



YouthLink Scotland Training Report

2023 - 2024



Introduction

Our impact objective; **to develop and support the youth work sector to deliver for young people**, is woven into all of our work at YouthLink Scotland.

Our national programmes and practice development projects build skills and confidence within the sector to meet the emerging needs of young people. The funding we distribute includes support to upskill the sector, and our events, networks and online presence are spaces in which fantastic professional learning happens.

This report shows the valuable training we delivered in 2023-24, across a range of priority themes.

The youth work sector has a workforce of 53,500, including 45,000 volunteers. This wonderful workforce engages with over 500,000 young people accessing youth work across Scotland. The priority themes we focus on support youth workers to work towards the [Youth Work Outcomes and Skills](#) alongside young people and to meet their emerging needs.

All our professional learning is designed to support youth workers to develop their practice in line with our professional frameworks: [The National Occupational Standards for Youth Work](#) and the [CLD Competent Practitioner Framework](#). We offer direct training and also train the trainer opportunities, to build capacity within the sector through cascading knowledge and skills. Almost all of our training is free to participate in, thanks to our funders. This is important to the sector at a time where services are financially stretched, but the need to upskill is key.

The world is changing fast for young people, their needs are developing, as is the social, environmental, technological and political context of youth work delivery. For example, as Scotland responds to incorporation of the UNCRC, alongside our existing equalities offer we have increased our training on Children's Rights, building confidence and connections on the rights-based nature of practice throughout the workforce.

This year we were proud to achieve the CLD Standards Council Standards Mark in recognition of the high-quality training we provide to the sector.

Liz Green, Workforce & Practice Manager



Highlights 2023-4

2557

individual
learning places
provided (sync)

130

sessions
delivered

68

themes covered
in workshops and
events

32%

events in person

500

organisations
reached

1000

e-learning
courses taken
across 19 topics

Our training events reached participants from all 32 local authorities, many participants with a national remit and participants from outside of Scotland.



Participant Quotes



"I enjoyed all the different activities and meeting different people from the locality and learn about what intersectionality means and how to make a change."



"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 youthwork 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 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."



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



"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."

"I have ended this session thinking an awful lot about what I can go forward and action."



Spotlight: CLD Standards Council Standards Mark



In June 2023 we achieved CLD Standards Council Standards Mark Approval.

This quality mark considers the quality of planning, delivery and evaluation of professional learning provided to staff and volunteers within the CLD field.

The Standards Mark has been awarded to YouthLink Scotland as an organisation, recognising the quality and value of training that we provide to youth workers and other CLD practitioners.

Our learning culture as an organisation, including our internal CPD Strategy, and the way we promote our training as a contribution to required professional learning have been identified as good practice and shared with others.



Spotlight: Digital Youth Work Conference

To celebrate Safer Internet Day on 6th February, we brought together the brightest minds from across the youth work and academic sectors to share ideas, inspiration and hopes for the future of digital.

On the day, we explored key issues concerning youth workers including cyber resilience, digital gaming, employability, young people's online rights and artificial intelligence.

One delegate said that following the conference they will

"Explore cyber resilience further and grow the case for training and capacity building opportunity for youth work organisations to develop their digital youth work offers."



Presenters included academics from Strathclyde, Glasgow and Abertay Universities, youth work organisations, Raspberry Pi Foundation, 5 Rights Foundation.

2024's conference was funded by the Scottish Government's Cyber Resilience and Digital Citizen Units.

Watch this [short film](#) made at the Digital Youth Work Conference featuring delegates and presenters. It gives a great sense, not only of the conference, but of the role and impact of digital youth work.



Spotlight: Impact of Imagine a Man

As part of his Community Learning and Development degree at Dundee, Aidan Harper completed an internship with the East Youth Team at Dundee City Council. One of the requirements was to complete a piece of research as part of a dissertation. Aidan was introduced to the concept of positive masculinity by the youth work manager, who shared the Imagine a Man toolkit. This was a new concept to Aidan and he decided to explore it further with young people, instead of focusing on the 'usual' narrative of 'toxic' masculinity.

