



All Learners in Scotland Matter: The National Discussion on Education final report

YouthLink Scotland response

YouthLink Scotland welcomes the final report from the National Discussion on Education. As part of the youth work sector's involvement in the National Discussion 738 young people participating in youth work shared their views which were submitted by YouthLink Scotland.

In their consultation submission, young people asked Education Reform to ensure that every young person can access youth work as a fundamental element of their education.

This would enable the changes they identified are needed in education:

- **Skills and achievements through youth work are recognised alongside exam results**
- **Every young person can access youth work where and when they need it**
- **Youth workers and teachers will work better together**
- **All young people can access youth work opportunities as part of their curriculum/timetable**
- **Schools can provide more opportunities for young people to develop life-relevant skills**
- **Young people will feel safe, respected, supported and included by those who support their learning.**

Alongside schools, youth work improves health and wellbeing, readiness to learn and educational outcomes for children and young people. It is therefore encouraging to see that one of the outcomes of the National Discussion is the acknowledgement that learning takes place across various settings and approaches, including in the community and through outdoor learning. Youth work in Scotland is part of the education system¹. It is a valuable element of the learner journey for all children and young people, helping them develop a broad range of skills, capacities and achievements to support their success. It complements and enhances the delivery of the formal curriculum, and the provision of support for pupils, contributing to raising attainment and improving outcomes for young people, especially, but not exclusively, those impacted by poverty.

Through our Scottish Attainment Challenge national programme, YouthLink Scotland has seen the positive impact of effective youth work and school collaboration. We are heartened to see the report highlight the crucial value of collaborative partnerships to

¹ <https://education.gov.scot/education-scotland/scottish-education-system/>

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deliver the vision for learners. Strengthened collaboration will be critical across the calls to action. This includes ensuring all learners have equitable access to support, high-quality learning opportunities and flexible pathways to help them develop the skills, values and attitudes to thrive in a changing world. Importantly, as we strive to deliver a human-rights-based approach to education, collaboration points towards a system where all young people feel they 'matter'.

The report also recognises the vital role of youth workers in supporting health and wellbeing – helping to create safe learning spaces, facilitating youth voice and as trusted adults that provide pastoral care. The need for access to guidance counsellors and youth workers was identified as important.

It will be essential to build on the current role and impact of youth work in this space – with sustained investment and stronger coordination, to ensure young people can access the support they need, where and where they need it. We share the report's concerns that a lack of action here will undermine attempts to improve learners' achievement and attainment levels. A strengthened collaborative focus on wellbeing will also be crucial to our collective efforts to tackle child poverty.

We applaud the report's calls for a 'learning system' that works collectively as a 'system-wide resource'. Educating Our Future is indeed a shared responsibility. Youth work educators must be included in the next steps to make this vision a reality. This includes ensuring read-across into the National Youth Work Strategy and recognising the need for investment in the sector as a vital component of Scottish education. We hope that the outcomes of this national discussion are embraced courageously by all those responsible for Educating Our Future. This is how we will make the culture and systemic changes needed a reality for our children and young people.

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