A Collaborative Approach to Tracking Achievement with a Focus on Skills in Alva Academy

Utilising the national Youth Work Outcomes and Skills Framework as a tool to support the mapping and understanding of skills for young people within the opportunities for personal achievement in the Alva Academy learning community

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Introduction

The pilot was facilitated by Community Learning and Development (CLD) Officers in Education Scotland in partnership with YouthLink Scotland. This pilot trialled the National Youth Work Outcomes & Skills Framework across a school learning community as a tool to support the measurement, development and understanding of skills and to build a common language to recognise and track young people's achievements. It came as a result of the Forth Valley and West Lothian Achievement project which conducted research in the region surrounding personal achievements.

A young person-centred process was facilitated by teachers and youth workers who deliver opportunities for personal achievement through a range of groups and activities in the school and community. This report details the pilot process over the academic year 2023/24. It outlines the key findings as well as the methodology, data and insights from practitioners and young people.

The pilot aimed to utilise the framework to help young people understand and articulate their skills while establishing a shared language around skills across the learning community. It also looked to build a comprehensive view of young people's personal achievements over the academic year and map the skills developed through this non-formal learning.

The framework provided the scaffolding for this approach which was underpinned by CLD values and principles throughout. The framework was developed by YouthLink Scotland through careful consultation with the youth work sector and young people over a number of years. It has proved to be a valuable tool in planning and evaluating youth work, and most importantly in providing a structure for reflective learning conversations with young people on their youth work journey. The framework can connect well with skills frameworks within schools, however it is not intended to replace them or be used in formal education contexts.

1. Summary of Findings

Almost all of the 57 young people involved in the pilot evidenced progress in developing skills through participation in personal achievement opportunities across school and community settings. The focus was not merely on counting those who evidenced skills growth but on empowering young people to better understand, describe, and take ownership of their skills development.

Throughout the pilot, all involved recognised the critical role of the youth work approach, grounded in Community Learning and Development (CLD) values, ethics, and competencies.

Successes

- The Youth Work Outcome and Skills Framework provided a shared, accessible skills language across school and community contexts. This enabled young people to reflect on their progress, identify strengths, and plan for the future
- Both young people and practitioners reported an improved understanding of skills across various contexts
- Practitioners, including youth workers and teachers, could effectively track and evidence skills development across diverse achievement settings
- Young people gained confidence in articulating their skills, understanding their importance, and applying them in written and verbal contexts
- Spaces for collaboration, idea-sharing, and building confidence in using the framework were essential for success

Challenges & Opportunities

- Teachers needed time to become familiar with the framework, highlighting the importance of professional learning opportunities
- Some practitioners faced challenges in finding time to record observations and capture evidence regularly
- Youth workers' expertise in skills tracking and achievement was recognised as valuable in supporting teachers

Key Feedback

Young People: They reflected that they understood the skills they developed, why these skills mattered and noticed when they had made progress on a skill more so that before this pilot. Many highlighted the importance of being given the opportunity to reflect on skills progress and using varied methods to measure and evidence their skills. Young people gave 10 recommendations to make this approach successful in other settings. (detailed in section 7)

Practitioners: Youth workers and teachers valued the framework's ability to map skills development comprehensively. It provided clear ways to evidence of growth across different learning contexts while strengthening partnerships between youth work and school settings.

Summary Conclusion

This pilot demonstrated a transformative learning experience for all involved. By prioritising agency and ownership, the approach empowered young people to grow and articulate their skills effectively. It also fostered professional collaboration, reinforcing the value of a shared skills framework for personal achievement opportunities across youth work, CLD and school settings.

The prospect for further development locally, regionally, and nationally is clear, with potential for strengthened partnerships and broader impact on the wider skills agenda as part of education reform.

2. Background

In late 2023, Education Scotland CLD officers published the [Achievement Project in Forth Valley and West Lothian (FVWL).](#) This research project was carried out by Education Scotland and partners in the FVWL Regional Improvement Collaborative (RIC). It investigated how young people's personal achievements, out with the formal curriculum, were recognised and recorded across schools and CLD providers. The report concluded with ten recommendations for schools and community partners. These focused on steps to support a broader range of children and young people's achievements to be recognised, recorded and tracked throughout their education journey. Some of these recommendations highlighted where the Community Learning and Development (CLD) sector and schools could work together to support improvement.

