Response to
Scottish Government Education and Culture Committee

Educational attainment gap - Role of the third and private sectors

About Youth Scotland

Youth Scotland is a national youth work membership organisation in Scotland and delivers quality youth work programmes, information, resources, training and support to community-based youth work.

Youth Scotland’s membership comprises over 1,100 youth groups, 59,000 young people and 7,000 youth workers, of which almost 70% are volunteer workers.

The context for Youth Scotland’s interest in this area

Youth Scotland celebrated its 80th anniversary of ‘opening doors for young people’ last year, and reflected on the exciting range of opportunities that we have offered young people through the changing environment since 1933. Over that time, the common feature has been an approach to valuing the impact of non-formal learning to the lives of Scotland’s young people, and how that has opened doors for them.

In 1998, Youth Scotland recognised that the majority of young people’s achievements in youth work went unaccredited and much of it was also unrecognised. This resulted in the introduction of the Youth Achievement Awards to capture the achievements of young people aged 14 and over through existing good quality youth work. The unique aspects of need that Youth Achievement Awards addressed was in providing a framework, not a programme of activities, to capture young peoples’ achievements. By 2002 we identified that the under 14 age group were also missing an Award that could capture achievement in existing quality youth work practice. Youth Scotland developed the Dynamic Youth Awards for 10 to 14 year olds and, in 2004, opened access to the Awards up to all learning providers in Scotland. The Youth Achievement Awards were placed on the SCQF by SQA in 2007 and Dynamic Youth Awards in 2011. Together, these Youth Scotland frameworks have provided SCQF credit rated and levelled recognition for the achievements of over 35,000 young people in Scotland.

From April 2015, the Youth Achievement Awards will become an SQA Customised Award and the results will be recorded in young peoples’ Scottish Qualifications Certificate.
In response to the 2007 Youth Work Strategy, Youth Scotland developed the Awards Network in 2008, with Scottish Government support, and has brought together 23 non-formal learning awards providers that use youth work approaches to recognise and accredit young peoples’ achievements throughout Scotland. This group has grown from strength to strength and is now developing the fourth iteration of the guide to non-formal learning awards in Scotland, Amazing Things.

Youth Scotland has led the youth work sector in capturing and accrediting achievement and in bringing non formal learning awards providers together to work collaboratively in the interests of young people and of those who work with them.

The scale of the third and private sectors’ involvement in schools

Youth Scotland has valued the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence and the approach that the policy takes in valuing the breadth of contexts in which learning happens and the diversity of learning providers. Building the Curriculum 3 very clearly aspires to an equal valuing of youth workers alongside teachers as deliverers of the Experiences and Outcomes of CfE. Youth Scotland’s Dynamic Youth and Youth Achievement Awards are extensively used in both school and youth work settings and through using youth work approaches in school.

Successes in improving achievement and attainment

Youth Scotland’s registration for delivery of Awards within schools extends to 60 Schools and 4 Colleges delivering 22% of our Awards. Youth Scotland’s experience of involvement of the Third Sector has been very positive and the measurement of improving attainment and achievement is quantifiable in the number of awards that have been delivered. The development of STACs into the INSIGHT tool also provides a quantifiable means of identifying which schools are delivering Dynamic Youth and Youth Achievement Awards.

Looking beyond counting achievement and attainment in schools

What is becoming very clear to the Youth Work sector is the need for youth workers to be seen, in the spirit of curriculum for excellence, as equals amongst education providers. Given that the way that this question is asked, the value of the 78% of the delivery of high quality youth work accredited and placed on the SCQF seems to be less valued than the 22% that is delivered through youth work approaches in Schools.
Solution focused approaches to capturing attainment and achievement

The Awards Network has recognised the need to look beyond Pupil Profiling and INSIGHT as the only means of capturing attainment and achievement for young people in Scotland and set up two Sub Groups in December 2014 to consider how the Awards Network members can demonstrate their collective output of Awards made in Scotland. The brief for the Data Collation Working Group is attached as Appendix A. The brief for the Capturing Achievement Working Group is attached as Appendix B. Youth Scotland is grateful for the support of staff within Scottish Government and Education Scotland who have assisted in this process through people resources as well as funding.

