



## **Youth Work (Scotland) Bill – Consultation Response**

**February 2025**

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### **About Children in Scotland**

Giving all children in Scotland an equal chance to flourish is at the heart of everything we do.

By bringing together a network of people working with and for children, alongside children and young people themselves, we offer a broad, balanced, and independent voice. We create solutions, provide support, and develop positive change across all areas affecting children in Scotland.

We do this by listening, gathering evidence, and applying and sharing our learning, while always working to uphold children's rights. Our range of knowledge and expertise means we can provide trusted support on issues as diverse as the people we work with and the varied lives of children and families in Scotland.

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### **Introduction**

Children in Scotland welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation. The proposal for a Youth Work (Scotland) Bill directly impacts our members, many of whom include third sector organisations and local authorities delivering impactful youth work services across Scotland.

The issue also relates to the theme of 'Learning' covered in Children in Scotland's Manifesto for 2021-2026.<sup>1</sup> This section of our manifesto recognises the important learning opportunities offered by youth work and the significant benefits this type of learning, which takes place outside the school environment, can bring for young people, including those who struggle to engage with more formal learning opportunities in the classroom. As such,

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<sup>1</sup> Children in Scotland. (2021). [Manifesto for 2021-26](#) (page 20-23).

youth work is an essential component of a truly equitable, inclusive and accessible education system.

In our response to this consultation, we have included the views of children and young people. This includes direct contributions from our children and young people's advisory group, Changing our World. The consultation directly links to the theme 'Education and Learning', one of the Hot Topics chosen by Changing our World. Our consultation response also includes the views of young people aged between sixteen and twenty-five who are working with us as part of the national Suicide Prevention Youth Advisory Group. Youth work has been identified as a vital source of support and connection in multiple Suicide Prevention Youth Advisory Group meetings.

### **General comments about the role of youth work**

Children in Scotland believes that a fully rights-based approach to Scottish education would be one where wellbeing is fully at the centre, barriers to education are removed, and children and young people have a clear and embedded role in influencing decision making across all areas of learning.<sup>2</sup>

There is strong evidence that youth work can be highly effective in promoting a holistic, rights-based, wellbeing-focused model for education, in which children and young people's voices are respected and listened to. The defining characteristic of youth work is that it is based on a relationship between a trusted adult and a young person, to support their social and emotional development.<sup>3</sup> Young people engage with youth work on a voluntary basis, and youth work builds from where young people are, with the young person and the youth worker working in partnership in the learning process.<sup>4</sup> Youth work is therefore by definition highly responsive to the needs and interests of children and young people, and is underpinned by respect for their views.

An extensive review of literature on youth work suggests that its 'values are founded on principles such as the provision of opportunities for meaningful participation, the development of agency and voice, and involvement in individual and collective action in order to develop social awareness.'<sup>5</sup> The Scottish Government has described youth work as 'one of the very few

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<sup>2</sup> Children in Scotland (2022). [Learning and Education – Evidence and Our Calls for Change](#) (page 2).

<sup>3</sup> Hoddinott, S and Davies, N. (2024). [Youth Work and Prevention](#) (page 2).

<sup>4</sup> Calder, A., Edgar, L., Fyfe, I., and McInnes, K.(2020). [The Impact of Community-Based Universal Youth Work in Edinburgh](#) (page 7).

<sup>5</sup> Brady, B., Silke, C. and Shaw, A. (2022). [A Rapid Review of the Benefits and Outcomes of Universal Youth Work](#) (page 1).

practices whose remit provides for young people to exercise genuine power'.<sup>6</sup> As such, youth work has the potential to promote and progress Article 12 (respect for the views of the child) of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Furthermore, Children in Scotland believes that the realisation of Article 28 (right to education) and Article 29 (goals of education) requires a 'holistic view of education and learning that does not solely focus on performance and qualifications.'<sup>7</sup> As such, we have already welcomed the indicators in the National Outcomes that 'aim to measure the confidence and resilience of children and young people.'<sup>8</sup>

