

Welcome to Youth Scotland's Impact Report 2025-26

Scroll down to enjoy a review of the fantastic work we have achieved with our community-based youth work network over the last year!

Check out Youth Scotland's Impact in 60 Seconds!

Watch the film: <https://youtu.be/7LjE6wJlHxA>

In Review

Funding remained the defining issue for community-based youth work in 2025-26. There were encouraging signs, including the Scottish Government's two-year Fairer Funding pilot and stronger sector-wide calls for multi-year, ringfenced youth work funding through discussions around the Youth Work (Scotland) Bill. However, long-term financial security remains unresolved for many organisations.

In this area, Youth Scotland delivered on a strategic ambition to put more funding directly into the hands of community-based youth groups. Through the Grassroots Youth Work Fund, Rural Action Fund, Safe Spaces Fund and Rural Activate Fund, small grants helped local organisations respond quickly and effectively to the needs of young people in their communities.

At the same time, concerns around youth violence, antisocial behaviour, school absence and community safety brought renewed attention to the preventative role of youth work. Government discussions increasingly recognised the value of trusted youth workers, positive role models and safe spaces, backed by targeted

investment including the Youth Scotland Grassroots Youth Work Fund and our ongoing partnership with CashBack for Communities.

Education reform and addressing concerns about school attendance further strengthened the case for youth work to be recognised as part of the learner journey. More than 10,000 Youth Scotland Awards were achieved during the period, demonstrating the scale of accredited learning already taking place through youth work.

It was a year where technology also moved rapidly up the agenda. The Online Safety Act came into effect alongside growing concerns around digital wellbeing, online violence, cyber resilience and the responsible use of AI, creating new areas where youth workers need confidence, skills and support.

Overall, 2025–26 brought greater recognition of youth work as a source of prevention, trusted relationships, learning and safe spaces. This Impact Report reflects the response to a changing landscape, rising demand and increasingly complex needs from Youth Scotland's growing membership network.

Pillar 1: Supporting Our Member Youth Groups

- **116,979 young people were supported across our services and programmes**
- **2,430 total youth groups, from 622 member organisations**
- **12,348 total youth workers, of whom 7,614 are volunteers**

Supporting Our Member Youth Groups - Impact in 2025–26

Youth Scotland membership has continued to increase over the last year and currently stands at 628 membership organisations who run 2,430 member youth groups, reaching 116,979 young people

(113,176 in 2024-25) and 12,348 youth workers (11,738 in 2024-25) of which 7,614 are volunteers.

Youth Scotland know what they're doing. You've got an experienced team [...] there's the networking bringing everybody together, I find really, really valuable for sharing ideas [...] And just being inspired!

- Formartine Youth Project youth worker

Our network spans all 32 local authority areas

- **71% of groups based in urban areas and 29% rurally**
- **Two thirds of our members operate in SIMD 1-5 areas**
- **In 2024-25, 162 new youth groups joined our membership.**

Our membership and capacity building offer continued to provide core infrastructure for community based youth work, including advice and guidance, safeguarding support, training, networks and practical tools. Member feedback in 2025-26 highlighted ongoing financial pressures and limited workforce capacity across many groups, making low cost training, practical support and access to small grants schemes more important than ever.

In response to funding pressures, we provided practical fundraising support alongside wider capacity building. In 2025-26, 23 workers completed 'Writing Successful Funding Bids' training and 155 practitioners joined 'Meet the Funder' sessions, helping groups build confidence and relationships with funders. To ensure that groups have robust safeguarding procedures in place, we provided guidance and training on a range of safeguarding topics in person, by phone and through our Youth Work Essentials website and also delivered Child Protection Awareness and Child Protection Officer Training to 766 youth workers and volunteers.

Find out more about membership:

<https://www.youthscotland.org.uk/membership/>

12 Hours to Stirling

Formartine Youth Project are a fantastic example of how community-based youth work meets the challenges young people face in Scotland's Rural communities. We took a trip to Pitmedden in rural Aberdeenshire to find out more from this amazing member group.

Funding is always a challenge with all groups [...] Youth Scotland know the benefits of youth work and the difference it can make [...] the money can go a long way, if you let youth workers get creative, it can go a long way.