> **Recommendation 3:** Schools and CLD providers should develop local collaborative partnerships to support the development of achievement opportunities and youth awards. This should involve staff upskilling, shadowing and practice sharing opportunities at a local level. Partnership agreements should be co-designed and regularly evaluated.

> **Recommendation 4:** Schools and CLD partners, including youth work providers and youth award providers, should work together to build a common language to recognise children and young people's personal achievements – in school and in their communities.

In addition, recommendation eight outlined that the Youth Work Outcomes and Skills framework could be a useful tool in helping the wider education system map skills that are being developed by children and young people through personal achievements

> **Recommendation 8:** This pilot has demonstrated that the Youth Work Outcomes and Skills Framework is a valuable tool to support shared planning and evaluation between youth work partners and schools. It also allows for accurate and meaningful skills mapping for children and young people. Professional learning and support in FVWL to increase awareness and use of the Framework should be a priority.

School staff who took part in the original project stated that they needed tools to help them accurately map young people's skills development through participation in achievement opportunities. Youth work and CLD teams also noted that the framework is already an effective tool used to demonstrate the impact youth work has on skill development, articulation and reflection.

Wider than this region, there is evidence surrounding the provision of achievement opportunities and their ability to grow skills. Youth awards are widely used across the youth work and formal education sector to create opportunities for young people to build and recognise their own skills achievements. A recent report from the Awards Network highlighted that:

"Youth awards can be an important factor in empowering young people to be active and engaged agents in their own learning. Youth awards can facilitate the recognition of young people's rights in their learning journey and provide a means with which to recognise their achievements and skills beyond the classroom." Pg 13
Acting on Achievement Report (2024)

Key messages within the FVWL Achievement Project were mirrored in the Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment (2023) which identified a need for a more holistic recognition of learners achievements, skills and competencies:

"learners should have opportunities to have recognised broader evidence of their achievements socially, culturally and economically. Many learners held a strong view on this broader view of recognising their achievements" pg. 33
Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment

This supports views gathered from young people participating in youth work during the National Discussion, who called for education to better value their skills and achievements through youth work.

Additionally, the Independent Review of Community Learning and Development highlights the role of youth work and wider CLD partners in improving school attendance and engagement. It describes the positive impact of the sector's ability to provide tailored learning pathways and approaches (recognising that the classroom doesn't work for every learner), skills development, and support for those who need it.

Although the research for the basis of this pilot was localised to one region, the findings and recommendations connect well with national policy and guidance. The recommendations help to measure young people's Opportunities for Personal Achievement – one of the 4 contexts for learning in Scottish Curriculum for Excellence

Partnership Approach

The pilot was facilitated by Community Learning and Development (CLD) Officers in Education Scotland in partnership with YouthLink Scotland. YouthLink Scotland is the national agency for youth work. It is a membership organisation and is in the unique position of representing the interests and aspirations of the whole of the youth work sector in Scotland, both voluntary and statutory.

The CLD sector is made up of distinct disciplines of youth work, adult learning, family learning and community development. CLD empowers individuals and communities to identify goals, engage in learning, achieve and take action for change by using a range of diverse methods. The CLD profession is underpinned by the values, ethics and competencies outlined by the CLD Standards Council.

As a discipline of CLD, youth work is a powerful, dynamic and versatile education practice that equips young people with the tools and support they need to reach their fullest potential. Youth work facilitates young people's personal, social and educational development, enables them to develop their voice, influence and place in society. It's nature and purpose are to develop young people holistically through relationships and in places they tend to be.

The Alva Academy Learning Community

Alva Academy is a state secondary school in Clackmannanshire with over 900 pupils. The Head Teacher at Alva Academy expressed an interest in piloting the Youth Work Outcomes & Skills Framework across a selection of non-formal curriculum and personal achievement opportunities including youth award initiatives, youth democracy groups, volunteering and leadership programmes.

Initial scoping for the pilot involved existing partners linked to Alva Academy including third sector organisation Ochil Youths Community Improvement and Clackmannanshire Local Authority CLD management. Initial joint discussions with school and community based staff formed the beginning of the pilot project which commenced autumn 2023 and proceeded through the academic year to June 2024.

All practitioners delivered achievement opportunities through group activities or projects within the Alva Academy community, some utilising youth awards such as Duke of Edinburgh. Due to staffing restructures in the Clackmannanshire CLD team there will shortly be a CLD practitioner based within the school to further support partnership working across the community.