There is considerable qualitative evidence that youth work can have a positive effect on these holistic educational outcomes, including, particularly, confidence. One report on outcomes of universal youth work in Edinburgh indicates that youth work has a positive impact on young people's life skills, their confidence, their relationships, and their feelings of being safe, valued, and supported.<sup>9</sup> A broad-ranging literature review found that youth work has clear personal and development benefits: confidence, openness to feedback, motivation, coping and emotional regulation, cognitive skills, and social skills were all identified as improving through youth work.<sup>10</sup>

In addition to these holistic educational benefits, youth work can also promote Article 31 (leisure, play and culture). The Scottish Government has committed to ensuring that 'All children and young people have sufficient time and space (physical and social) for playing within their community and play is valued, encouraged and supported in communities (as are providers of community play opportunities).'<sup>11</sup> Play encompasses children's behaviour that is 'freely chosen, personally directed, and intrinsically motivated.'<sup>12</sup> Youth work – which is by definition engaged with on a voluntary basis by young people – therefore supports the Scottish Government's Play Strategy.

There is evidence that youth work can have positive impacts on relationships, connections, and support. It can also have health and wellbeing benefits, including in mental health, as well as reducing risk-taking behaviour such as

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<sup>6</sup> YouthLink Scotland, Education Scotland, and The Scottish Government. (2014) [National Youth Work Strategy 2014-2019](#) (page 31).

<sup>7</sup> Children in Scotland. (2023) [The Review of National Outcomes: Children in Scotland Response](#) (n.p.)

<sup>8</sup> Children in Scotland (2023) [The Review of National Outcomes: Children in Scotland Response](#) (n.p.)

<sup>9</sup> Calder, A., Edgar, L., Fyfe, I., and McInnes, K.(2020). [The Impact of Community-Based Universal Youth Work in Edinburgh](#) (page 5).

<sup>10</sup> Brady, B., Silke, C. and Shaw, A. (2022). [A Rapid Review of the Benefits and Outcomes of Universal Youth Work](#) (page 66).

<sup>11</sup> The Scottish Government (2013) [Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Action Plan](#) (page 15).

<sup>12</sup> The Scottish Government (2013) [Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Action Plan](#) (page 10).

recreational drug use.<sup>13</sup> As such, youth work can progress and promote Article 24 (health and health services). Finally, youth work has been shown to ameliorate the negative impacts of poverty, and break intergenerational cycles of poverty.<sup>14</sup> As such, it can play a vital part in advancing the aims of the Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan (2022-2027).

## **CONSULTATION QUESTIONS:**

### **Aim and approach**

#### **1. Which of the following best expresses your view of the proposed Bill?**

##### **- Fully supportive**

Please explain the reasons for your response:

Children in Scotland is fully supportive of the proposed Bill. In our general comments above, we have highlighted the importance of youth work. We believe youth work plays a key role in the delivery of UNCRC and Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC), and in improving outcomes for children and young people.

Below, we have highlighted some key areas where the Bill will bring benefits.

#### **Implementing strategic approaches to youth work**

Children in Scotland notes that the proposal for a Bill will place a legal duty on local authorities to develop comprehensive youth work strategies, aligned to a National Youth Work Strategy.<sup>15</sup>

In our current manifesto, we call for the Scottish Government to commit to publishing a comprehensive youth work strategy, because this will ensure that there are clear visions for the provision and resourcing of youth work. Nearly five years on from the publication of our manifesto, and despite a range of engagement activity with young people and professionals in the sector, the Scottish Government is yet to publish its National Youth Work Strategy.

We support the additional proposed duty for each local authority to publish a youth work strategy, as these will ensure that young people and their parents or carers know what is happening in their area, and that provision and

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<sup>13</sup> Brady, B., Silke, C. and Shaw, A. (2022). [A Rapid Review of the Benefits and Outcomes of Universal Youth Work](#) (page 67).

