

YouthWorksHighland

2019 – 2024

The Highland Strategy for Youth Work 2019-2024.

With, by and for young people.



“Youth work makes me the best that I can be”

Highland Young Person 2019

Welcome to your Strategy

Firstly, thank you.

Thank you for taking a moment out of your life to listen to young people. This document has been written with, for and by young people and I am so proud to have been part of its journey to this point.

More importantly though, I am excited to be part of its future. We are all part of its future, it's our strategy. Young people, youth workers, decision makers, parents, anyone with an investment in tomorrow.

During the writing process, we have explored what participation in Highland really means and tried to achieve true co-production.

With that goal in mind, we managed to reach the end of the journey with something that can be recognised by everyone who has been part of the process. That to me is an achievement.

So have a read; question it, interpret it, share it, talk about it but most importantly, own it.



Esme Leitch, Highland Youth Convener 2018-2019

“Needs will change, things will change but young people will always need the support of youth work”

Highland Young Person 2019

Vision

Our vision is consistent with the accepted definition of youth work in Scotland and was created by young people involved in the co-development of this strategy.

“Youth work in Highland is a voluntary learning process that builds confidence, resilience and character by bringing young people together in a safe space, facilitated by skilled and competent youth workers”

Outcomes and principles

Our strategy is based on a number of outcomes for young people involved in the Youth Work Sector. Young people want to:

- be confident
- experience new things
- make good decisions
- speak up for what is right
- make life better for others

The strategy will enable young people and the youth work sector in:

- Being heard
- Being Involved
- Being the best we can be

Drivers for this strategy

Youth work in Scotland describes three essential features of Youth work. Namely that:

- Young people choose to participate
- The work must build from where young people are
- Youth work recognises the young person and the youth worker as partners in a learning process.

This strategy recognises that the world is different for young people and adults compared to how it was in 2007 when the previous (Highland Council) Youth Work Strategy was put in place.

The UN Youth Strategy, 'Youth 2030', reminds us that young people are "a tremendous and essential asset worth investing in". This globally contextualised document also reminds us of the challenges faced by young people and how they arise for the young when accessing their rights to quality education, health care and decent work.

Therefore, a rights based approach to work with young people and a genuine sharing of power is required locally if we are to secure the peace, security, justice, climate resilience and sustainable development of wider international goals.

In Highland young people, youth workers and the wide variety of volunteers and staff from a very wide range of voluntary and statutory continue to work and learn together as they always have and the region remains a great place to be young for many. However, there are some significant pressures to be navigated growing up right here, right now. This strategy seeks to support the delivery of the Highland Outcome Improvement Plan, Getting it Right for Every Child and other local and national strategies including corporate parenting by reducing inequalities through youth work.

This document sets out how we are going to work together to continue and improve our offer of accessible and high-quality youth work, how we will measure progress and how you can get involved too.



Process

Co-production has been central to the development of this strategy. Co-production is an approach described as equal stake with equal status for all involved in the production of the strategy. Over 1000 young people have contributed in a wide variety of ways. They have explained in detail what the pressures are, the impact they have and how young people want and need youth work support to work alongside them in the next 5 years.

In June 2018 The Highland Council's Care, Learning and Housing committee asked the Youth Work Improvement Group (a cross sector group of youth work professionals) to support and fully include young people in Highland to co-create an updated Youth Work Strategy for the region.

A period of engagement, consultation and collaboration took place that resulted in 473 online surveys being completed, 62 focus groups being coordinated and workshops being coordinated.

A Youth Work Strategy Review Group met regularly to steer the process and ensure that the voices of young people and those working across the sector were being considered. Appendix 1 contains the range of partners who participated.

The result of all this work has been the development of this strategy, 'Youth Works Highland - The Highland Strategy for Youth Work 2019- 2024'. It has one central purpose - to ensure that a positive difference is made by, with and for young people through youth work, especially where it's needed most.

Youth Work in Highland

To determine priorities for improvement, it was important to understand the current landscape for youth work in Highland. As part of the development of this strategy an extensive consultation into young people's lives and views on youth work was completed. Both Highlands and Islands Enterprise and the Voluntary Youth Network have recently released their own research which helped inform this evaluation.