3. Methodology

The process for implementing this approach involved a number of distinct phases to ensure it's ambition and desired outcomes were understood by all practitioners involved.

The methodology taken to ensure this is detailed below.

Pilot Collaboration Principles

The National Youth Work Outcomes and Skills Framework provided the scaffolding for this approach and, from the outset of the pilot, a learning partnership was established that reflected important hallmarks of youth work practice, underpinned by CLD values and principles.

The collaborative approach engaged young people, teachers and youth workers as partners in the learning process at every stage, with young people at the centre. It was constructed with an asset-based model ensuring skill levels are not seen from a deficit perspective, while being 'done with' not 'done to' young people. All of the young people and practitioners involved chose to participate in this process and had opportunities to shape it as it developed.

Aims of Approach

- Empower young people to notice, make sense of and articulate their skills and strengths, and how these are developing and evolving over time
- Map the skills that young people have developed through achievement opportunities in a tangible and evidence-based way
- Inform conversations about young people's individual progress surrounding skills and their next steps as learners
- Allow schools and communities to build a common language and collective picture of young people's progress and achievements
- Shape the design and delivery of future learning opportunities for young people in school and community settings
- Inform service self-evaluation, strategy, planning and development
- Support workforce and partnership development

Planning

Education Scotland and YouthLink Scotland supported the school to identify a group of practitioners within the learning community who would lead the pilot. Staff involved delivered different activities within the school learning community including projects focusing on youth participation, awards and volunteering. The majority of the young people involved were from S3 (14-15 years old) with a cohort selected to keep the pilot numbers manageable.

Practitioners involved were:
- Ochil Youths Community Improvement (OYCI) Chief Officer, School Based Worker and Community Based Workers

- Local Authority CLD Lead Officer
- Music, Religious Education, Physical Education, Maths, Modern Studies and Additional Support Needs Teachers

The projects the practitioners led included:
- Rights Respecting School group
- Duke of Edinburgh Award
- Volunteering project group
- Pupil Parliament
- Learning for Life group
- OYCI Youth and Leadership programmes
- Sports Leadership programme

At the beginning of the pilot, practitioners participated in a professional learning session on the Youth Work Outcomes and Skills Framework, the specific skills and associated behavioural indicators. OYCI shared how they currently use the framework within their practice in a youth work setting and explained why it was useful across a range of groups and settings. This session also highlighted and developed the approaches that would be used for evidence gathering and data capture.

Process

Each practitioner identified specific skills from the framework that young people would be most likely to develop through participation in their programme. Practitioners then selected a number of associated "I can" behavioural indicator statements that describe different dimensions of the skills they shortlisted. The 'I can statements' are key in demonstrating how progress is being made by young people towards a particular skill.

"The indicators are useful – they help everyone to understand what we mean when we talk about 'confidence' for example." - Teacher

Each practitioner identified a maximum of 12 behavioural indicators which they planned to explore and track with participating young people. This allowed them to create a manageable focus within their groups. Throughout the academic year practitioners worked alongside young people to capture and triangulate evidence associated with behavioural indicators that demonstrated progress towards these skills.

"We need to take care that reviewing progress does not become repetitive and boring for young people. It's important not to try to measure everything and to balance direct feedback from young people with our own observations." - Youth Worker

Below is an example of how this might have looked for an individual young person:

Name		Young Person 1	
Achievement	**Opportunity**	Pupil Council OR Youth Forum	
Skill		Decision Making	
Behavioural Indicator	Evidence Type	Evidence	Date
I can explain why I made a choice	Progress Scales	They completed a scale in the Autumn and in the Spring which asked how capable they felt about explaining the choices they made. The scale showed a 60% improvement	Sept 23 & May 24
	Observation	Practitioner witnessed them explaining why they believed running a fundraiser in the school and community would help to raise money for a charity.	Jan 24
I can participate in a decision making process	Observation	Teacher in a class observed them joining in on votes regarding topics that are covered in class. Before they would not participate.	Feb 24
	Quality Conversation	Young person states they feel more confident in getting involved in decisions that affect them. They feel that they can make their voice heard and have something worthwhile to share.	Apr 24

Evidencing

Evidence gathered included recorded discussions, peer to peer activities, reflective statements, and staff observations, as well as start and end point scales captured at different points throughout the year. Evidence was stored locally by practitioners in various formats including documents, pictures, videos, audio recordings, feedback sheets and online forms. At the end of the year evidence was summarised to show progress made by young people involved in their programme of activity.

