:



“Loved this session, very informative, brought this issue to the forefront, great sharing of resources.”

“Engaging facilitators and session.”

“Great! Very interactive and got me thinking about this in different ways. Will definitely be using the resources with my young people.”

United Voices Network: Celebrating Diversity in Youth Work

In 2023-2024, the United Voices network, funded by the Corra Foundation, expanded significantly, growing to include around 30 Black-led organisations working with young people facing racism. This network has been instrumental in amplifying the voices of under-represented communities and advocating for greater diversity within the youth work sector.

One of the key highlights of the year was the network's participation in the National Youth Work Awards, where a table was purchased to ensure that the network could be part of this national celebration of youth work. This not only allowed United Voices members to connect with the wider youth work community, but also provided an opportunity to raise the profile of their work.

AoS resources continue to have a lasting impact, with **213,944 downloads** since the website's launch, **including 24,731 in the past year**. Over the period, the website had **4,847 users, 5,839 sessions, and 10,853 pageviews**, reflecting the broad reach and deep engagement with the content provided.

These websites continue to support youth workers in developing inclusive, informed, and responsive youth work practices, helping to address key issues of prejudice and sectarianism in communities across Scotland.



We were especially proud that **Helene Rodger of Passion4Fusion** won the Inspirational Leader Award, a recognition of her leadership and contributions to youth work.

In addition, **Jasmin Aden** represented the network at the **Commonwealth Conference on Youth Work** in July 2023, where she connected with youth workers from across the Commonwealth, exchanging ideas and learning from diverse practices in youth work globally.

YouthLink Scotland has been committed to providing ongoing support and information to network members, particularly in helping them access funding streams. This year, we shared our learning from supporting the network with other funders, ensuring that community groups are better supported in accessing appropriate funding opportunities.

Vicky Nyanga-Ndiaye from **Project Esperanza**, a network member, shared her appreciation for being part of United Voices:

"I absolutely appreciate being a part of United Voices; firstly for the wealth of experience that is in the network collectively but also for the benefits of getting work-related support. I value that the network can offer resources and, where I have been in difficult situations that have required mediation, members of the network have been ready to step in and help me challenge racism, oppressive, or discriminatory work practices that may affect the service users where I work. I feel lucky that this space is there to hold space for me when I get exhausted from challenging oppression."

During **Black History Month**, the network had the opportunity to take over the Twitter account of **Ross McCulloch**, who has 36.3k followers. This supported United Voices to showcase the incredible work of its members to a much wider audience. The content shared through Ross McCulloch's and **Third Sector Lab's**

Lab's social media channels received over **30,000 views**, highlighting the significant impact and importance of the network's work.

Finally, we were thrilled to successfully secure three years of funding from The National Lottery Communities Fund for the period of 2024-2027, ensuring the continued growth and sustainability of the network.

The United Voices network remains a vital part of our efforts to ensure that youth work in Scotland is inclusive, diverse, and accessible for all young people, particularly those facing racism and other barriers.

Workforce Development

At YouthLink Scotland, our core objective is to develop and support the youth work sector to deliver for young people. This goal is integral to all our initiatives. Our national programmes, practice development projects, and funded support aim to enhance skills and confidence within the sector, equipping youth workers to meet the evolving needs of young people.

In 2023-24, we delivered valuable training across a wide range of priority themes to help youth workers engage with young people and work towards the **Youth Work Outcomes and Skills Framework**. Our efforts also supported the professional learning of the sector through events, networks, and online platforms that facilitated growth and development for youth work practitioners.

With a workforce of **53,500** individuals, including **45,000** volunteers, youth work across Scotland engages over **500,000** young people. Our priority themes focus on supporting youth workers in responding to emerging needs, ensuring young people are provided with the tools to thrive.

Training Report Highlights (2023-24):

- **2557** Individual Learning Places delivered (synchronous)
- **130** Sessions delivered
- **68** Themes covered in workshops and events
- **500** Organisations reached
- **1000** e-learning courses undertaken across 19 topics

We are proud to have achieved the **CLD Standards Council** Standards Mark for the quality of professional learning we deliver to the sector.

"I remember the creation of YouthLink and thinking it was great – we finally have a national youth work agency. Without YouthLink Scotland and the sector pulling together and advocating for youth work, it could potentially be in a much worse place than it is now."



"Linking the promise to YW outcomes and CLD values, making this connection for staff team and will take back to local CLD networks in area and be good for reporting to partners on how our work links —also useful for training with staff."



"Thought provoking and reassuring. I felt inspired by the speakers and dynamic ways they have had input in the youth work field, in reflection understanding the link to my work and how at the foundations of all the discussions we all share fundamental principles and belief in youth work."



"It was helpful to have discussions with the group, to talk about the practical application of children's rights."



"I have a team of 76 that need this training and youth clubs that need it too. I try and deliver this to them all."