- Caroline, Formartine Youth Project

Watch the film: <https://youtu.be/yf-E2UnpGGE>

Pillar 2: Youth Leadership and National Programmes

- **3,827 young people engaged in leadership and participation programmes**
- **6 key asks on behalf of Scotland's young people from Young Advisors at the The Just Transition Summit 2025**
- **1,033 young people took part in leadership and awareness events with Stand Up to Sectarianism**

Youth Leadership and National Programmes - Impact 2025-26

In the last year, Youth Scotland supported 3,827 young people young to reach their potential through community based youth work opportunities that combine safe relationships, learning and recognition.

"I'm more confident, before I joined, I would have given myself a 7 out of 10 in confidence, now I'm a 10 out of 10."

- The Playcentre Glasgow young leader

Young people benefited from access to leadership and participation activities which gave them the chance to learn new skills and have opportunities to have their voices heard in their local youth groups, their wider communities and at a national level through thematic networks such as the Just Transition Commission, Rural Youth Action Network, Young Islanders Network, Stand Up to Sectarianism and young grant makers projects supporting young people with lived experience of poverty and substance misuse to decide on funding for local projects.

This matters most in communities experiencing poverty, isolation and limited access to services, where youth work provides safe spaces and trusted relationships and the opportunity for young people to be listened to, nurtured and supported to take on active roles in decision making within their communities.

"Before this, I wouldn't have spoken in front of anyone. Now I can stand up and share my ideas without feeling scared. I didn't think I could do that."

- Generation CashBack Participant

Generation CashBack: Across the consortium, 2,694 young people were supported, with groups accessing vital small-scale funding and networking. Outcomes included 34,723 hours of volunteering contributed by participants, 2,690 young people report that they feel less inclined to participate in antisocial and/or criminal behaviour and 100% reporting they felt more resilient.

- Stand Up to Sectarianism: 1,033 young people joined events to raise awareness and take action in their communities.
- Big Ideas Weekend: Over 220 young people and youth workers developed skills, networks and practical ideas.

- Young Islanders Network: Supported young leaders across island communities, influencing ferry fare concessions and housing discussions.
- Inspiring Ayrshire: 7 teams of young people were supported to design and deliver their own social action activities. In total, 10 social action projects were delivered.

Read more about our programmes:

<https://www.youthscotland.org.uk/programmes/>

There's a Buzz in Easterhouse

If you walk in to BEE (Brighter East End) in Easterhouse, there is every chance that the youth worker running the session first came through the same doors as a primary-school child. BEE has grown alongside generations of children and young people from the community. Read their story.

"I always remember when I was younger, seeing all the staff and being like, well, if you're going to do that, that looks really fun. I think it was all kind of our mindset of, you would grow up with BEE. Like, that's the end goal, I think [...] You come all the way through, and then do it for other people."

- BEE young leader

Read the case study:

<https://www.youthscotland.org.uk/story/theres-a-buzz-in-easterhouse/>

A Happy Accident

Youth work has taken Alona from her local youth group in Blantyre to residentials, national events and opportunities to meet young people from across the UK and Ireland. Along the way, she has built her confidence, taken on new responsibilities and discovered a passion that is now shaping what she wants to do next.

I had no idea what I wanted to do for my future career [...] but then when I took part in the workshops, that immediately gave me inspiration because it just looked really fun.

Read the case study: <https://www.youthscotland.org.uk/story/a-happy-accident/>

Pillar 3: Training and Workforce Development

- 3,549 youth workers engaged in training
- Ready for Youth Work (816), Trusted Adult (1,516), PDA in Youth Work (54) participants
- 903 participants have undertaken Youth Awards training

Training Volunteers and Youth Workers - Impact in 2025-26

Over the year 2025-26, we delivered training to over 3,549 youth workers and volunteers, helping them build confidence, competence and safe practice. Members consistently tell us that accessible and affordable training remains critical, particularly for small volunteer-led youth groups where cost would otherwise prevent participation.

"I enjoyed taking part in each session, I liked that there were a lot of opportunities to discuss, answer and give my point of view on a variety of topics. As someone who has come into youth work for only around a year, I gained a lot of confidence to take back to my youth work job and learned the basics, I will look forward to be able to run more sessions in the youth club and gain more confidence in my role."