If there was no evidence linked to a particular skill for any individual, no progress was reported for that specific skill. Throughout the process it was generally accepted that this could mean impact was underreported.

Do's and Don'ts for Evidence Gathering

There was no set amount of evidence required however practitioners were encouraged to follow some key guidance to ensure it was robust and relevant:

Do...
- Introduce young people and practitioners to the National Youth Work Outcomes and Skills framework before project delivery begins.
- Work with partners and young people to agree a shortlist of skills and indicators to track and evidence progress.
- Use a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods to gather evidence.
- Invest in relationships that support natural, encouraging, interested discussions that allow a young person to reflect on what skills they are developing and what practitioners/adults have noticed (these don't have to be long and they can be small group conversations as well as one-to-one check-ins)
- Notice what works for young people in supporting reflective conversations and build from that. Little and often is best.
- Triangulate evidence of impact from different sources to build as compelling a picture of impact as possible and to help young people notice what's changing - your own observations, parental observations and other partner observations are useful alongside feedback from young people gather evidence directly from young people as well as practitioner/adult observation.
- Encourage peer to peer conversations as an evidence source
- Record evidence regularly and methodically e.g. online form, annotated photo, log etc. Voice note apps can be a useful timesaver week to week.

Don't ...
- Try to report on everything - stick to the shortlist of skills and indicators that feel relevant to your project and the young people involved.
- Ask the same questions from week to week to track progress - vary your approach, especially with young people
- Ask leading questions as this doesn't add value to a young person's skills development.
- Solely focus on start, middle and end metrics of skills development - gather short reflections and observations session by session.
- Make evidence gathering a tick box exercise and gather it in a hurried and reactionary way - it should be a sense-making exercise that supports young people's learning.
- Assume that you have to record everything in writing - use voice notes / short videos and pictures to help make this manageable. Do it little and regularly.

At the end of the year practitioners summarised the evidence collected and provided a quantitative and qualitative picture of progress made by young people involved in their programme of activity.

4. Timeline of Pilot

The pilot began Autumn 2023 and ended June 2024. Education Scotland and YouthLink Scotland staff attended the school at certain times throughout the year to provide training, support and guidance. These check ins were necessary to ensure that the pilot progressed in a consistent manner and a young person-centred approach with youth work practice principles and CLD values were at its core.

Below are the key milestones and outputs throughout this timeline:

Introduction to Framework (October 2023)
- Initial introduction to the pilot with staff from across learning community
- Professional learning provided on framework, skills and measuring progress
- Each lead practitioner selected the most relevant skills and associated "I can" statements (max. 12)
- Input and demonstrations of different methods to capture evidence

Check in Session 1 (December 2023)
- Focused discussion on main challenges and learning points so far
- Early indications on which methods of gathering evidence were working well
- Time to support a deeper understanding of the framework and potential value

Check in Session 2 (March 2024)
- Input on "So What?", explained end data capture approaches and submission
- Practitioners gave presentations to update on evidence gathering so far, pilot progress, confidence in data submission and completion timescale
- Discussion on pros and cons of evidence gathering approaches
- Details of data submission expectations highlighted for May

Data Submission (May 2024)
- Staff submitted completed data via the agreed template by the end of May.
- Data submitted using the template included the number of young people who achieved progress towards particular skills and types of evidence gathering used, and included the views of young people and practitioners involved

Check in Session 3 (June 2024)
- Education Scotland and YouthLink met a focus group of young people to gather their views on the pilot
- Feedback on data shared including final numbers of young people who made progress towards specific skills
- Feedback gathered from practitioners on pilot including views on process, data gathering, evidence approaches, opportunities, challenges and next steps

5. Data Gathered

As outlined earlier in this document, it was important to gather both qualitative and quantitative data to explore young people's progress and impact of personal achievement opportunities across the learning community. As practitioners selected

the specific skills and indicators that were relevant to their context, not all groups measured the same skills and indicators.

Although it was not the main focus of this pilot, the process of gathering quantitative data did support richer discussions with young people about their own skills development journey.