<sup>14</sup> YouthLink Scotland (2023) [Youth Work and Poverty Policy Brief](#).

<sup>15</sup> Whitfield, M. (2024) [Proposed Youth Work \(Scotland\) Bill](#) (page 6).

resourcing of youth work is designed around the specific needs of the children and young people in each local authority area.

The act of ensuring each local authority has a youth work strategy in place must not simply be a bureaucratic exercise, but it must lead to improvements in the local delivery and resourcing of youth work. Considerations about how local youth work strategies align with local education improvement plans, and the local children's services planning and delivery process, must also be taken into consideration. Our learning from the Supporting the Third Sector Project<sup>16</sup> has highlighted the challenges many Children Services Planning Partnerships experience in prioritising activity to improve children and family services and ultimately improve outcomes for children and young people.

While there are challenges to ensuring they lead to tangible improvements in youth work across the country, Children in Scotland is supportive of the overall aims of implementing a National Youth Work Strategy and local youth work strategies, and therefore supports this part of the proposal.

## **Funding**

We note that the proposal for a Bill also commits to multi-year funding for youth work. We know that local authorities are experiencing extreme funding pressures and have already proposed or delivered key cuts to essential services. Ring-fenced, multi-year funding will be a key part of delivering a successful youth work bill that works in practice.

In Children in Scotland's recent responses to the consultation on the National Outcomes consultation<sup>17</sup> and the Third Sector Funding Principles Inquiry,<sup>18</sup> we highlighted some of the funding challenges that exist at present. In our National Outcomes response, Children in Scotland identified that a 'lack of sustainable funding negatively impacts the ability of organisations to plan for longer-term progress and minimises their capacity to report against additional outcomes and indicators outside their core funding sources'.<sup>19</sup> As part of this response, we recommended that the Scottish Government, and public bodies more widely, provide greater financial stability to organisations to enable them to make progress towards achieving the National Outcomes.<sup>20</sup> Children in Scotland therefore supports the funding

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<sup>16</sup> <https://childreninscotland.org.uk/supporting-the-third-sector-project/>

<sup>17</sup> Children in Scotland (2023) *The Review of National Outcomes: Children in Scotland Response* (n.p.)

<sup>18</sup> Children in Scotland (2024) *Response to the Social Justice and Social Security Committee Pre-Budget 2025-26 Scrutiny – Third Sector Funding Principle* (n.p.)

<sup>19</sup> Children in Scotland (2023) *The Review of National Outcomes: Children in Scotland Response* (n.p.)

<sup>20</sup> Children in Scotland (2023) *The Review of National Outcomes: Children in Scotland Response* (n.p.)

commitments outlined in this proposal.

### **Collaboration and integration within the Scottish education system**

Our manifesto highlights the need for an integrated and holistic approach to education, and calls on the Scottish Government to commit adequate funding to fully integrate youth work (as well as other forms of learning) with formal education.<sup>21</sup> We therefore support the ambition in this proposal that the framework for local authorities will ensure 'youth work is integrated into broader community services and social policies, creating a holistic approach that brings together education, health and social care'.<sup>23</sup>

Children in Scotland has also called for the development of opportunities for those outside formal education settings to be meaningfully involved in the governance of education in Scotland, and for providers outside schools - including youth workers - to have a more meaningful voice in education governance.<sup>20</sup> We therefore support the provision in this proposal that a portion of funding is reserved for innovation, 'encouraging collaboration and the sharing of best practices across regions', and that it particularly prioritises 'collaboration between local authorities and voluntary youth work providers'.<sup>22</sup> This resourcing is essential to ensuring that youth work is recognised and fully integrated as a vital part of Scotland's education system.