- Ready for Youth Work participant

- Ready for Youth Work (SCQF Level 3): 816 participants, including 293 full completions, 523 in progress. This training

increased confidence and competence to deliver inclusive youth work and support young people's wellbeing.

- Professional Development Award in Youth Work (SCQF Level 6): 54 participants. The qualification boosted attainment, employability and recognition of youth workers' achievements.
- Leadership and Management Training (SCQF Level 9): 14 managers and senior staff undertook this accredited course, delivered with the Social Enterprise Academy and Glasgow Caledonian University, strengthening leadership across youth organisations.
- Trusted Adult training: 1,516 participants. Topics included mental health, safeguarding, challenging behaviour and inclusion.
- Stand Up to Sectarianism training: 593 participants developed skills to challenge sectarianism and hate, reaching urban, rural and island communities.
- Youth Awards Training: 903 participants, supporting high quality recognition of young people's achievements).

Read more about our training:

<https://www.youthscotland.org.uk/training/>

Practice to Purpose: Why the PDA in Youth Work Matters

This powerful short film captures the voices of youth workers from across Scotland who took part in the PDA — a practical, confidence-building course designed to deepen youth work skills and strengthen practice in real-world settings. From first-day nerves to lightbulb moments and long-term impact, participants reveal how the course helped them grow as professionals, connect with peers, and better support the young people they work with.

"Oh, it's been fantastic. To be honest, when I first joined the course, I thought it was going to be just learning some fun games and stuff and

treading over what I've already been on. But truth be told, I've learned so much."

- PDA participant

Watch the case study:

<https://www.youthscotland.org.uk/story/stepping-into-your-professional-development-in-youth-work/>

Pillar 4: Accredited Youth Awards

- **9,723 young people have been recognised for their learning and achievements**
- **4,751 young people completed their Hi5 Awards and 4,619 their Dynamic Youth Awards**
- **353 stepped up to earn their Youth Achievement Awards (256 Bronze, 51 Silver, 25 Gold & 21 Platinum)**

Accredited Youth Awards - Impact 2023-24

10,074 young people have been recognised for their learning and achievements through awards, from Hi5 Awards (5,023 young people) to Dynamic Youth Awards (4,526 young people) and Youth Achievement Awards (271 Bronze YAA, 178 Silver YAA, 25 Gold YAA and 15 Platinum YAA). These numbers represent a 4% increase over the same period as last year.

This year we also celebrate the milestone of 100,000 awards across all local authorities in Scotland since we started building them. While we might record and talk about a number, what to us is important are the 100,000 individual young people who are behind those awards. We are proud to continue to support young people's individual achievements, help them gain skills and confidence and support their journey through gaining accreditation for their amazing work.

Part of the journey in supporting young people goes through supporting the youth workers that walk along the pathway with them. In 2025/26, have harvested the product of the seeds we planted in the previous year, where we redesigned Youth Achievement Awards, launched the Awards Force submission platform and developed the E-module for Level 1 training.

"He ended up doing 3 awards I think really close together, and they were really complex as well, which was brilliant because he was able to focus on something and just seeing that change in him was brilliant. He just became light, became happier and he was achieving which was the main thing for him."- Kythe, Youth Scotland Awards Group

Read more about our awards:

<https://www.youthscotland.org.uk/awards/>

The Power of Youth Awards

Kythe, a Youth Scotland member group, has been implementing youth awards as part of their personalised approach to youth work. They embedded the awards seamlessly into their regular activities, offering young people an opportunity to reflect on their time commitments, help them build organisational skills and support them in reaching their potential.

"This is a massive, massive tool for youth workers, but also for young people. They get certification, they get the SQA points, they get so much out of doing something that they already do. So for me, it's a no brainer."

- Gillian, KYTHE Youth Worker

Watch the case study: <https://www.youthscotland.org.uk/story/the-power-of-youth-awards/>

Watch on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/DaXu7HJBgg4>

A Hi5 Ticket to Murrayfield

No achievement is too small with Youth Scotland's youth awards. This year, 275 young people engaged in the Hi5 Rugby Programme across East Lothian schools. All 276 young people obtained a Youth Scotland Hi5 Award in recognition of their participation and learning.