In total, 57 young people participated in this pilot. The details of each group/activity[1] and the amount of young people involved in each is detailed below:

Group Name	OYCI Leadership	Rights Respecting Schools	Duke of Edinburgh	Learning for Life	Volunteering
No. of young people	14	10	25	5	3

Skill Areas

Across the 5 different groups, the range of opportunities covered almost all of the skills within the Youth Work Outcomes & Skills Framework. The table below lists the specific skills and which activity/groups each skill was measured by:

Skill	Measured by
Confidence	All
Resilience	OYCI Youth and Leadership programmes. Duke of Edinburgh.
Looking after myself	-
Building relationships	OYCI Youth and Leadership programmes. Volunteering.
Communication	All
Organising and Planning	OYCI Youth and Leadership programmes. Rights Respecting Schools. Duke of Edinburgh. Volunteering.
Decision Making	OYCI Youth and Leadership programmes
Problem Solving	OYCI Youth and Leadership programmes
Teamwork	OYCI. Duke of Edinburgh. Learning for Life
Leadership	OYCI. Rights Respecting Schools. Duke of Edinburgh
Creating Change	OYCI Youth and Leadership programmes

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[1] Due to unforeseen circumstances data from the Sports Leader programme was not received. This may be added to this report later.

Practitioners used a mixture of approaches to create a triangulated view on an individual young person's progress towards each skill.

Evidence methods included but were not limited to:

- Young Person feedback and quality conversations
- Skills baseline and pre/post questionnaires
- Peer to peer activities
- Voice recordings
- Observation forms
- Teacher & Youth Worker feedback
- Parent, Partner and Practitioner feedback
- End of Program evidence
- Tangible evidence – presentations, posters, photos etc.

It is important to reinforce that there was no minimum level expected on "how much" progress a young person had to make towards each skill. If there was clear evidence to demonstrate a young person had made progress towards a skill, regardless of the scale of said evidence, it was counted in the overall numbers. This approach for data gathering remains consistent with ensuring that young people remained at the centre of the process.

Data gathered for specific skills

Below highlights a selection of skills, the amount of young people that made progress towards them, and the means of which progress was demonstrated. Some views from young people and practitioners are also included.

Confidence

Skill	OYCI Leadership	Rights Respecting Schools	Duke of Edinburgh	Learning for Life	Volunteering
Confidence	14	10	10	5	3

Total number of young people where this skill was measured	57
Total number of young people evidenced making progress	42
Total percentage of young people evidenced making progress in this skill	74%

Data gathered for **Confidence** demonstrated that this skill was measured for all 57 young people across every opportunity. All 14 young people participating in OYCI leadership programmes demonstrated progress in this skill. **The data demonstrated that 42 of young people were able to evidence making progress in this skill (74%).**

Practitioners engaged young people in quality conversations to help them articulate their reflections about confidence in group activities. Young people complete pre activity questionnaires to gather baseline ratings for confidence indicators. Initially hesitant, the individuals gradually expressed their ideas more clearly, reflecting on the positive feedback received from their peers. The increased in willingness to participate and share opinions was evidence of progress in developing confidence. This ongoing dialogue highlighted the growth of the individuals and underscored the importance of creating a supportive environment for skill development. Young people highlighted they enjoyed reflecting on pre-activity questionnaires and discussing their progress with peers.

"I am more able to talk to teachers and adults. Being involved in the whole school recycling program has helped my confidence. I think my confidence has improved."
– Young person

"The overall feeling of being more confident was shown by all with a particular reference to 2 individuals who felt confident enough with a new skill to share with others." – Teacher

Communication

Skill	OYCI Leadership	Rights Respecting Schools	Duke of Edinburgh	Learning for Life	Volunteering
Communication	14	10	10	5	3

Total number of young people where this skill was measured	57
Total number of young people evidenced making progress	42
Total percentage of young people evidenced making progress in this skill	74%

Data gathered for **Communication** also demonstrated that this skill was measured for all 57 young people across every opportunity. **The data demonstrated that 42 of young people were able to evidence making progress in this skill (74%).**

For the 3 young people participating in Volunteering and measuring their progress in communication, all 3 could evidence progress. Teachers and youth workers gathering the data noted that the actual number of young people making progress was probably higher than this but recognised that reporting should reflect concrete evidence of progress.