- Highland continues to be a positive and safe place to be a young person with a variety of youth work mechanisms playing a key role. However, limited resources and poor access to opportunities consistently appear as barriers to participation.
- Youth Clubs are the single most common place that young person recognise as a place where they have a positive youth work experience showing a need for open access and universal provision.
- Having fun and socialising ranks as the most important feature of youth work. Arts opportunities such as Rock Challenge and drama clubs also score highly when young people are asked to identify a single positive youth work experience. However this was often considered to be a leadership opportunity.

- Structured provision, such as uniformed groups, leadership opportunities, volunteering and youth forums make up a large percentage of young people's most popular experiences.
- This evaluation tells us that opportunities which directly support young people's skill development and CV building is incredibly important and are engaged with by many young people in Highland, including the range of achievement awards available to young people.
- Volunteering opportunities feature within Highland research as a very positive opportunity for young people with a clear ask for more available opportunities.
- Young people also acknowledge the importance of outdoor spaces as places where young people choose to spend time.

Through this evaluation and having listened to the voices of young people in Highland a number of clear priorities for improvement have emerged. These are detailed in the next section of this strategy.



Priorities for improvement.

The following five priorities for improvement have emerged as those that should be actioned within the lifetime of this strategy.

1. **Improving community Involvement** – opportunities to be involved that are inclusive, empowering and meaningful.
2. **Improving democracy** – creating a space for having opinions, making change and being heard
3. **Improving Health and Wellbeing** – supporting a positive combination of physical health, mental health, relationships and keeping safe online.
4. **Improving inclusion** - removing barriers, involving everybody, respecting differences and providing equal opportunities
5. **Providing enhanced opportunities and training** – offering access to skills development, experiences, qualifications and learning that should be facilitated by skilled, competent youth workers, peers or those with lived experience



Commitments

The key commitments below capture the voices of the young people through their participation in devising this strategy. They will support the delivery of the priorities and will form the basis of the improvement plan to take this strategy forward.

The sector will:

Promote equity between young people and youth workers

Ensure there are effective links between statutory and voluntary youth work providers.

Embed young people's and sector voices in community planning structures.

Promote opportunities for partnership to achieve priority outcomes for young people.

Further develop strategic and operational links between youth work and formal education.

Deliver accessible and high quality youth work facilitated by skilled competent youth workers, their peers or those with lived experience.

Devise a Digital Youth Work Development Plan that complements this Strategy to improve digital access and reduce digital exclusion amongst young people.

Delivery and Next Steps

Having identified key priorities and commitments, they now require action within a clearly articulated and dynamic improvement plan. The Youth Work Improvement Group will develop and deliver this plan which will detail specific actions to be undertaken during the lifetime of this strategy.

The plan will clearly articulate timescales for action and will include both strategies for evaluation and performance management.

This plan will be co-developed and will include the following commitments to meeting the priorities determined within the strategy.

End words

So, there we are: **YouthWorksHighland**, A Strategy for Youth Work in Highland 2019-2024. Thank you again for taking the time to read this, we really appreciate it.

Being able to share our learning and the journey we've had is such an important part of the process and we hope you come back to this document again and again over its lifespan.

Whether you're a young person, a youth worker or just someone with a passion for the sector and the lives of young people in Highland, I hope this document has inspired to be ambitious and compassionate, and supported in doing so.

We hope we have left you believing that with, by and for young people, we can make youth work in Highland the best it can be, and excited for the journey getting there.

Esme Leitch, Highland Youth Convener 2018-2019

Further Information

The following links provide you with further information that relates to this strategy.

<https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/youth-un/>

<https://www.unicef.org/rightsite/files/uncrcchildfriendlylanguage.pdf>

<https://www.cypcs.org.uk/>

<https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/>

<https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/policy/youth-work-outcomes/>

http://www.highlandcpp.org.uk/uploads/9/5/2/0/95206114/hoip_v4_public_consultation.pdf

Organisations which Participated

In addition to the 1000 young people who participated we are very grateful to the following organisations for their participation:

Youth Work Improvement Group

- Action for Children
- High Life Highland
- The Highland Council
- Youth Highland

Highland Youth Work Organisations

- Highland Children's Forum
- Highland Youth Parliament
- High Life Highland
- Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament
- Scouts Scotland
- Spirit Advocacy
- The Boys Brigade
- The Clay Studio
- The Highland Council
- Voluntary Youth Network