

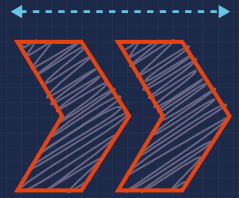
Youth Scotland Strategy 2024–29

Growing Sustainable Community-Based Youth Work





Who we are



Our Purpose

Is to grow and develop community-based youth work.

Our Mission

Is to support young people to achieve their full potential.

Our Vision

Is a country which values community-based youth work and its positive impact on young people's lives.

Our Pillars

As a national youth work organisation, Youth Scotland's work is expansive and varied, but much of what we do can be put in four key areas of community-based youth work that we call our 4 Pillars:

1. Membership: supporting our member youth groups

Our ambition is for all young people, regardless of their circumstances, to benefit from high quality community-based youth work through the Youth Scotland network.

2. Programmes: youth leadership and national programmes

Our ambition is for young people across all 32 Local Authorities to have the opportunity to grow and develop their everyday leadership skills and to use their voice in their communities through our youth participation projects.

3. Training: training volunteers and youth workers

Our ambition is to build on our reputation as the leading provider of training and capacity-building for the youth work sector in Scotland, improving the skills and confidence of those who are supporting young people.

4. Youth awards: accredited youth awards

Our ambition is that we will create more opportunities for young people to gain recognition for all their achievements through the accredited Hi5 Award, Dynamic Youth Awards and Youth Achievement Awards at SCQF levels 2-7.



Foreword

As we have collectively considered and consulted on the future path for our organisation, we have been acutely aware that the emerging needs and aspirations of our communities lie with Scotland's young people. This 2024–2029 strategy is our pledge to young people and the community-based volunteers, youth workers and groups who will play such a significant role in supporting them to achieve their full potential.

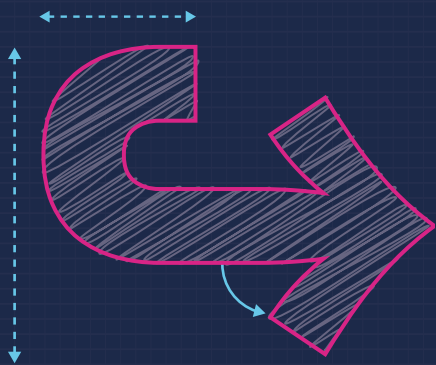
This strategy started life as full-complement away-day with the Board of Trustees and staff team, creating the time and space to thoroughly and impartially examine our previous strategy, *Changing Lives Through Community-Based Youth Work. A Strategy for 2020–2023*, particularly in the context of the unforeseen challenges when that document was created. We were pleased that the core of our strategy had been fit for purpose, regardless of how it came to be applied through a global pandemic and cost of living crisis but, ever determined, we aspire for continual improvement.



We captured fresh and ambitious aims for our path through the next five years and then sought to consult with a wide cross-section of stakeholders to stress test our assumptions and direction. Over the course of 2023, we have had significant inputs from young people at our events and programmes; we have heard from passionate and knowledgeable community-based youth workers in our Leaders' Forum; feedback from an open membership survey; talked with our Area Association partners; incisive input from funding partners and full-circle to our own people. This strategy then is a product of a shared vision and we feel privileged to be its custodians.

As we look towards an evolving landscape, this strategy is both our plan and a reminder. We move forward with a clear direction: grow and develop community-based youth work; support young people to achieve their full potential and to help build a country which values community-based youth work and its impact on young people's lives.

William Miller
Chair of Youth Scotland



The context

Youth Scotland - through its work at the heart of community-based youth work - is well-placed to be an active partner in the delivery of key policy areas in Scotland. Youth work is a pragmatic and grassroots endeavour that often has the opportunity to impact positively in some of the most disadvantaged communities; 67% of Youth Scotland members operate in SIMD 1-5 postcodes.

Supporting the ambitions of Scotland's National Performance Framework (NPF), our strategy seeks support efforts across the community-based youth work sector to create a Scotland where our young people are cherished, supported, and empowered to achieve their utmost. Simply put, we envisage opportunities for every young person to thrive in their education, health, and well-being - all within communities where their rights are recognised and upheld.

Providing additional structure to that vision is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which serves as our guide to ensuring that young people's rights are embedded in every facet of Scottish life. We endorse the Scottish Government's commitment to enshrining these rights within our legal system, taking a step towards a society where the interests of young people are at the forefront of every decision.