### **Children and young people's voices**

Children in Scotland believes that education governance reform is key to the improvement of learning in Scotland. Education governance needs to be more open, inclusive and representative of the key stakeholders, including children and young people.<sup>23</sup>

To support the participation of young people we have called for:

- Clear roles for children and young people to be identified in the governance of Scottish education, with participation supported by trusted adults;
- Clearer routes for the views of all children and young people to shape the structure and delivery of education locally and nationally.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Children in Scotland. (2021). [Manifesto for 2021-26](#) (page 23).

<sup>22</sup> Whitfield, M. (2024) [Proposed Youth Work \(Scotland\) Bill](#) (page 12).

<sup>23</sup> Children in Scotland (2022). [Learning and Education – Evidence and Our Calls for Change](#) (page 3).

<sup>24</sup> Children in Scotland (2022). [Learning and Education – Evidence and Our Calls for Change](#) (page 5-6).

We welcome the ambition that the proposed framework will ensure youth work services are designed to reflect the needs and voices of young people, involving them directly in shaping programmes and policy.<sup>25</sup> Youth work is premised on partnerships between children and young people and trusted adults. Together's most recent State of Children's Rights report has shown that 'youthwork plays an important role in empowering children and young people's participation in decision-making.'<sup>26</sup> Legislation that enables universal access to youth work, and makes provision for the integration of youth work into education planning and provision, could therefore facilitate improved participation of children and young people in the governance and delivery of Scottish education.

## Relationships

Children in Scotland has previously called for greater emphasis on relationships within educational settings.<sup>27</sup> This requires a diverse workforce with the time to get to know children, appropriate skills, and the qualifications and the resources to meet children's needs.<sup>28</sup>

A study of the impact of universal youth work across three localities in Scotland identified that 'young people recognise and articulate the importance of having a trusted adult and a safe space created by youth workers, with whom they often form long-term relationships continuing into young adulthood.'<sup>29</sup> A similar study of the impact of universal youth work in Dumfries and Galloway also found that positive and supportive relationships are central to youth work.<sup>30</sup> Together's State of Children's Rights report highlighted that some young people have better relationships with youth workers than with teachers.<sup>31</sup>

We therefore support the commitment, in this proposal for a Bill, that 'mandates ongoing professional development and training for all paid and volunteer youth workers', and the commitment to 'establish a comprehensive professional development framework, including entitlements to training and opportunities for specialisation....[which] promotes stronger collaboration between educational institutions and youth work organisations to develop

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<sup>25</sup> Whitfield, M. (2024) [Proposed Youth Work \(Scotland\) Bill](#) (page 7).

<sup>26</sup> Together: Scottish Alliance For Children's Rights (2024) [State of Children's Rights in Scotland](#) (page 121).

<sup>27</sup> Children in Scotland. (2021). [Manifesto for 2021-26](#) (page 21).

<sup>28</sup> Children in Scotland. (2021). [Manifesto for 2021-26](#) (page 21).

<sup>29</sup> Fyfe, I. et. al. (2018) [The Impact of Community-Based Universal Youth Work in Scotland](#) (page 4).

<sup>30</sup> The University of Edinburgh, Northern Star, YouthLink Scotland, Youthwork Dumfries and Galloway, and Dumfries and Galloway Council. (2020) [The Impact of Community Based Universal Youth Work in Dumfries and Galloway](#) (page 37).

<sup>31</sup> Together: Scottish Alliance For Children's Rights. (2024) [State of Children's Rights in Scotland](#) (page 121).

specialised courses and certifications'.<sup>32</sup> Investment in youth workers and in their full participation in the governance of education would help promote the relationships between youth workers and young people within education in Scotland. It would also help raise the esteem of youth work and the skills of youth workers, by formalizing their contribution to Scotland's education system, and funding youth work in proportion to this contribution.

