



The network
of youth groups

**Youth Scotland's Awards:
Supporting young people
to achieve their potential
— their stories**





A LETTER FROM OUR CEO

Youth Scotland believes every young person has potential and high quality youth work helps them to achieve their full potential. For over 15 years, our Dynamic Youth and Youth Achievement Awards have recognised and accredited the fantastic achievements of young people all over Scotland.

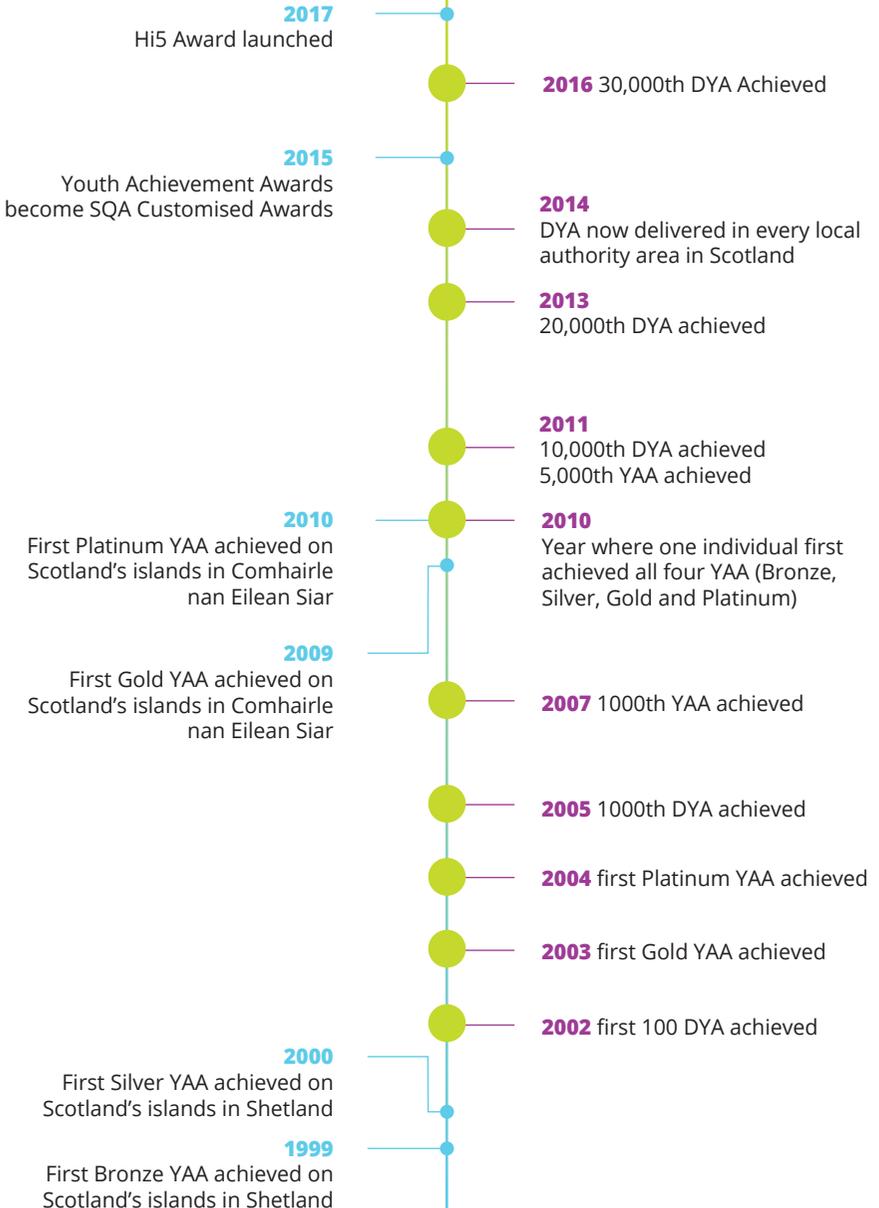
Young people have incredible stories to share of how completing their award has made a real difference in their lives, from making friends and enjoying new challenges and experiences to developing new skills. This collection of case studies shares only a handful of these stories but I hope you will see the tremendous value which young people place on their achievements and awards.