Week on week you saw their confidence build, it was really well structured (...) The different teams, the different mix up of individuals, people who are sometimes a bit more on the sidelines really going for it and getting involved, that was really lovely to see as the programme progressed. (...) Just for them to realise that they've achieved something worthwhile like that it's been a fantastic experience for them

Watch the film: https://youtu.be/5E0_woC06vA

The bigger picture

Youth Scotland has been an active advocate on behalf of its members in the wider youth work sector during 2025-26. These are just some examples of how we have highlighted and supported the case for community-based youth work in the last year.

Small Grants, Big Gains

Why Small Grants Matter for Community-Based Youth Work

This report demonstrates that Youth Scotland's small grants programmes provide essential direct support to grassroots youth organisations, protecting local activities and services that support young people in their own communities.

Community-based youth work provides vital opportunities for young people across Scotland to develop new skills, improve their wellbeing and reach positive destinations. To do this work and to do it well, organisations require adequate funding.

"This isn't just a one-off project for us — it's how we keep our doors open."

- Youth Worker, Youth Scotland Grassroots Youth Work Fund recipient

The evidence from our programmes demonstrates that small grants — delivered through trusted relationships and strong support infrastructure — can create significant and lasting impact for young people and communities across Scotland.

Read the full report: <https://bit.ly/YS-SGBG-26>

The Awards Network

Youth Scotland is the host and founder of the Awards Network, that exists to support youth award providers, to recognise the amazing things that young people learn, do and achieve in Scotland.

Awards Network members have had a phenomenal year with 210,400 youth awards completed in total.

Read the Annual Report:

https://www.canva.com/design/DAHHL4FKc-c/kPUVssmv_osrP1Y6YXMBEg/view?utlId=hcfcbb2e1c4

Watch on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4d-SuKbh2GA>

With gratitude and thanks

We acknowledge the support of Scottish Government and funders as key partners in supporting young people and the community-based youth work sector in Scotland.

We would also like to say a huge thank you to all our funders and supporters of Youth Scotland projects and programmes including:

Generation CashBack, funded by Scottish Government Cashback for Communities and managed by Inspiring Scotland.

Support from Garfield Weston contributing to the delivery of our workforce development programme as part of our core vision.

Core funding from the Children, Young People and Families Early Intervention Fund from Scottish Government and managed by the Corra Foundation.

Support of our rural membership from The Gannochy Trust, including distribution of the Rural Action Fund.

Support of area-based work from Holywood Trust & Dumfries and Galloway Local Authority.

Core funding from The Robertson Trust Large Grants strand.

Strategic partnership with Children in Need to deliver Youth Work training to their grantees as part of a 'funder-plus' model of support.

Strategic partnership with Paul Hamlyn Foundation to support a National Impact Network in Scotland.

Continuation funding from the Scottish Government CLD Unit in support of our co-ordination role in the Awards Network, promoting informal learning opportunities between 40+ Awards Providers and Partners.

Continuation of our training and capacity building support for youth workers, funded through the Scottish Government's CLD Unit.

The Young Islanders Network, funded from the Scottish Government's Islands' Team.

The Stand Up to Sectarianism programme, funded by Scottish Government's Community Safety Policy and Prevention Unit.

The Rural Youth Action Network, funded by funded by Scottish Government and the Scottish Rural Network.

The National Lottery Community Fund for supporting the Launch of Amplify, a new programme promoting youth voice across Scotland.

The Trustees would also wish to thank the Meikle Foundation for their donations in support of our work.

Our Area Association partners

As always, we would like to make a special thank you to our Area Associations across Scotland, who we work in partnership with as part of the Youth Scotland Network:

LAYC in Edinburgh and the Lothians - see their website:

<https://layc.org.uk/>

YouthBorders - see their website: <https://youthborders.org.uk/>

Youth 1st in Fife - see their website: <https://www.youth1st.co.uk/>

Youth Highland - see their website: <https://youthhighland.org.uk/>

Lewis and Harris Youth Clubs Association - see their profile:

<https://www.facebook.com/people/Lewis-and-Harris-Youth-Clubs-Association/100064388994223/>

Special thanks

Finally, our heartfelt thanks go to the members, volunteers and young people who make this work possible. Together we achieve lasting change and create positive opportunities for young people across Scotland. Find out more about our work, how to get involved and how to join us on our website.

Read more about our work, how to get involved and how to join on website. Visit the site: <http://www.youthscotland.org.uk>