Young people participating in the Rights Respecting Schools Award Group used a range of mixed methods to evidence progress in communication. Evidencing methods included staff observations triangulated with conversations with young people and feedback from other members of staff around the school. The practitioner leading the group stated:

"Young people involved in the RRSA group have had to work hard to improve their communication skills. The thing to be noted in this case in particular is their positive communication with members of staff. Previously when arranging events students would create resources/information and have teachers send it out. Since the start of this process young people have taken ownership of communication methods for events and when interacting with teachers and other members of staff." - Teacher

Organising and Planning

Skill	OYCI Leadership	Rights Respecting Schools	Duke of Edinburgh	Learning for Life	Volunteering
Organising and Planning	12	8	25	0	3

Total number of young people where this skill was measured	52
Total number of young people evidenced making progress	48
Total percentage of young people evidenced making progress in this skill	92%

Data gathered for **Organising and Planning** demonstrated that out of the **52 young people working on this skill, 48 evidenced making progress (92%) across the 4 programmes which were looking at this skill.**

For the 25 young people participating in Duke of Edinburgh's Award measuring their progress in organising and planning, all 25 were able to evidence their progress in this skill (100%).

Young people participating in the OYCI Leadership Group were able to demonstrate their progress in this skill while undertaking peer mentor training and developing transition sessions for Primary 7's. Practitioners enhanced the recognition of this skill through one to one discussions, skills observation sheets and peer to peer discussion activities to support the young people to reflect on their skills development. The lead practitioner explained that:

"5 of our S3-S5 Leaders completed Peer Mentor training with Youth Scotland & Place2B mental health charity, setting their own targets and gaining an additional Dynamic Youth Award. They have applied for a £250 grant to set up a lunchtime Drop-in, to help support mental health & well-being of other young people in school. They planned what resources they would need for the sessions." – Youth worker

"I researched and planned which games would be suitable. I organised the equipment needed" - Young person

Teamwork

Skill	OYCI Leadership	Rights Respecting Schools	Duke of Edinburgh	Learning for Life	Volunteering
Teamwork	12	0	5	5	0

Total number of young people where this skill was measured	44
Total number of young people evidenced making progress	22
Total percentage of young people evidenced making progress in this skill	50%

Data gathered for **Teamwork** demonstrated that out of the **44 young people working on this skill, 22 evidenced making progress (50%).**

For the 14 young people participating in OYCI leadership programmes, 12 demonstrated progress in this skill (86%). Practitioners supported young people to reflect on their teamworking achievements through one-to-one discussions, peer to peer activities and skills baseline sheets – this was enhanced by practitioners using an online platform to record observations and input skills scoring at several points in the programme.

Within the Duke of Edinburgh group, it could be evidenced that 5 of the young people made progress in teamwork, however this does not mean that more young people did not make progress in this area. Time for quality discussions with young people was crucial in this pilot process to support understanding and reflection on a particular skill. This is articulated by two young who said that:

"It can be difficult sometimes, I don't always get on with everyone in the group, I have different ideas, but I can still work with them" – Young person

"I wasn't just going with my own ideas; I was listening to what other people had to say and deciding" – Young person

6. Insights from Young People and Practitioners

At the end of the academic year practitioners and young people who were involved within the pilot gave feedback. Detailed below are their views on how their understanding and awareness of skills had changed in relation to personal achievement opportunities within the school and community.

Insights from Young People

With young people at the centre of this approach, it was important to gather their views and triangulate findings. At the beginning and end of the pilot, focus groups were held with young people. Feedback from focus group sessions was supported by information and quotations from young people which were captured throughout the process by practitioners.

Feedback from young people was analysed and summarised into **Ten Key Recommendations:**

1. Make sure you use words we understand when you talk about skills
2. Explain why skills matter
3. Go into detail about what skills mean and why this is important for us
4. Help us understand what skills we can develop through a specific activity
5. It would be good to have reminders about skills so it's in our minds more
6. Make it fun and active – not just listening
7. Give us more opportunities to talk about our skills with you
8. Make sure you give us time to prepare if you are going to ask us questions or ask our views, so it isn't a surprise when you do
9. Conversations with our peers really help, just the chance to chat about what we think we have done well or improved on.
10. We can help to run activities that would introduce skills to younger children so they understand what skills are, what skills they already have and why they matter

During the focus group sessions young people told us of the **value** of using a **consistent, clear and understandable framework** to discuss skills. Feedback from the young people on the language and format of the Youth Work Outcomes and Skills Framework was positive. Young people said that having context and developing understanding of what a skills means, and looks like in practice, was helpful.