"I appreciated the space to collectively come together and share challenges, experiences, and approaches. This is the support I like to see continuing. This demonstrates and exemplifies how we facilitate our youth work spaces. Providing a circularity of experience."



"Was great to get up-to-date information and learn new things. Also wonderful to network and hear from others and their experiences in the sector."



"It has given me a fresh perspective on the practical applications of digital tools in youth work —lots of useful anecdotes and examples."



"Really engaging session, I liked the presentations, good discussion group :) The speakers were good and very informative, great links."



"All very good - such knowledgeable trainers."



Have a look through the [YouthLink Scotland Training Report](#)



The Participative Democracy Certificate (PDC) is a youth award that provides SCQF level accreditation, recognizing young people's involvement in group decision-making. Through this certificate, participants have the opportunity to develop key skills in communication, decision-making, and negotiation within a democratic framework.

Key achievements in 2023-2024:

- **28** young people achieved their PDC award
- **120** young people began working toward their PDC award
- **139** youth workers and practitioners received PDC training



The #iWill movement in Scotland aims to empower young people to take action, make a difference, and influence positive change within their communities, the environment, and society at large. Through volunteering, fundraising, mentoring, campaigning, and activism, #iWill Scotland engages young people in meaningful contributions to social and environmental causes.

We celebrated a major milestone in 2023—the **10th anniversary** of the #iWill movement. This celebration marked a decade of inspiring young people to make a difference through social action and civic engagement.

In June 2023, the **UK-wide Power of Youth Day** was a standout event, trending **number 4** on socials across the UK, highlighting the strength and reach of youth-led action.

Key #iWill Statistics and Achievements in 2023-2024:

- **28** individual young people are active #iWill Ambassadors (12 recruited in August 2023)
- **7** new organisations signed up as Power of Youth Charter signatories, bringing the total to 57
- **337** #iWill Champions in Scotland, with **93%** of sign-ups from the youth work sector (i.e., through youth groups and clubs)

The latest #iWill UK-wide survey highlighted the impressive impact on Scottish ambassadors, who scored higher than the UK average in skill development. The survey found:

- **87%** felt their leadership skills had improved
- **80%** reported improved communication skills
- **80%** noted enhanced problem-solving skills
- **87%** believed they developed skills to support their personal, academic, and professional goals

SUMMARY FINANCIAL REPORT

The following is an extract of the financial information contained in YouthLink Scotland's audited report and financial statement for the year ending 31 March 2024. Copies of the full accounts may be obtained from the registered office.

**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024
(including income and expenditure account)**

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2024	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2023
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Income						
Income from charitable activities:						
Services	723,636	653,838	1,377,474	1,503,574	-	1,503,574
Income from other trading activities:						
Conferences and Training	191,523	182,287	373,810	248,077	153,290	401,367
Investment income	6,658	-	6,658	3,301	-	3,301
Total Income	921,817	836,125	1,757,942	1,754,952	153,290	1,908,242
Expenditure						
Expenditure on charitable activities:						
Services	945,443	836,125	1,781,568	1,719,540	153,290	1,872,830
Total Expenditure	945,443	836,125	1,781,568	1,719,540	153,290	1,872,830
Net income/(expenditure) before transfers	(23,626)	-	(23,626)	35,412	-	35,412
Gross Transfer between Funds	-	-	-	-	-	-
Net income/(expenditure) before other recognised gains and losses	(23,626)	-	(23,626)	35,412	-	35,412
Revaluation of Investment	6,187	-	6,187	(8,413)	-	(8,413)
Net income/(expenditure) and net movement in funds for the year	(17,439)	-	(17,439)	26,999	-	26,999
Reconciliation of funds						
Total funds brought forward	445,054	-	445,054	418,055	-	418,055
Total funds carried forward	427,615	-	427,615	445,054	-	445,054

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 MARCH 2024

	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total Funds 2024	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total Funds 2023
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Fixed assets	5,988		5,988	12,097		12,097
Investments	104,421	-	104,421	97,441	-	97,441
	110,409	-	110,409	109,538	-	109,538
Current assets						
Debtors	85,325	-	85,325	102,094	-	102,094
Cash at bank	360,594	-	360,594	569,424	-	569,424
Funds Held as Agents	67,821	-	67,821	25,477	-	25,477
Detailed investments	50,000	-	50,000	-	-	-
	563,740	-	563,740	696,995	-	696,995
Liabilities						
Creditors falling due after less than one year	246,534	-	246,534	361,479	-	361,479
	317,206	-	317,206	335,516	-	335,516
Creditors falling due in more than one year	-	-	-	-	-	-
	427,615	-	427,615	445,054	-	445,054
Net assets						
The Funds of the charity						
Unrestricted						
General	427,615	-	427,615	445,054	-	445,054
Restricted	-	-	-	-	-	-
	427,615	-	427,615	445,054	-	445,054

#InvestInYouthWork

www.youthlink.scot



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