The principles of Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) underpin our approach, ensuring that from the earliest stages of life, young people are supported and their voices heard. As Scotland embarks on significant Education Reform, the role of youth work becomes even more pivotal in supporting young learners, ensuring that their journey through education is both enriching and supportive.

'Keeping The Promise' reflects our collective responsibility to transform the care experience for young Scots, placing love and dignity at its heart. Similarly, 'Best Start, Bright Futures' confronts the challenge of child poverty head-on, striving to ensure that all young people can realise their potential, regardless of their start in life. Our regular Leaders' Forums and member consultations empower us to be the voice of community-based youth work, capturing the challenges and issues affecting young people at a grassroots level.

Through the Scottish Attainment Challenge, we are dedicated to closing the attainment gap that poverty can create. This strategy advocates for strong partnerships between youth work and educational settings, recognising the unique role that youth work plays in helping young people to overcome barriers to achievement.



Membership and network

What change do we want to see?

We will offer a comprehensive membership package – tailored to the emerging needs of community-based youth work groups – from their inception to becoming thriving, established parts of their communities. Through our work with Area Association partners, area development workers and outreach activities, we will build an engaged membership, turning our network into a community that supports the growth and development of the sector.

We will:

Change 1 – Increase opportunities for our members by listening and understanding their needs and providing practical solutions which build their capacity.

Change 2 – Improve our responsiveness and better connect our members to each other and to the Youth Scotland Network.

Change 3 – Build on our vital role supporting community-based youth work to operate safely through safeguarding, policy support and access to our PVG scheme.

Change 4 – Amplify the voices of our members and act as an advocate for community-based youth work and its role in changing young people's lives to decision makers and funders.



What does success look like?

Success measure 1 – Youth Scotland Member Groups will grow, offering more support to more groups.

Success measure 2 – Youth Scotland member groups report that they feel supported and connected through the Youth Scotland membership offer of training, capacity-building, safeguarding, funding, networking and events.

Success measure 3 – Youth workers and volunteers will improve their practice, meet membership and sector standards and comply with legislation through support offered by Youth Scotland staff, Area Associations and Area Development Workers and through the Youth Work Essentials online resource.

Success measure 4 – Member groups will report that they have better access to funders and decision makers and more opportunities to have their voices heard as a result of Youth Scotland network membership.

Success measure 5 – Young Ambassadors from Youth Scotland member groups will have active role in shaping Youth Scotland's services, direction and the implementation of our strategy.



Young people's voice and participation

What change do we want to see?

We will build on our inclusive approach to youth participation where all young people – including those furthest from their rights – are supported to participate in and contribute to their communities. We will support more young people to develop the skills they need to be confident to use their voice and ensure that they are heard, recognised and respected.

We will:

Change 1 – Use our youth participation expertise and our membership reach to support young people to become confident, skilled participants in their communities and beyond, so that they can contribute to key issues and decisions that affect their lives.

Change 2 – Develop a Youth Scotland Young Ambassadors programme to ensure that young people who are representative of our membership have increased input into the organisation's programmes and governance.

Change 3 – Support members to meaningfully increase their young people's participation and leadership in their youth groups through newly developed resources, our worker training programme and capacity-building support.



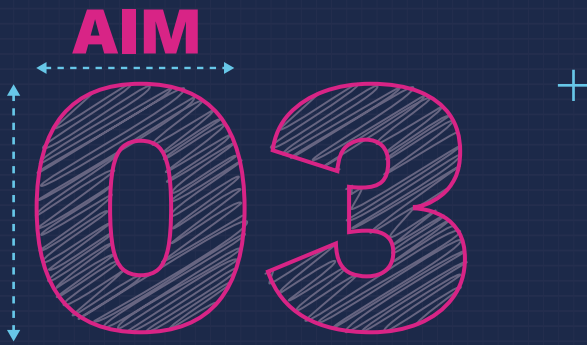
What does success look like?

Success measure 1 – More young people will take up accredited iLead training opportunities, furthering their personal development and increasing their community contribution.

Success measure 2 – Community-based youth workers feel confident and competent to support young people in the youth participation process and increase youth involvement in the running of their groups.

Success measure 3 – Our Young Ambassadors support us to ensure that our programmes remain relevant and useful to young people and contribute to the strategic planning of our organisation.

Success measure 4 – Our partners in government, public bodies, funders and industry are supported in their youth participation process and have increased understanding of meaningful youth voice and participation.



Training volunteers and youth workers

What change do we want to see?