You will also hear from individuals who support young people to complete their awards and I want to thank them and all our partners for the work they do. Together we have come far but Youth Scotland wants every young person to have the opportunity to achieve our awards. I would encourage you to think about how you could work with Youth Scotland to recognise and accredit the achievements of young people you are working with.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Ian McLaughlan'. The signature is stylized and written in a cursive-like font.

Ian McLaughlan

THE HISTORY OF YOUTH SCOTLAND'S AWARDS





Kayleigh Haggo

Many young people look back on their Youth Achievement Awards (YAA) and view them as a life-changing experience that took them in a whole new direction

100%

Youth Scotland's Awards are delivered in every local authority in Scotland

**Platinum
Youth
Achievement
Award**

Kayleigh, 18, did her Platinum YAA two years ago. She is now at University and employed part time as a swimming teacher. She feels the activities she did for her Platinum YAA helped her get a job and gave her the experience, skills and confidence to take on the public-facing role that she now loves.

“ It shows you who you are as a person.

“Doing the Platinum YAA changed my life so much. When I started it, I hated talking in front of people and doing presentations but my confidence increased massively through my Platinum YAA. I had to talk in front of groups for my placements so I got used to it and got more confident in doing that. Since I've done it I've seen a massive difference in what I can do.

For my placement I went to Troon Swimming Pool and became a swimming mentor. Through doing my Platinum YAA I decided I really liked it and that's what I wanted to do. After that I got a job as a swimming teacher.

When I was doing my Platinum YAA I don't think I really realised how much I had changed until the evaluation stage; I looked back, and I was like, wow,

I have done quite a lot since I started. The YAA shows you who you are as a person. It reflects what your strengths and weaknesses are and then what you can work on.

A lot of people have noticed a change in me. After doing the Platinum YAA, whenever I was asked to deliver presentations I wouldn't mind at all. I feel much more organised as well, because you have to be organised and you have to stick to deadlines and get stuff done.

I would definitely recommend taking part in the YAA. I just loved doing it. I loved the planning stage and then actually delivering the sessions and evaluating it; I just loved it all.

When I was doing my Platinum YAA, we did first aid and protection

of children and safeguarding workshops, so that really helped me get my job.

I'm hoping to get my degree and then I want to become a sports development officer.”

I got a placement as a swimming mentor and I decided, through doing my YAA, that I really liked it and that's what I wanted to do.

It reflects what your strengths and weaknesses are and then what you can work on. Personal reflection was quite a big part of it, which has benefited me now I'm working.

I've seen a massive difference in what I can do. A lot of people have noticed a change in me.

For more information about Youth Scotland's awards go to

→ www.youthscotland.org.uk



Darren Archibald

Dynamic Youth Awards (DYA) and Youth Achievement Awards (YAA) can be particularly helpful for young people who struggle in formal learning environments

60h

A Bronze YAA involves a minimum of 60 hours activity

**Dynamic
Youth Award
& Bronze
Youth
Achievement
Award**

An Award journey can fit in and around other aspects of life. Darren, 15, lost focus when he progressed from his Bronze YAA to his Silver YAA. A year later, he felt more ready to engage and is glad he had the opportunity to re-attempt the Silver YAA. The awards have helped with practical and personal aspects of his life including looking after money, planning and behaviour.

“ I’m much more confident in myself and in talking to others

“I did my DYA and then I learnt more about the YAA and that I could do more. It felt like a good idea to do the YAA because they’re linked up to the Scottish Qualifications Authority. The qualifications I get from the YAA will be helpful just in case I don’t pass any more at school.

I’ve been helping with dodgeball, Friday night football, and in the café bar here at Universal Connections (community-based youth learning centre). I’m also planning for my Bridges course as part of my Silver YAA. At dodgeball I take the register and referee and I help set up. It’s a level up; I’ve gone from playing to helping out. Now I know that I can handle situations; I know what to do. I didn’t used to ken

[understand], I would maybe run about hitting people or getting into arguments – now I take a step back.

It feels brilliant to be so close to finishing my Silver YAA. I’ve got more confidence talking to new people that are younger than me, and I’ve gained more organisation skills like getting up in time for school and getting stuff done when it needs to be done.

The most difficult part has been writing my personal targets and making sure that I can hit them. My personal targets included getting more organisational skills and improving my money management skills. I can count better now and I can calculate change

in my head. My favourite part of the YAA has been doing all the fun things that I want to do.