### **Inclusive education**

Children in Scotland has highlighted that schools sometimes focus on the "successful learners" part of the Curriculum for Excellence, at the expense or neglect of the other capacities: confident individuals, responsible citizens, and effective contributors. These capacities should not be forgotten.<sup>33</sup>

This is supported by the observations of Changing our World that individuals have different experiences of education, and that the diversity of children and young people's experiences needs to be met with a diversity of provision.<sup>34</sup>

In their 2024 evidence paper, Changing our World highlight that 'learning does not just take place in the school building, but ... happens in a much wider and holistic way', and that 'a range of opportunities are required to support the holistic approach to education and learning that children and young people want to see'.<sup>35</sup>

Changing our World members have also discussed the importance of opportunities outside school through which children and young people find their passions and interests. Youth work was specifically identified as one of these opportunities; one young person said they learned 'things not taught at school, sharing voice, learning by doing, practical things like cooking' through youth work.

Changing our World members emphasised that youth work was particularly instrumental in supporting their knowledge and understanding of children's rights. Children in Scotland is confident, on the basis of other engagement work, that this will be applicable to a wide range of topics beyond rights.<sup>36</sup>

Youth work has repeatedly been identified by Changing our World members as a key opportunity for learning outside school, and as one form of

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<sup>32</sup> Whitfield, M. (2024) [Proposed Youth Work \(Scotland\) Bill](#) (page 14).

<sup>33</sup> Children in Scotland (2022) [Consultation Response on the Education National Improvement Framework – enhanced data collection for improvement](#) (n.p.).

<sup>34</sup> Changing our World (2024) [Exploring our "Hot Topics": Education and Learning](#) (page 2).

<sup>35</sup> Changing our World (2024) [Exploring our "Hot Topics": Education and Learning](#) (page 12).

<sup>36</sup> Changing our World (2024) [Exploring our "Hot Topics": Education and Learning](#) (page 11-12).



education that can be more inclusive of the diverse needs of children and young people.

The proposal for a Bill that would make youth work provision mandatory across all local authorities has the potential to progress these calls, and therefore to progress and promote children and young people's right to education, holistically defined.

### **Health and wellbeing**

Youth work also has significant benefits for children and young people's health and wellbeing, beyond education.

Children in Scotland's National Suicide Prevention Youth Advisory Group has identified youth work as a key preventative support mechanism. In particular, it was highlighted that young people 'were more likely to approach people they had good relationships with when they were in crisis, rather than the most relevant professional'.<sup>37</sup>

This group has also highlighted that access to physical spaces where support can be sought out was a particular problem for young people in rural areas. Members of the group often felt safer and better supported when accessing support through third sector organisations than through the NHS. Furthermore, less formal spaces were seen as important for supporting people's mental health and wellbeing.<sup>38</sup> This report, developed through engagement with the National Suicide Prevention Youth Advisory Group, highlights 'the importance of non-therapeutic spaces in supporting people's wellbeing'.<sup>39</sup>

By creating conditions for the universal provision of youth work with sustainable funding, the proposal for a Bill has the potential to promote the relationships, resources, time, and designated spaces that are essential to children and young people's health and wellbeing.

## **2. Do you think legislation is required, or are there are other ways in which the Bill's aims could be achieved more effectively? Please explain the reasons for your response.**

**- Yes, Children in Scotland thinks legislation is required.**

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<sup>37</sup> Children in Scotland (2023) [Suicide Prevention Youth Advisory Group: Reflections on the One Good Adult Resource](#) (p 1).

<sup>38</sup> Ross, C. and Kerridge, E. (2022) [Suicide Prevention Youth Advisory Group: Time, Space, Compassion](#) (page 2).

<sup>39</sup> Ross, C. and Kerridge, E. (2022) [Suicide Prevention Youth Advisory Group: Time, Space, Compassion](#) (page 2-3).