We will build on our reputation as the leading provider of training and capacity-building for the youth work sector in Scotland, improving the skills and confidence of those who are supporting young people through community-based youth work. We will continue to evolve and adapt our core training pathway to be supplemented by topical and emerging needs, based on an ongoing dialogue with members and practitioners.

We will:

Change 1 – Increase and enhance opportunities for accredited learning and development through our Training Pathway for voluntary and paid youth workers, managers and leaders.

Change 2 – Grow our Leaders' Forum for voluntary youth work managers and leaders to meet and share learning in the youth work practice and policy.

Change 3 – Build on our Trusted Adult and thematic training programmes to ensure that youth workers have the knowledge, skills and confidence to support young people and meet their needs in an ever-changing and complex society.

Change 4 – Build and expand our offering of digital youth work skills and training to meet the needs of the evolving nature of youth work.

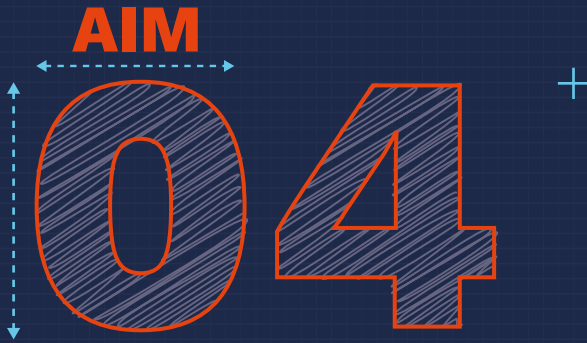


What does success look like?

Success measure 1 – Community-based youth workers will report increases in the skills and confidence to deliver youth work opportunities for young people and accredit young people's learning.

Success measure 2 – Youth workers and volunteers will achieve accredited qualifications or CPD evidencing their training and development.

Success measure 3 – Our sector colleagues, policy makers, education and industry partners have increased understanding of meaningful, quality-assured youth work practice.



Accredited youth awards

What change do we want to see?

We will increase opportunities for young people to participate in Youth Scotland's awards and be recognised for all their achievements. Using youth work methodology and the plan-do-review format of our awards, we will support young people to recognise and articulate their achievements and gain nationally recognised qualifications. Additionally, by supporting young people to gain qualifications for their achievements, we aim to support national efforts to close the poverty related attainment gap.

We will:

Change 1 – Increase and strengthen our partnerships with local authorities, schools, colleges, Area Associations, Youth Scotland member groups and third sector organisations to build their capacity and broaden young people's access to our awards.

Change 2 – Increase the number of young people completing Youth Scotland's awards and gaining nationally recognised qualifications for their achievements using a youth work methodology and where appropriate, the technical solutions to support this.

Change 3 – Continue to develop an awards infrastructure that supports the growth and sustainability of Youth Scotland's awards programmes.

Change 4 – Increase the wider recognition of the value of youth awards and, through our own work and that of the Awards Network, work towards parity of esteem with formal qualifications.



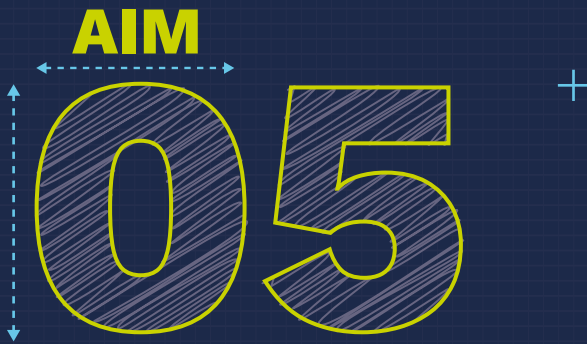
What does success look like?

Success measure 1 – Increase number of awards delivery hubs and groups offering Youth Scotland awards, increasing the opportunities for young people to gain recognition for their achievements within projects and programmes and contributing to their personal pathway.

Success measure 2 – Increase the number of young people accessing and completing our Youth Scotland Awards, so that they are better equipped with the skills to maximise their educational and employment opportunities.

Success measure 3 – Awards delivery hubs and groups are better supported to deliver Youth Scotland Awards through improved systems, customer support and training.

Success measure 4 – Young people, parents, youth workers, teachers and employers recognise the value of youth awards and their validity in a young person's learning pathway, in accordance with education reform recommendations to value and recognise the attainment and wider achievements of all learners.



Measuring impact and telling our story

What change do we want to see?