Barriers that get in the way

In the spirit of Curriculum for Excellence, Youth Scotland shares Scottish Government’s views on the value of collaboration and partnership working. Partnership working forms one of Youth Scotland’s five Strategic aims. A key message of Building the Curriculum 4 is:

“Curriculum for Excellence can best be delivered through partnership working. All establishments should work with partners and share a common understanding and language around skills development and application. Together, they should plan and deliver learning and other experiences which meet the needs of individual children and young people.”

Building the Curriculum 4 – Skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work. p2

Delivery of this partnership approach is often hampered by terminology that is not in the spirit of Curriculum for Excellence. If Scottish Government are seeking stronger Third Sector/schools partnerships then referring to young people as “school pupils” in the framing of these questions has the tendency to disengage the Third Sector from seeing themselves as the agencies being referred to as potential partners. From young people’s perspective, they spend 855 hours per year in Secondary Education. That’s 15% of the total waking hours in the year, yet when we refer to young people in an education context, we refer to them as “pupils”. This does not seem to reflect the intentions of Curriculum for Excellence in valuing a more holistic approach to learning.

The problem of terminology extends to how young people’s achievements out with school are referred to. Youth Scotland is supporting thousands of young people to gain SCQF credit rated and levelled accredited recognition for their achievements both within and out with the school curriculum at SCQF levels 3 to 7. Youth Scotland does not feel that the SCQF Level 7 Platinum Youth Achievement Award, comparable to an Advanced Higher or HNC qualification, is fairly described as a “wider achievement” or as a “wider award” and certainly is not considered “wider” than anything else at the time of receiving it by the young person. Youth Scotland
calls for the term “wider” to be dropped as a way of describing young peoples’ achievements.

**Bringing the achievement and attainment story to life**

The stories of young people that have experienced life changing opportunities through youth work is heard anecdotally on a daily basis and Youth Scotland has attached some case study examples that capture a range of opportunities offered by Youth Scotland across the range of programmes that we offer.

Kirsten’s story is attached as Appendix C and Stuart’s as Appendix D.

**Contact**

Youth Scotland would be pleased to provide further information on any aspect of this response.

Please contact:

Steven Greig  
Depute Chief Executive (Youth Work Manager)  
Youth Scotland  
Balfour House  
19 Bonnington Grove  
EDINBURGH  
EH6 4BL  
[steven.greig@youthscotland.org.uk](mailto:steven.greig@youthscotland.org.uk)  
0131 554 2561
Awards Network

Data Collation Working Group Remit

This group is a working group of the Awards Network in Scotland.

Background

The Awards Network met on 4th December, 2014, to consider the opportunities for the Network to develop tools that would capture young people’s achievements in a way that would complement the existing Insight and Pupil Profiling Tools. Two groups were agreed to be established as a result of these discussions. One part to collate and present awards hard data on a geographic basis, and the other to support young people to recognise their achievements gained through Awards Network members’ programmes that are not necessarily certificated.

Data Collation Working Group Remit

The Data Collation Working group was tasked with setting up a system that would collect and present the certificated awards that are described in Amazing Things. Suggestions from the event were that the resource should be available online and would allow browsers to filter information by the geographic areas to give a cumulative total of the collated awards achieved in that area. The resource could also filter information by Award to present just the selected awards data for Scotland or for filtered geographic areas. The group agreed that data should be collated for the extended age range of 10 - 25 to ensure that the transition stage from Primary to Secondary was included. It was recognised that there would be a large variance in the geographic boundaries collected by Awards Network members and that the resource would need to embrace this challenge. Consideration should be given to present data as a % of appropriate age range population.