I would recommend taking part in YAA to other young people because I’ve seen a big difference in myself. It helps you develop your skills. My gran has noticed a change in me – she’s told me that I’m not as cheeky as I used to be.”

I used to be a wee cheeky person, but I’m dead polite now.

I’ve gained more organisation skills like getting up in time for school and getting stuff done when it needs to be done.

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Stanes Primary School

A Dynamic Youth Award (DYA) is often a first step on the Youth Achievement Award journey and can accredit activity that young people are already involved in

93%

of young people who have achieved a Dynamic Youth Award believe it helped them to "have a more positive view of myself"

**Dynamic
Youth
Award**

This example from Stanes Primary School shows that a DYA is a flexible way to accredit activity that young people enjoy. Alice, Katie, and Eve, in Primary 7, completed a peer-education DYA which involved reading stories to nursery children. They described the DYA as fun and liked reading to the children and doing the training, which helped them improve their confidence, planning and public speaking skills.

Alice:

"I set myself a target to talk louder and to work on my confidence. I learnt to be more confident through talking out loud to the nursery children. It wasn't really that hard, doing the DYA, because it was stuff we were already doing. We all worked as a team which I found helpful and it was quite fun. I would recommend the DYA to a lot of other people like all my friends who didn't do it. I'm sure they will regret not doing it once they see the certificate and know what we've done."

Katie:

"At the start of my DYA one of the goals I set for myself was to take on a talking task during each story session. I learnt to be more confident through talking to the nursery

children. The puppets we used to tell the story made it more enjoyable for the young children. We also helped each other in the folders by doing witness statements and helping to spell different words. We all wanted to do it because it sounded quite fun and we got a certificate at the end."

Eve:

"We were already reading stories to the nursery children and the DYA recognised our hard work by us recording it in our folders. I got better at making eye contact when I was reading and making sure that the nursery children were listening. It was hard work when you think about it but then you get used to it and it gets easier. We all met up after school and planned the

story sessions. Planning and trying to figure out who's doing what was difficult, but in the end we all decided together who was doing what."

**Julie Parker
(Community Learning
and Development
Practitioner, North
Lanarkshire Council):**

"I think the DYA is a great award for schools to use because in many instances it recognises hard work by young people that's already taking place. All they're doing is recording it. It gives them a method to do that and a certificate at the end which recognises their hard work. I've seen the young people I've supported through the DYA grow in their confidence and self-esteem."

“ It wasn't really that hard, doing the DYA, because it was stuff we were already doing.

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William McEwan

Progression through Youth Achievement Awards (YAA) is flexible which helps young people participate at a comfortable pace and fit them around other activities

16

A Platinum YAA is worth 16 Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework credit points

**Bronze
& Silver
Youth
Achievement
Award**

William, 22, is now in the final stages of completing his Platinum YAA and already has two: a Bronze YAA and a Silver YAA. His journey with YAA over the past six years has given him new qualifications and experiences. He feels they have made him more employable, helped to improve his literacy and provided leadership opportunities.

"I enjoy building my confidence and self-esteem and helping others through my YAA, and increasing my leadership skills. They're also great for my CV; they show employers that I'm keen. Taking part in my YAA has helped me learn how to organise a folder and gain skills and experience by

I went down to Leeds last year for the first ever time by myself, for a residential. I knew no one on the train and that put me right out of my comfort zone because I've never travelled on my own. It was a whole new experience. I also learnt how to manage my money a lot more.

I would recommend YAA to other young people because it's helped me so much in my life. They're good for your CV and for employers to look at. They also help to build skills and experience. My plan for the future is to do my SVQ Level 3 in Youth Work, and also to continue what I'm doing now as a youth worker.

“ My YAA made me try something more, put myself out of my comfort zone.

trying something different. I used to be quite shy but now I've taken on a leadership role at the Oasis Youth Project by chairing meetings and supporting young people.

My line manager has noticed, even my wee sister has noticed, how much they have built my confidence.

My favourite part has been talking to young people and then putting all the evidence into my folder, like the photographs. I've also enjoyed getting positive feedback from staff members and young people. When I read it, I feel proud of how much I've progressed through the years.

Doing the YAA has made me realise that I want to do more youth work."

This will be my first ever Advanced Higher on my Certificate and I'm quite happy to see it.