Explain:

1. There are significant geographic differences in youth work provision, which would most effectively be addressed through legislation. A report on youth work in Dumfries and Galloway highlighted the equality and inclusion benefits of youth work, and that 'this is particularly important in rural local authorities like Dumfries and Galloway where young people can feel isolated and lonely as a result of geography.'<sup>40</sup> Lack of provision and transport were also highlighted as key barriers to accessing youth work by children and young people in rural areas who contributed to Together's State of Children's Rights report.<sup>41</sup> We also know this from the direct project work that we deliver with children and young people, including our work on the Access All Arts Fund<sup>42</sup> and the Live Music and Mental Health Project.<sup>43</sup>
2. Protected funding for youth work would most effectively ensure that its most fundamental potential benefits – which are long term – are attained. Together highlights that 'funding cuts are leading to the closure of many youth clubs', and that children and young people 'express sadness, frustration and a deep sense of loss at the closure of clubs that have provided essential support, connection, and opportunities to influence change'.<sup>44</sup>
3. Legislation would protect youth work from short-term thinking. For example, many youth centres were redeployed as vaccination centres during COVID. This is illustrative of a short-term responsiveness which impedes the long-term nature of youth work's best impacts.
4. Together has reported calls from neurodivergent and disabled children for more inclusive clubs and activities.<sup>45</sup> We also know from our work through the Access All Arts Fund<sup>46</sup> and other projects that children and young people with a disability or additional support need often struggle to access groups and activities that meet their needs. Legislation would ensure that all children and young people have

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<sup>40</sup> The University of Edinburgh, Northern Star, YouthLink Scotland, Youthwork Dumfries and Galloway, and Dumfries and Galloway Council. (2020) [The Impact of Community Based Universal Youth Work in Dumfries and Galloway](#) (page 27).

<sup>41</sup> Together: Scottish Alliance For Children's Rights (2024) [State of Children's Rights in Scotland](#) (page 123).

<sup>42</sup> <https://childreninscotland.org.uk/access-all-arts-fund/>

<sup>43</sup> <https://childreninscotland.org.uk/live-music-and-mental-health-innovation-labs/>

<sup>44</sup> Together: Scottish Alliance For Children's Rights (2024) [State of Children's Rights in Scotland](#) (page 123).

<sup>45</sup> Together: Scottish Alliance For Children's Rights (2024) [State of Children's Rights in Scotland](#) (page 123).

<sup>46</sup> <https://childreninscotland.org.uk/access-all-arts-fund/>

access to youth work, supporting more equitable and inclusive approaches to the provision of youth work opportunities.

## Financial implications

**3. Any new law can have a financial impact which would affect individuals, businesses, the public sector, or others. What financial impact do you think this proposal could have if it became law? Would this save money or cost money?**

**- a significant reduction in costs**

Please explain the reasons for your answer, including who you would expect to feel the financial impact of the proposal, and if there are any ways you think the proposal could be delivered more cost-effectively.

The proposal for the Bill claims that 'a collaborative framework has been shown to save money by reducing duplication of services and improving early intervention.'<sup>47</sup> This claim is supported by the findings of the Hall Aiken report into the Social and Economic Value of Youth Work in Scotland.<sup>48</sup> This report was published nine years ago. Revised economic modelling would provide more up-to-date cost-benefit figures. However, youth work is widely recognised as a highly cost-effective preventative intervention, which can lead to improved mental health, improved educational attainment and reductions in crime and antisocial behaviour.<sup>49</sup> This is supported by anecdotal evidence from frontline youth workers, though challenges in measuring and quantifying outcomes, particularly in the short term, have resulted in limited data to support these observations.<sup>50</sup>

For example, a recent report on youth work in England and Wales found no statistically significant association between decreased local authority expenditure and any short-term changes in education outcomes or socio-economic and health outcomes; and no statistical evidence that serious crime offences are affected. However, the report authors noted that data limitations affected the range of analyses, and highlighted that interviewees stressed that youth work is linked with positive outcomes for many young people.<sup>51</sup> A separate report on the economic benefits of youth work over a longer time frame (10 years) found significant direct and indirect economic

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<sup>47</sup> Whitfield, M. (2024) [Proposed Youth Work \(Scotland\) Bill](#) (page 13).