Membership

The group would include:
Alex Cumming, DofE (Chair)
George Cherrie, Youth Scotland
Peter Donachie, Scot Xed
Heather Aitken, ASDAN
Alan Hunter, Boys’ Brigade
Martin Passmore, CVQ
Nicola Sykes, Education Scotland

The group would be welcome to recruit additional members from within and outwith Awards Network membership as they saw fit to deliver their brief.
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Capturing Achievement Working Group Remit

The Capturing Achievement Working Group was tasked with setting up a system that was designed to support young people to value their youth work achievements as part of their educational successes. The group recognised that only a small percentage of Scotland’s youth work successes were represented in the membership of the Awards Network and that we should actively promote the work of this group to other groupings so that this work complements similar approaches elsewhere in the sector. The group was tasked to include young people in its membership, as the target audience for the resource was young people. Format of the resource was suggested to be an App but other formats should not be discounted. The group agreed that information should be collated for the extended age range of 10 - 25 to ensure that the transition stage from Primary to Secondary was included. A suggestion was to approach the work as a Junior Amazing Things in App format. Written using an Award by Award thematic approach that addressed young people to support them to recognise their non-formal learning experiences achieved through Awards Network members’ services and to record these achievements in their Pupil Profiles, on CVs or just to recognise them as part of their holistic learning achievements.

Membership

The group would include:

Steven Greig, Youth Scotland (Chair)

Graeme Luke, Scouts Scotland

Mandy Toogood, Education Scotland

Heather Aitken, ASDAN

Laura Wright, Girlguiding Scotland

Janice Anderson, SQA

Katherine McNab, Scottish Government
(High resolution images of Kirsten telling her story at Youth Scotland’s Big Skills Weekend are available on [this Dropbox link.])

Youth Scotland’s Girls on the Move project is funded by the Scottish Government and is part of the Active Girls programme, supported by sportscotland. It aims to increase the physical activity levels of girls and young women across Scotland, but the project’s outcomes are much more than just getting girls active.

Increased levels of confidence, leadership skills, community development and increased employability for participants are only some of the additional benefits for young people. Read Kirsten’s story to learn more about how youth work and Girls on the Move opened up opportunities:

“Hi there, my name is Kirsten. I left school when I was 15 with two Highers, and left home at 16 to study dance. I started that course with high hopes, but even though I passed my attendance was terrible and I didn’t make any friends. I started again with something different and began a course in childcare. It began well but I ended up failing. I got depressed and developed anxiety issues that made things like walking down the street really difficult. When I attended the GOTM course my self-esteem was shaky and I was starting to think: ‘I’m going to be one of those people who fail everything.’

“So what was the GOTM dance leadership course like? Five days of dance workshops in different styles, lessons on planning and leading dance sessions and how to go about setting sessions up your community.

“The first thing that struck me was how it felt very relaxed. Staff didn’t try to talk down to us, as many people do when they’re working with young people. We weren’t forced to play terrifying icebreaker games. We were given a picture of a tree with little jelly baby people sitting on different branches and we were asked to colour in the figure we related to most. I coloured in a jelly person near the bottom of the tree.

“The course gave us the challenge of having to lead a dance session on our own. We built up to that with smaller challenges, like leading a warm up in pairs. It gave us something to aim for and made us feel like we could all do it. I felt there was the expectation that we could do something. That is very special attitude to have towards young people, as I think most people don’t expect anything from young people, except maybe trouble.

“Another thing I found helpful was how the course was in a week and you achieved a leadership award. This was so satisfying for me after two years of college without much to show for it. The award is on my CV. We also did a Youth Achievement Award, which took into account all the hours we put in. We listed all our activities, showing that everything we did added up to an achievement.
“Before we went home we were given the tree picture with the jelly people in it again and this time I coloured in a person smiling and sitting near the top of the tree. I felt on top of the world and I also felt like I’d been given a kick up the backside to go and do something.

“Over summer I used my new confidence to start dance sessions in my hometown. When I was putting up posters and getting a venue I wanted to give up, but looking at my GOTM folder and remembering all the lovely comments reminded me I could do it. So I did and about ten girls came. They seemed to enjoy it and it was very exhilarating for me.

“Since then I’ve led dance sessions at holiday clubs, camps and youth clubs, in between studying a HND in Dance. I’m employed as a cover teacher for a dance school in Edinburgh and I’ve been given the chance to start teaching there permanently. I’m beginning to feel that I am getting to where I want to be.

“The last thing I wanted to mention was how on one of the evenings of the course the staff had arranged a massage workshop. I enjoyed that workshop so much that I’m studying Clinical Reflexology part-time at Dundee University. I feel really lucky to have found another thing that I love to do and I’m now a self-employed massage therapist.