I never enjoyed my school experience but I've enjoyed doing the YAA.

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→ www.youthscotland.org.uk



Bethan Blair

Youth Achievement Awards (YAA) help young people to address anxiety and confidence issues and can be used to encourage peer learning

135h

A Platinum YAA involves a minimum 135 hours time commitment

**Platinum
Youth
Achievement
Award**

Bethan's experience highlights that YAA have a range of positive impacts for individuals and wider communities. As part of her Platinum YAA Bethan delivered alcohol awareness training to younger pupils at her secondary school, taught swimming, and ran a drop-in club for socially isolated students. She believes participating in the YAA increased her self-belief and shaped her future plans to become a teacher.

“We found out about the YAA through school and I decided I wanted to do it because it would be quite handy to get into University. I don’t think I would have got into University without the extra Advanced Higher and I think I’ve made a lot more friends because I am more confident. University would have been a very different experience if I hadn’t come out of my shell as much.

I was doing my teaching qualification at the same time as my Platinum YAA. The swimming coaching I did helped me work towards both. It also improved my confidence when I was teaching. I back myself a lot more than I did before. I am much more aware of what I can do and I know that I can do things on my own.

A group of us delivered alcohol awareness to younger pupils at our school as part of our YAA, and we were put up for an award by South Ayrshire Council. It was nice to be recognised for the hard work we were doing and to see that we were actually making a difference.

I’ve travelled to the United States and Amsterdam, which I wouldn’t have done if I hadn’t done the YAA. I’d have been too scared that things would go wrong and I wouldn’t know what to do, whereas when I did the YAA, things went wrong quite often so I had to work out how to sort it out.

I think one of the biggest lessons I’ve learnt from doing the YAA is to approach new

opportunities thinking, well, why not – what’s the worst that’s going to happen if I do it?”

One of the biggest changes? I decided that I could do it and that I didn’t need to be apologetic for being myself.

The YAA taught me that I definitely wanted to do something with my life and not just worry about things.

University would have been a very different experience if I hadn’t come out of my shell as much.

“ My mum and dad were like,
“you’re like a new person”

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Duncan Mathieson

Many young people go on to do multiple Youth Achievement Awards (YAA), sometimes with different providers or at different stages of life

1,300

More than 1,300 young people in Scotland have achieved Silver YAA

Dynamic Youth Award, Bronze and Silver Youth Achievement Award

Duncan, 17, has a Dynamic Youth Award (DYA), a Bronze YAA and a Silver YAA, and is working towards his Platinum YAA. He did his DYA at school and was introduced to YAA at a Universal Connections, community-based youth learning centre. Duncan has developed experience and skills, including volunteering, leadership, cooking and cash handling. His YAA gave him a chance to get qualifications he would not have achieved at school.

"I found out at school that the work I was doing was enough to complete a DYA, so I thought why not – I'll just go for it. When I started coming to Universal Connections I was told pretty much the same – I'm doing all the work, why don't I go for a YAA? The Silver YAA was the start of my volunteering. It gave me the opportunity to learn how to do cash handling. I also learnt how to cook through that; I got a lot of life skills from the Silver YAA.

I left school with no Highers, so if I get my Platinum YAA, that will be an Advanced Higher. I tried to get into a college course previously but I needed two Highers for it. To be doing the Platinum YAA now, it's something

I can put forward instead of just saying, I didn't pass my final exams.

One of my main focuses has been the Friday night football group that runs here at Universal Connections. I'm in charge of taking the registers and ensuring other young people's health and wellbeing is ok to take part in the activity. I'm to support them, really.

I've gained a lot of confidence with working with young people. I've done a lot of training through the Platinum YAA that shows you how to cope in different situations. It's been beneficial for me and I've enjoyed it. It's taught me a lot about myself and a lot about other people; before I never thought about

how other people think. It's helped me decide what I want to do in the future. I want to become a youth worker and I feel like this has set the tone; this has made me realise what I want to do. I want to help other young people get accredited for doing awards such as YAA."

It feels good to know that you've got another qualification under your belt.

I thought why not – I'll just go for it.

It's something I can put forward instead of just saying, I didn't pass my final exams.

“ The experience has made me more vocal. I used to be very shy.