> *"Having the framework and the descriptions of different skills was really helpful. Talking about these at the beginning helped me realise that we all have a different idea of what, for example 'confidence' is. It was good to think about the different bits of each skill and that what matters changes at different times."*
> - Young Person

Young people told us that **focusing on skills** and skills development matters to them because they had opportunities to develop a deeper understanding of what skills mean and how they relate their experiences to skills development.

> *"It has helped me see what I have done and why it is important to me. It will help me explain why I was good in my volunteering and what skills I have because of it."*

> *"It's good for our futures as we need skills to get jobs and go into college and uni. We need to be able to talk about them."*

> *"It helped me with choosing my subjects as I knew what skills I am good it and I could pick subjects that needed those kind of skills."*

Young people told us that they appreciated and enjoyed having a **range of methods** to measuring their progress towards specific skills. Methods included voice recordings, pre and post questionnaires, discussions with peers and discussions with staff.

> *"We had the chance to do voice recording about how we feel our skills have improved. This helped me think about it more and say what I felt. It was easier than writing things down."*

> *"We also got a scale for the 'I can' statements. We got asked this at the start and the end and it helped me see how I had got better at something."*

Different approaches work for different individuals. Some young people liked their own space to write down their reflections. Also, when young people struggled to capture their own evidence, observations and quality conversations proved essential in highlighting skills progress.

Why talking about skills works

Throughout the pilot young people told us that for them, talking about skills supported the development of a stronger understanding of the skills and their progress towards developing them. Young people explained that talking, alongside other methods, supported their understanding of skills and told us that it took practice to feel more confident to talk about different skills and articulate what was changing for them.

It supports understanding:

"When you talk about it you have more chances to ask questions and discuss it. It helped me understand my own skills as my teacher could explain it to be better if I wasn't sure how I had got better at a skill."

It supports critical thinking:

"It was good talking individually with the youth worker. It made me really think. But I liked talking about it in a group too – sometimes someone would say something that had changed for them, and I'd realise I'd got better at that thing too."

It supports detailed discussion:

"Speaking is better, you can say what you want without having to write, I can go into more detail when talking".

Insights from Practitioners

Below are the collated views of practitioners who were involved within the pilot.

Successes

The Youth Work Skills and Outcomes Framework meets a clear need: All involved in the pilot recognised that there is a need to support and develop young people's understanding of skills. It was recognised that the framework can support young people in feeling more confident to articulate their skills, strengths and areas for development.

"The language of the National Youth Work Outcomes and Skills Framework is simple and accessible for young people – you can use it with any age group S1-S6" - Teacher

"The indicators are useful – they help everyone to understand what we mean when we talk about 'confidence' for example." Teacher

Developing confidence with a common language: Everyone agreed that there is great value in developing a common language that young people become familiar with across different learning settings – in school and in the community. It was clear that this common language supported practitioners (and young people) to develop confidence in using the terminology of skills:

"The framework is made up of really accessible language – that's why I've picked it up and I can use it colloquially. That's why it's become subconscious and felt really meaningful. It's totally embedded in my teaching language now." - Teacher

"Having a common language across the team was an important part of building confidence to talk about skills" - Youth Worker

Strength in partnership approach: Having ring-fenced time to come together as a multi-disciplinary practitioner group (youth workers and teachers) was really valuable in supporting a partnership approach, sharing learning and overcoming challenges together.

"We don't often get the opportunity to come together as colleagues (youth work and school) and learn from one another – that's been valuable." - Youth Worker

This partnership approach gave young people the opportunity to identify and discuss their progress across the school community:

"Young people can see progress in school and out of school – it's all part of their own development." - Teacher

"As young people become more familiar with the language of the framework, the depth and confidence of their reflections improves" - Youth worker

Connections with Youth Awards: It was understood that youth awards are a useful tool to create opportunities for personal achievement for young people to develop and reflect on their skills. Although youth awards create ways for practitioners to work with young people to develop their skills they aren't always necessary as the youth work approach does this naturally.