We will refine and improve how and where we tell our story – and that of our members – to be the voice of community-based youth work. We will continue to capture the impact of our work in an engaging, inclusive way, building on our established reputation with funders and other stakeholders as providers of quality reports and robust impact analysis. We will seek to support our members to do the same.

We will:

Change 1 – Review, optimise and organise our data collection processes across the organisation to ensure we are telling the full story of our work and its impact.

Change 2 – Support youth workers and volunteers to understand, demonstrate and present their own impact better to ensure sustainability of their own groups and the sector.

Change 3 – Contribute to demonstrating impact in the wider sector through representing the voice and experience of community-based youth work at national impact forums, sub-groups and research groups and by engaging our members in topical discussions around the impact of community-based youth work in key areas, amplifying their voice.

Change 4 – Advance our communications approach of meeting people where they are, by further implementing an ‘omni-channel’ approach that uses tailored communications matching goals to the platform and audience.



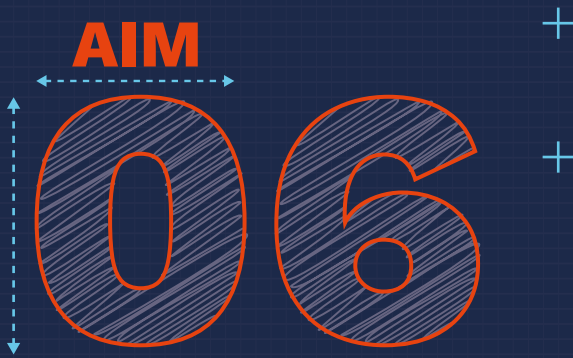
What does success look like?

Success measure 1 – Refinement of the top-level data set across operations to improve our holistic evaluation framework and ensure that we comprehensively capture our impact.

Success measure 2 – More member groups will access Youth Scotland evaluation resources, training and support and feel confident and competent to evaluate their work and produce high-quality, multi-media reports and case studies.

Success measure 3 – More youth workers and volunteers have their voice heard in the sector and share good practice through quarterly impact-focused Leaders' Forums, as well as involvement in longitudinal case studies and biannual thematic impact reports.

Success measure 4 – Higher levels of engagement with communications and an ability to be targeted with media and message, allowing us to effectively tell our story in an impactful way.



Sustainability, funding and infrastructure

What change do we want to see?

We will implement an operational review so that Youth Scotland can meet the needs of present members without compromising the ability of future generations of young people and youth workers to do likewise. We will strive to be sustainable in our environmental practices, funding streams and digital infrastructure, so that our organisation remains stable and robust.

We will:

Change 1 – We will build on Youth Scotland’s commitment to Net Zero by carrying out a comprehensive ‘green audit’ of our current policies, procedures and general operational activity, at both our Balfour House offices and in our national delivery. We will support our member groups to consider their environmental footprint, and provide themed resources, training and national programmes to enable them to have a positive impact in their communities.

Change 2 – Ensure Youth Scotland and our membership are better informed and knowledgeable about equality, diversity and inclusive youth work practice and our services are accessible to all youth groups and young people who wish to participate.

Change 3 – We will extend our financial horizon to provide greater visibility into the future, by building a diverse, robust and sustainable income pipeline, providing long-term stability for Youth Scotland.

Change 4 – Youth Scotland will implement the right digital infrastructure to support our work, using the tools and technology we have as effectively as we can. Staff will be confident and competent in a digital space.



What does success look like?

Success measure 1 – Youth Scotland will undertake a 'green audit,' developing a clear picture of current energy usage across our operations to better understand the overall carbon footprint of our work. This will facilitate clear organisational Net Zero policies, procedures, practice and will enable both Youth Scotland and our member groups to work towards promoting and implementing sustainable and carbon neutral practice for the future.

Success measure 2 – We have a clear plan to improve access to our services and increase the diversity of our membership, based on feedback, data and demographics. We demonstrate a willingness to adapt services to meet identified needs and to offer a menu of support available to users of our services in order to remove barriers to participation. We model good practice and deliver training to our membership, in partnership with those with lived experience and equalities expertise.

Success measure 3 – A diverse and full income pipeline for the period of this strategy, supported by improved systems for forecasting income.

Success measure 4 – Our systems remain fit for the future, allowing our staff to be confident and competent in a digital space. Building on this, we can be in the right digital place at the right time; meeting young people where they are at and supporting youth workers to be connected and safe online.

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