Aidan was working with 6 young males (in S3) as part of a health and wellbeing group. They were described as the "bouncy" group by their school, as they were energetic, seen as disruptive and disengaging from school. He also ran a session with younger boys who were P7s who attended a drop in at the youth club. With both the P7s and S3s none of them had heard of 'positive' masculinity. They appreciated the opportunity to have informal discussions about masculinity and what it meant to them, being "strong" and having "big muscles", were seen as being masculine traits. Within the groups, the boys were respectful and open to having discussions, but Aidan still observed behaviour which indicated that more work is required. Aidan reflected that these boys would benefit from a structured Imagine a Man programme. Since Aidan completed his work with the P7 boys, his manager has said they have observed positive changes in their confidence and ability to build relationships.

Imagine a Man and discussing positive masculinity with the boys has had an impact on Aidan's youth work practice. "You see in the media constantly, it's bad to be male and women are scared to go out at night...but there are good males and need to get away from 'all men are' to 'some people are'. Youth work is amazing at giving young people a chance and promoting discussion" Alison Maccaulay, Aidan's placement manager from the East Youth Team stated:

"Aidan's research into positive masculinity and the role of youth work has had significant impact on the Dundee Youth Work Team, on an East team and city-wide level. Aidan's research prompted our service to make further contact with [the No Knives Better Lives team] who lead on the Imagine a Man research and eventual publication of the Imagine a Man toolkit. This contact resulted in two city-wide training sessions to 30 staff, by Vicki Ridley and her team. Upskilling all youth work staff on positive masculinity and the role of youth work. This will lead to the Imagine a Man toolkit being delivered on a city-wide basis. The East Youth team are currently looking at delivery options for our groups next term. Incorporating sessions into our peer education deliveries or into our new boys H&WB learning programmes... Aidan's professional approach and enthusiasm for this topic has fully engaged staff and young people. Who will continue to address and challenge the issues arising from toxic masculinity".

You can read Aidan's dissertation [here](#). Aidan also won the Biggest Impact Award in his year at University of Dundee for his time on placement.

Spotlight: Scottish Attainment Challenge programme West Partnership Collaborative Enquiry

Feedback from teachers and youth work practitioners who participated in the West Partnership Regional Improvement Collaborative practitioner enquiry.

The aim of the practitioner enquiry was to enable established youth work and school partnerships to reflect on the strengths and challenges of their joint working, and make recommendations for onward development and support. More on the process and insights from that can be found [here](#).

“The collaborative enquiry with YouthLink Scotland has been very good for us. It’s helped us reflect as a [youth work and school] partnership on where we’re at. We’ve taken a step back and a fresh look at things. I think it’s made us more strategic in our approach and it’s been great to share practice with colleagues from other local authorities across the West.” Depute Head Teacher

“This work reignited interest locally in the value of youth work and school partnerships – helped us as practitioners (and a wider group of local decision-makers) to see that if you get partnership working right it will really make a difference to outcomes for young people.” Youth Work Manager

“Working this way has allowed us to identify meaningful measurements that sometimes feel tricky to measure.” Depute Head Teacher

“This process gave us the time and space to measure and to plan together – and to consider how we could work better in future.” Youth Work Team Leader

“This facilitated approach to self-evaluation helped us show deep impact.” Youth Work Team Leader

Participating youth workers and teachers tell us the work has positively influenced:

- A wider understanding of the value of a youth work approach across the school community
- A more ‘strategic, outcome focused’ approach to partnership work
- A more considered joint approach to planning and measuring the impact of their youth work and school partnerships
- (In some cases) local decision-making around additional funding for youth work in school

Senior stakeholders from Education Scotland and local authorities in the West attended a learning event with participating practitioners in the spring, leading to a set of local commitments to share learning and heighten the profile of youth work and school partnerships in their localities.



#YouthWorkChangesLives



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