<sup>48</sup> YouthLink (2016) [Social and Economic Value of Youth Work in Scotland: Initial Assessment](#) (page 3).

<sup>49</sup> Hoddinott, S. and Davies, N. (2024). [Youth Work and Prevention](#) (page 2).

<https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/2024-10/youth-work-and-prevention.pdf>

<sup>50</sup> Calder, A., Edgar, L., Fyfe, I., and McInnes, K.(2020). [The Impact of Community-Based Universal Youth Work in Edinburgh](#) (page 4).

<sup>51</sup> Millard, W. (2024) [Youth Provision and Life Outcomes: A Study of the Local Impact of Youth Clubs](#) (page 30).

benefits.<sup>52</sup>

Furthermore, many studies of youth work do not 'focus on changes in the broader community'.<sup>53</sup> However, the anecdotal positive health and wellbeing outcomes noted in these studies suggest wider social and economic benefits in the longer term. The authors of one report emphasise that 'the personal development gains through youth work should not be underestimated'.<sup>54</sup> For example, confidence is reported as increasing through youth work.<sup>55</sup> Similarly, the Hall Aiken report emphasises that there is strong evidence that 'youth work builds a range of soft skills and capabilities including, in particular, confidence and motivation'.<sup>56</sup>

Children in Scotland has already argued that public funds must be spent in a way that supports and improves the wellbeing of everyone in Scotland.<sup>57</sup> We therefore recommend that there should be a strong focus on wellbeing in any analysis of the financial costs and benefits of this proposed bill. There is clear evidence that youth work has a significant positive impact on the wellbeing of children and young people.

Several studies of the impact of youth work have highlighted the negative impact of short-term thinking informing financial planning for youth work. The authors of one report note that 'In order to secure funding for youth work services, local authorities and voluntary organisations are required to demonstrate the impact of their practice. It is challenging to evaluate the impact of open-access universal youth work'.<sup>58</sup> Another report points out that 'The impact of youth work is both difficult to research and emergent, only becoming apparent after prolonged periods of engagement over a number of years'.<sup>59</sup>

We would therefore recommend that the question of financial impacts is

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<sup>52</sup> Frontier Economics (2022) [The Economic Value of Youth Work: A Report for UK Youth](#) (page 16).

<sup>53</sup> The University of Edinburgh, Northern Star, YouthLink Scotland, Youthwork Dumfries and Galloway, and Dumfries and Galloway Council. (2020) [The Impact of Community Based Universal Youth Work in Dumfries and Galloway](#) (page 15); Fyfe, I. et. al. (2018) [The Impact of Community-Based Universal Youth Work in Scotland](#) (page 14).

<sup>54</sup> Fyfe, I. et. al. (2018) [The Impact of Community-Based Universal Youth Work in Scotland](#) (page 4).

<sup>55</sup> Fyfe, I. et. al. (2018) [The Impact of Community-Based Universal Youth Work in Scotland](#) (page 20); The University of Edinburgh, Northern Star, YouthLink Scotland, Youthwork Dumfries and Galloway, and Dumfries and Galloway Council. (2020) [The Impact of Community Based Universal Youth Work in Dumfries and Galloway](#) (page 19); Calder, A., Edgar, L., Fyfe, I., and McInnes, K.(2020). [The Impact of Community-Based Universal Youth Work in Edinburgh](#) (page 21).

<sup>56</sup> YouthLink (2016) [Social and Economic Value of Youth Work in Scotland: Initial Assessment](#) (page 9).

<sup>57</sup> Children in Scotland (2023) [The Review of National Outcomes: Children in Scotland Response](#) (n.p.).

<sup>58</sup> The University of Edinburgh, Northern Star, YouthLink Scotland, Youthwork Dumfries and Galloway, and Dumfries and Galloway Council. (2020) [The Impact of Community Based Universal Youth Work in Dumfries and Galloway](#) (page 7).