"For us as educators, it brings it home that it's not just about achieving the award." - Teacher

Challenges

Time: Time to build practitioner understanding of the skills framework is crucial, as is time to support high quality review conversations with young people and sometimes it is not easy to create this time in the school context. Having time for skills discussions appeared to be a more natural part of an established rhythm of doing and reviewing youth work practice. Teachers reflected that supporting young people to achieve awards like Duke of Edinburgh depends on the delivery of prescribed content which makes it challenging to free up additional time to introduce the skills framework in a thorough manner.

The challenge of time also relates to differences in overall group sizes and time spent with young people in school and youth work contexts.

"It's important this isn't tokenistic, and we don't have the time we need to help young people make sense of the questions we're asking [about skills]." - Teacher

It was recognised that supporting young people to discuss skills in small groups and peer to peer activities could possibly alleviate some of the time pressures.

"Individual / small group discussion works best, and this takes time – but taking short opportunities to do this over the course of the programme make it manageable." - Youth Worker

It's a process – not a tick box exercise: When time is tight, there are risks that this process would turn into a tick box exercise. The richness of the process is in creating time for rich discussions, and the journey of supporting of young people to recognise and record their own skills development:

"We need to take care that reviewing progress does not become repetitive and boring for young people. It's important not to try to measure everything and to balance direct feedback from young people with our own observations." - Youth Worker

Creating a clear focus for reviewing progress is key: Capturing and reviewing progress can be tricky however the actual process is naturally happening in most situations:

"Doing the observations and have the conversations is one thing – but having the time to keep a record of them all is really difficult. We want to focus on the moments for reflection – rather than spending time on recording evidence." - Teacher

Opportunities

Building (everyone's) confidence to have conversations about skills is an important first step. To support reflective learning conversations about skills, both teachers and youth workers highlighted the need to build confidence (their own and that of young people).

"School staff need to be trained and confident to deliver this. Nobody told us at uni how to teach skills." - Teacher

Expertise in youth work practice and CLD methodology: It was clear that youth workers bring confidence and experience in supporting these kinds of conversations and could help to build confidence across the school community.

"As relationships improve, the quality of the conversations [about skills development and next steps] improves" - Youth Worker

"Nothing is standalone – learning doesn't stop at the school gate either – skills are the common thread across settings in school and in the community." - Teacher

Widening this approach: There could be an opportunity to widen this approach to other youth work and school partnerships with Clackmannanshire. The CLD team within the local authority would be best place to take a lead on this ambition, informed by learning from the pilot a high school and it's community.

7. Conclusion and Next Steps

This pilot demonstrates the importance of young people having access to personal achievement opportunities across their school and community. Through participation they develop a range of skills while also improving their wellbeing, knowledge, resilience and social connections.

The National Youth Work Outcomes and Skills Framework is a valuable tool in supporting young people to notice and articulate what they develop through participation in personal achievement opportunities across a wide range of learning experiences. It also provides a straightforward common language that enables teachers and youth workers to build a compelling picture of young people's achievements within school and community-based settings.

The pilot shows that practitioners who originate from different sectors can successfully utilise the framework and do so in partnership. This approach grew practitioners own understanding of skills and allowed the language of skills to be better incorporated into their practice.

Young people involved in the pilot stated a number of positives from using the Framework within their activities and groups across school and community contexts. As there was consistency within the approach across different settings, they felt more confident in the language, the meaning and development of skills within their own lives. Importantly, young people were able to reflect on what skills they had made progress in and could articulate how this contributed to their personal and future goals.

Youth work practitioners showed expertise in supporting young people explore and articulate their skills, while helping them notice when they are making progress. Teachers learned from this expertise and gained confidence in utilising a skills language, sharing ideas on gathering evidence and introducing quality conversations into their practice with young people.

This pilot links closely with several of the recommendations within the Independent review of qualifications and assessment and the Independent Review of the Skills Delivery Landscape. The approach demonstrates a practical way in which skills language can be integrated with the personal achievements of young people. It shows that these elements can be profiled successfully and tangibly across a learning community.

There are clear opportunities for this approach to be further developed and trialled with other learning communities. The approach is currently being cascaded to another setting with the process being led by the CLD youth work practitioner within the school with initial capacity-building support from YouthLink Scotland and Education Scotland. This is being seen as an essential step to improve its success and sustainability.

To support the facilitation of this approach in other settings, YouthLink Scotland have created a national toolkit with information and guidance based on the evidence from the pilot in Alva.