



Youth Participation

Youth Scotland

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Universal Youth Work

[Youth Scotland](#) is the national charity supporting the delivery of community-based youth work and the largest national youth work organisation in Scotland. Our range of projects and services support a membership network of over 2,200 youth groups running in diverse communities across Scotland, from small rural and island community groups to large urban projects. Youth Scotland member groups work with almost 105,000 young people aged 5 – 25 years old who are in turn supported by over 11,300 passionate and committed youth workers and volunteers. Youth Scotland supports this network of community-based youth groups by providing: key training; information and guidance; resources; accredited youth awards; capacity-building support; access to small grants schemes, youth participation opportunities and national youth work programmes. Youth Scotland has over 90 years of expertise in supporting these groups and is essential in building their capacity to deliver safe, compliant and high-quality youth work.

“Less than a year ago [Youth Scotland staff member] came to deliver a workshop to less than 10 young people. Thanks to everything he has done for us we now deliver to almost 100 young people a week...without him we wouldn't have the youth work programme we do!”

- Member group currently supported by a Youth Scotland Area Development Worker.

Please see our [22/23 Impact report](#) for more information on our work, our successes and our reach.

Targeted Provision

We promote the benefits of open-access, universal youth work that encourages mixing between young people from different SIMD areas and circumstances, promoting social mobility and better understanding of each other's backgrounds, while also reducing potential stigma attached to accessing services. However, we also appreciate that equality is not necessarily equity and that some young people will need additional support and targeted provision to take up opportunities.

67% of Youth Scotland member groups operate in communities in the highest 50% of Scotland's areas of deprivation, while 28% operate in rural and remote rural communities. We respond to our membership by catering to these different needs. Youth Scotland have delivered funded projects focussed in areas of deprivation for over 15 years, demonstrating our reach into communities most affected by crime, anti-social behaviour, and poor mental health. In 2020-23 [Generation CashBack](#), a targeted

programme, supported 9,340 hard to reach young people to participate in positive activity, with 71% of participants from SIMD1-2 areas.

For more information on how Youth Scotland's vital work supports the most disadvantaged communities please see our [Acting on Poverty](#) report.

Youth Participation and Leadership

Listening to and incorporating young people's views is embedded into Youth Scotland programmes. Our accredited iLead training pathway was co-produced with young people and provides a youth participation and leadership framework that is flexible according to need. The programme can be tailored to meet a range of outcomes across themes as diverse as physical activity, climate action, alcohol misuse, financial awareness and mental health.

The iLead Pathway takes young people through three stages of leadership which allow them to:

- Engage with a range of learning opportunities
- Empower them to take the lead in their communities and turn their ideas into social action
- Advance as peer educators and young leaders of others on their leadership journey

Evaluation shows that participation in the iLead programme raises self-confidence and self-esteem, develops leadership skills and enables young people to be involved in decisions that affect their lives. The programme is interactive throughout, using games, movement, drawing, rapid idea generation and other creative techniques to effectively engage young people. Young people who participate can accredit their achievements with SQA rated youth awards. We have used the iLead pathway as a foundation for a number of Youth Participation projects, using the training to ensure that young people have the confidence and competence to meaningfully use their voice, make it heard and have an impact.

Recent Youth Participation Successes Include:

- [Young Islanders Network \(YIN\)](#) – Youth Scotland established the Young Islanders Network (YIN) in 2021, with the aim of understanding the views of young islanders and their communities. The YIN has gone on to build a presence in all 8 Local Authority islands areas and is supporting young people to shape the National Islands Plan, ensuring that their interests and priorities are considered. The YIN explores issues such as the depopulation of islands and provides a platform to support lesser heard voices to engage through its inclusive methods.

- [Reach Events](#) – an annual event designed by young people for young people. Each year we recruit a Reach Advisory Group of young people aged 14 – 25 and facilitate a process through which they co-design and co-deliver an event that celebrates the power of youth work, attended by up to 150 young people and youth workers from across Scotland.
- [Inspire 2022](#) – Funded by Spirit of 2012, this programme supported teams of young people to come up with an idea for a youth-led social action event that they wanted to run to benefit their local community. The teams then pitched for up to £800 Dragons-Den style to make their idea a reality and were supported to deliver their event.
- [Young Placechangers](#) – A programme run in partnership with Greenspace, which gave young people the skills and confidence to act with others in their community to improve the environmental quality, biodiversity, and vibrancy of their neighbourhoods.
- Scotland: The Big Picture (SBP) – Youth Scotland engaged and supported a steering group of young people from across the county to help shape SBP’s youth advocacy strategy and create a communications plan to make more young people aware of rewilding.
- [Inform 100](#) – A project that ran 2018-2020 in partnership with Audit Scotland, supporting young people’s voices to be heard about public services that affect Scotland’s communities. Youth Scotland also ran Youth Engagement training for Audit Scotland’s staff.

In late 2023, we were successful in a tender process to be part of the [Scottish Government’s CYP Participation framework](#), alongside 5 other providers. We have also recently been contracted by Skills Development Scotland to support them with consulting young people on the design of their ‘Profiling Achievements’ project. This piece of work will run throughout 24-25. Following the enshrinement of UNCRC in Scots law in January 2024 we are anticipating increased interest in involving young people in decision-making - a development that is welcomed by Youth Scotland.

Young Grantmakers

Participatory grantmaking and youth-led funding initiatives have become more common over the last 5 years with key funders like the National Lottery Community Fund, Corra Foundation, and Creative Scotland recognising the value of youth-led funds and decision-making panels. Youth Scotland has been approached by funders to support this work using our youth participation expertise to recruit, train and facilitate young grantmakers panels, supporting young people to design, develop, promote and assess funding schemes.