<sup>59</sup> Fyfe, I. et. al. (2018) [The Impact of Community-Based Universal Youth Work in Scotland](#) (page 10).

informed by a long-term (approximately 10-year) perspective. In this perspective, there is strong evidence that investment youth work will result in significant reduction in potential costs because of its positive impact on children and young people's wellbeing, mental and physical health, and skills and employability.

## Equalities

**4. Any new law can have an impact on different individuals in society, for example as a result of their age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. What impact could this proposal have on particular people if it became law?**

If you do not have a view skip to next question.

Please explain the reasons for your answer and if there are any ways you think the proposal could avoid negative impacts on particular people

Together's State of Children's Rights Report emphasises that 'youthwork plays a particularly significant role for children and young people whose rights are most at risk'.<sup>60</sup> The research highlighted above shows that youth work is relationship based and responsive to the needs of the children and young people accessing it. As such, it offers opportunities for children and young people to develop a range of skills, and to build friendships, outside of formal education settings.

Many children and young people struggle to reach their full potential within formal education. Our children and young people's advisory group, Changing our World, have highlighted that for some children and young people, 'school is very stressful, and things like learning disabilities or bullying are a barrier to either coming to school or learning anything there'.<sup>61</sup>

The proposal for the Bill has the potential to promote and progress the right to education for these children and young people. For example, youth work can provide new opportunities for young people with additional support needs who find school difficult. It can also offer unique learning opportunities for young people who have had contact with the youth justice system when they have disengaged from formal education. In youth work, the relationship between young person and youth worker 'never begins from a deficit position'. This means that 'the strengths of the young person are valued and

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<sup>60</sup> Together: Scottish Alliance For Children's Rights (2024) [State of Children's Rights in Scotland](#) (page 119).

<sup>61</sup> Changing our World (2024) [Exploring our "Hot Topics": Education and Learning](#) (page 6).

developed from the outset no matter the situation or environment which has brought the youth worker and young person together'.<sup>62</sup> Youth work can therefore be a vital part of a more fully inclusive, holistic, relationship-based education system.

A more diverse education system, in which youth work is fully integrated and sufficiently resourced, can be more resilient and flexible to the diverse and changing needs of Scotland's children and young people.

For the proposal for this bill to be fully equitable and inclusive, however, requires provision and sustainable funding for:

- *universal* youth work, which is accessible (and attractive) to all children and young people
- *targeted* youth work, which caters for the needs of specific communities and individuals
- *detached* youth work, which facilitates engagement with children and young people who may not typically engage with more structured or formalised provision.

Equalities Impact Assessments and Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessments should be undertaken at the earliest opportunity to explore the positive and negative impacts of the proposed legislation.

## **Sustainability**

**5. Any new law can impact on work to protect and enhance the environment, achieve a sustainable economy, and create a strong, healthy, and just society for future generations. Do you think the proposal could impact in any of these areas? If you do not have a view then skip to next question.**

Please explain the reasons for your answer, including what you think the impact of the proposal could be, and if there are any ways you think the proposal could avoid negative impacts?

See response to question 3, above.

## **General**

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<sup>62</sup> National Youth Agency (no date) [National Youth Work Curriculum: Youth Justice](#) (page 2).

**6. Do you have any other additional comments or suggestions on the proposed Bill (which have not already been covered in any of your responses to earlier questions)?**

It is vital that the legislation recognises, respects, and retains the principal strengths of youth work:

- Youth work is relationship based: the relationship between a trusted adult and a young person is central, and its purpose is to support the young person's social and emotional development, holistically understood.
- Children and young people engage with youth work on a *voluntary* basis.
- Youth work builds from where young people are; the young person and the youth worker are partners in a learning process.

The aim of legislation should be to ensure the sustainably funded, fully inclusive provision of universal, targeted, and detached youth work, and to raise the status and influence of youth work and youth workers within Scottish education, not to influence or dictate the goals, objectives, outcomes, or methods of youth work.

**For more information, please contact:**

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