For more information about Youth Scotland's awards go to

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Hi5 Award

Youth Scotland's newest nationally recognised award accredits and celebrates primary school aged children's achievements

5h

A Hi5 Award involves a minimum 5 hours time commitment

Hi5 Award

Kenina Williamson, a Community Education Worker in Falkirk, was involved in a Hi5 Award pilot. She believes the Hi5 Awards are a fun and early way for children to gain accreditation and fit easily around activities they are already involved in.

“The Hi5 Award met something that was missing. Primary schools can’t give any kind of qualifications through children’s informal learning right up until students are 10 years old, so there was a gap there and the Hi5 Award seems to have filled that gap.

It is extremely easy to implement the Hi5 Award because it is mostly about young people taking part. The young people were already taking part in activities and this was just a way of documenting what they were already doing, so I didn’t have to add anything into the programme – it just fitted brilliantly in with what we were already delivering in our summer programme.

It wasn’t difficult to collect evidence for the Award; we took photos and the young people wrote or we scribed for them.

If you’ve got a great programme running, then the Hi5 Award will marry directly in with what you’re doing. Then, the young people start from a very early age to gain qualifications that they might not normally get. If we’re giving children and young people attainment and achievement at an earlier age than when we would normally, then it can only be good, and it can only make them want to try for more, like the Dynamic Youth Award and the Bronze Youth Achievement Award.

The children’s parents were really interested. The Hi5 Awards generate a lot of pride for the family and pride for the children as well. Parents can see that their children are now on that qualification ladder at such a very, very young age. It helps them see it’s not difficult, it’s not hard, and it’s achievable for everybody.”

I’ve been speaking to child minders about the Hi5 Award and they’re really keen to take it on as well.

The kids absolutely took it in their stride because it was just something that was part of the activity of that day.

“ The Hi5 Award lets parents see it’s not difficult for their children to get onto the qualifications ladder.

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Wesley Greer

Youth Achievement Awards (YAA) can provide tailored support and educational experiences for young people with additional learning needs

SCQF
Level 7

A Platinum YAA is credited at level 7 on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

Platinum
Youth
Achievement
Award

The flexibility of a YAA means it can be adapted to meet challenges young people face in their lives. This is particularly important for those, like Wesley, who have additional learning needs. Wesley feels his YAA accreditation had a powerful positive impact on his life. It helped him to grow in confidence, become more organised, be more sociable and develop leadership skills.

"I am involved with a charity called CKUK. It is a peer education-run project for people with learning difficulties, and the aim is for young people with learning difficulties to go into schools and teach others. Through that process I heard about the YAA, and I decided to go for the Platinum YAA.

think on my feet and to think more about planning and organisation and how I can develop these skills.

I've always been a social person, and I like to socialise with other people, but the YAA gave me the opportunity to get involved in more projects and develop a circle of

The YAA has given me the experience to work with others that are less fortunate than myself and it's opened the social aspect of my life as well.

“ If I can do it, then what's to stop anybody else doing it?

My biggest challenge was finding it difficult to plan – to be more prepared and more organised. But as I got through the YAA I got a lot of help with that; how to devise a plan and how to come in to the office with a plan. It's helped me become more organised. I think for a lot of people with learning difficulties that can be a challenge, particularly people who have got Asperger's, like myself. The YAA has given me the confidence to

friends; I have become more sociable. The experience helped me get into more volunteering. For example, I volunteered for the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games. That was one of the best experiences of my life.

Completing the YAA has made a big difference in my life. I'm really proud of my achievement; it's given me a boost. If I can do it, then what's to stop anybody else doing it?"

Even if it's someone else with a learning disability – given the right amount of support, they can put their mind to it and they can do it.

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→ www.youthscotland.org.uk



YoMo (Young Movers)

A third sector organisation that views Youth Achievement Awards (YAA) as a vital way to recognise and celebrate youth-led community work in Scotland

64,000

7,500

Youth Scotland serves a membership of over 64,000 young people and 7,500 youth workers

Many large and small third sector organisations deliver YAA across Scotland, including YoMo, a Glasgow-based empowerment charity. They value the YAA as a way to recognise and celebrate youth-led community work and believe they are an important accreditation option for learners who struggle in formal learning settings. In addition to directly delivering awards, YoMo supports a range of other community-based organisations to deliver YAA.