These include:

- Corra Way Forward for Families Partnership – Corra commissioned us to take young people from two of our member groups through Young Grantmakers training so they would be able to make recommendations on their Way Forward for Families fund. The fund is for projects designed to support young people and families affected by drug and alcohol abuse. Decisions on the fund will be announced in 2024.
- Corra UNCRC – In 2023, Corra commissioned us to support a panel of young people to review applications to the UNCRC fund. We invited young people who had previously participated in a Young Grantmakers programme to take part, and they went through a short refresher training, and were supported to familiarise themselves with the UNCRC. The fund was open to public bodies who were innovating to further the aims of the UNCRC. The youth panel put together a list of recommendations for the Scottish Government panel who were taking the final decisions on the fund.
- [Step into the Arts](#) – Youth Scotland was selected by Creative Scotland in 2023 as part of a tender process to manage a programme of youth-led arts funding for young people. We recruited and trained a panel of young grant-makers from our membership who designed ‘Step into the Arts’ and made the decisions on who was successful with the funding. £65,000 was distributed to support young people’s creative development.
- Corra Henry Duncan Grants – In 2022 Youth Scotland was commissioned to train and facilitate a Youth Panel for Corra Foundation’s Henry Duncan Grants, to decide on how to administer £900,000 of funding aimed at improving the lives of young people across Scotland with over 60 applicants.
- [Glas-glow Up](#) – In 2021-22, the National Lottery Community Fund commissioned Youth Scotland to design and deliver a participatory grant-making pilot project in Glasgow. The aim was to give young people an opportunity to identify and fund initiatives to tackle anti-social behaviour within their local communities. Youth Scotland’s role in this programme was to: recruit participants aged 13-25 from four areas of Glasgow; support these young people with training to 1. Understand the grant-making process, 2. Design the fund and priorities, and 3. Take on a decision-making role; accredit young people’s learning; administer the grants and coordinate the evaluation of the process and the funded projects themselves. A total of £40,000 was awarded to 10 successful applicants.

Grant Management

Youth Scotland has designed, promoted, administered and evaluated a multitude of small grant schemes that fund and support member youth groups to deliver youth work activity, as well as microgrants schemes that fund young people directly. Our experience means we already have robust financial processes and safeguarding measures in place to ensure that the funds well managed.

Recent funds we have distributed include:

- [Youth Scotland Safe Spaces Youth Work Fund](#) – created for general youth work activity which creates safe spaces for young people who are at risk, as well as providing the opportunity to run issue-based programmes. Supported by The RS Macdonald Charitable Trust.
- [What's your Big Idea?](#) – provides young people with the opportunity to apply for a small amount of funding to help get an exciting idea off the ground. This could include starting a new project with their youth group; an idea for a way to make more money; or developing a new skill.
- [Rural Action Fund](#) – currently supported by The Gannochy Trust, this fund has reached more than 5,000 young people in rural communities across Scotland through our rural/ island membership.
- [Generation CashBack Microgrants](#) – provided opportunities for young people living in areas of deprivation to receive a microgrant of between £100 and £300 to help them develop their interests and skills and enable them to take the next steps in achieving their goals.
- [Inspire 2022](#) – see above
- [Youth Scotland Action Fund](#) – created as an emergency response to support youth groups throughout the first Covid-19 lockdown. Supported by The STV Children's Appeal, The Robertson Trust, The Gannochy Trust, Cattanach, Ponton House Trust and The Scottish Government, this fund reached over 12,000 young people across Scotland through 167 grants to youth groups totalling over £80,000.
- [Winter and Spring Funds](#) – evolved to continue the support of the YS Action Fund and enabled Youth Scotland to provide a total of £120,000 through 58 grants to member youth groups, to ensure local families received essential support.

Accreditation

The increased engagement of youth work in 'offering wider curricular and learning opportunities' has been identified in [Ken Muir's Report](#) and key recommendations for Scottish education reform (2022). Youth work has been shown to be crucial in helping close the poverty-related attainment gap, and Youth Scotland's Youth Awards offer a valuable way to accredit the non-formal learning not always captured in the school environment.

Youth Scotland is an SQA centre and the national managing body for Youth Achievement Awards which, alongside Hi5 and Dynamic Youth Awards, comprise our suite of SQA-accredited and SCQF-levelled awards (levels 2-7). The Awards vary in responsibility level and time commitment but all use an experiential education 'plan-do-review' process which is key in developing critical learning skills in young people.

Our Awards provide a framework which accredits learning in a wide variety of contexts, developing meta-skills which are critical in educational and employment success. The Awards are driven by goals determined by young people, as opposed to a fixed curriculum, and it is this flexibility that is part of its key success. We have developed themed awards to tie in with certain priorities (such as the Climate Action Hi5 and [DYA Award](#)) as well as bespoke awards to wrap around specific programmes of activity (such as Inspire 2022).

Almost 94,000 Awards have been completed to date, accrediting young people's achievements and improving their employability. We are seeing growth again post-pandemic and in 2023/24 we delivered almost 8,300 awards (38% in SIMD1-2), and provided training for those delivering Awards. We are anticipating further growth with the increased profile of youth awards as part of education reform in Scotland.

For more on Youth Scotland's Awards please find below some short films illustrating the value of Youth Awards from the perspective of both young people and youth workers/ teachers:

- [A case study of Alva Academy and OYCI youth group](#) whose youth award programmes and special partnership help young leaders thrive.
- [A case study](#) of KYTHE to illustrate embedding Youth Scotland Awards into community-based youth work
- [Youth Voices](#) - How youth work is key to recognising achievement in a reformed education system. Produced by Awards Network, filmed on location at Youth Scotland's flagship event – Big Ideas

Further Information

We very much welcome the opportunity to discuss our youth participation work in more detail. For further information, please contact:

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