“Each young person’s learning style is completely different. Some instantly know what they want to get out of the YAA, but for many that initial question – what do I want to learn? – is a really big one.

“Eight years ago, we started looking at the YAA as a way to accredit the work being done by young people in communities. In particular we were thinking about our YouthBank - a grant pot run by young grant makers, who fund young people’s ideas for youth led projects that will benefit the community. It now funds more than 140 youth-initiated projects each year in the North of Glasgow and is responsible for a huge amount of fantastic work by young people. But at that time, none of this good work was accredited, which bothered me.

After some training I started to introduce the YAA to the young people

that I was working directly with at YouthBank. It was easy to get them through their YAA.

Soon we also saw the greater need not just for our young people but for the third sector in Glasgow, because nobody else was offering the YAA. That’s when YoMo became an operating agency. As well as ourselves, we now support 18 other organisations to deliver the YAA across Glasgow.

Glasgow needs the YAA program. Our young people have some of the lowest attainment levels in the whole of Scotland and most of the organisations that we’re supporting to deliver the YAA are

working with young people that will leave school with absolutely nothing. The YAA is an opportunity to accredit these young people.

It has given us a bit of stand, doing the YAA. It’s not always been easy but I think we’ve been reasonably successful in building infrastructures within organisations to deliver their own YAA.”

We are now looking at doing the delivery of the YAA through a peer education model, within youth clubs.

For more information about Youth Scotland’s awards go to

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At the beginning of our efforts to identify and develop these case studies we asked a number of Youth Scotland's partners to share their views and experiences with the Youth Achievement Awards.

These specialists in fields such as employment, skills development, youth work, community learning and development and education, include senior representatives from public, third and private sector organisations operating at national, local authority and community levels.

In these discussions, stakeholders identified a range of ways in which Youth Achievement Awards have provided positive benefits for individuals. Crucially, they also suggested that the awards have a broader value for Scotland:

Gains for young people:

- The open structure of awards creates opportunities to accredit activities young people are already engaged/ interested in. This creates momentum and motivation and helps to convert existing activities into accredited learning experiences
- Accredited work appears in a young person's record of achievement and includes important testimony where others can share their stories about that young person. This is a valuable boost for the young person but also an alternative way to share insights with potential employers, educators and others who may help a young person's progress
- Young people gain experience that helps with college/university/ employment interviews
- Routes for parents and other important people in children and young people's lives to get involved in their learning experiences
- The flexibility of evidence base can make it fun and more inclusive for young people
- A route to open up conversations and address behavioural issues or negative activity in a non-judgemental way
- Contribute to soft outcomes including confidence, skills, self-awareness and equip young people with the tools of plan/do/review – a lifelong skill
- A fair, equal and easy to access experience where "the top 10% and bottom 5%" of achievers can be engaged in the same activity, working towards the same thing
- Accreditation of an individual's journey – not their learning outcome. For some young people, this may be only accreditation they may have when leaving school

“ We had a situation where one of our workers had been working on a YAA with a young person and they went into Her Majesty’s Young Offenders Institution (HMYOI) Polmont for a period of time and through having the youth work team within HMYOI Polmont we were able to continue the YAA process with the young person within the prison and they got their accreditation.

Gains for Scotland:

- Awards offer new types of learning exchanges among peers and across settings; for example between age groups, spanning school and community learning environments, and across community and criminal justice settings.
- Development of young leaders, champions and community based role models
- An evidence base which sets out the impact and value of youth work
- Another strand of practical and person-centred entry routes to employment
- Contribution to innovative and young person focused ways of working within schools and other institutions
- A route for young adults to re-enter the world of learning
- Education options which suit a diverse range of learning needs, skills and abilities
- Contribution to a range of national and local outcomes, including changing behaviours for health, justice and education outcomes
- Another means to address social and economic inequality
- Facilitating community responses to social issues – i.e. alcohol and drug misuse, young people at risk of entering the criminal justice system
- Contribute to community development and social inclusion
- Maximise the impact and coordination of community resources.

“ The possibilities of YAAs are endless because it’s an open structure and young people choose what is appropriate to them so it reflects their learning.

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A company limited by guarantee No: 125456.

Scottish Charity No: SC000501.

Registered in Scotland.

www.youthscotland.org.uk

Produced by:

The  Accessible Social Research — Lines Between

Published: November 2017