“I owe a lot to my involvement with GOTM. I wonder how much of the dance teaching I would have done if I hadn’t been to the course. I don’t think it would be much, if any. And likewise if I hadn’t attended that massage workshop would I now be self-employed in the two things that I love to do?”
From Participation to Leading - One Young Person’s Youth Work Journey

There is no doubt that youth work changes lives. Through a vibrant Scottish youth work sector, young people have access to opportunities that complement and build on formal education. Youth Scotland and its membership support young people though their youth work journey, capturing their achievements and helping them to develop their skills and confidence. Read one young person’s journey to get a flavour of how youth work opens doors.

Youth group participation

Stuart had been a member of his local Falkirk youth club when, at about 13 years’ age, he asked if he could help out as a volunteer. He also attended training courses and workshops. One time he went to a summer activities session, but when the leaders didn’t turn up he stepped up to take the session. Since then there has been no going back.

“When I first started I was quite shy, less confident and saw myself as a quiet person. Through involvement in youth work I have learnt new skills; how to deal with issues and problems that crop up; how to adapt a session to meet the kids’ needs and ability. It is very rewarding – seeing the kids’ faces makes all the difference.”

Contact with the Falkirk project led to more opportunities, including some part-time paid work offering games workshops around clubs in the Falkirk area. Stuart used this experience to accredit activities where he was responsible for planning and delivering sessions with young people, and was awarded a Platinum Youth Achievement Award for his efforts.

Youth Work in Sport Traineeship

In 2012, Youth Scotland made a successful application to The Rank Foundation and The Robertson Trust to participate in their Youth Work in Sport Initiative (YWIS). This led to the three year appointment of Stuart as Youth Active Trainee (2012-2015).

“[The traineeship] was my next step. It was a missing part of my jigsaw. I wanted to be a youth development worker and I wanted to be able to help young people have the opportunities that I had.”

As part of the traineeship, Stuart was involved in the Diploma in Youth Work Practice which is a distance learning programme run by the YMCA George Williams College in London. At first, he had concerns about the Diploma:

“Having to write essays, being like ‘school’, going to college down in London. I kept thinking – can I do this? It was a struggle at first, especially with the written assignments. I have dyslexia so the written work was particularly hard. The college allowed me to complete my course work by speaking the words while someone else did the typing. Gradually, as I got more confident, I went from talking to typing it myself. It was all my own words. I just needed help with organising it all. What really helped was the support and encouragement I got from family, friends and the Falkirk project manager.”
Overcoming challenges

After the first year, Stuart was given the choice of whether to continue on an academic degree route or a more practical sports coaching route. After careful decision, he decided to go with coaching. However, just as he began this training he faced his biggest challenge.

“A knee injury saw me off work for six months, and when I did get back to work I was limited physically in what I was able to do. This was a difficult time. I lost direction, I lost contact, I lost my motivation. I was really nervous about doing my first session back but I was surprised. Getting back into it helped me to remember why I do it. Also, I found that because I was more limited physically, I had to get better at communicating and I started to get young people to do the demonstrating. This was a really positive aspect which I had not thought about.”

Taking the lead

The third year of the programme focused more on putting the learning into practice with young people and supporting local youth clubs. Stuart took responsibility for the StreetGames project, leading and supporting a team of 12 young leaders as they followed their own Platinum YAA journey through the volunteering opportunities that were available to them.

Stuart supported young leaders to join young people from other groups to organise events like girls’ football fives. The Falkirk young leaders also enjoyed opportunities to volunteer at big events like the Commonwealth Games, the Great Scottish Run and the Great Scottish Swim. A highlight was the Youth Active Festival – a multi-sports event with over 500 young people attending.

What the future holds

Now at the end of his time as a trainee in the YWiS Initiative, Stuart is looking to secure a new youth work post. He has acquired many qualifications and skills through his youth work experience, including the Diploma in Youth Work Practice, the PDA in Youth Work, Sports Leaders UK, Trail Cycle Leader, a Platinum Youth Achievement Award and Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award.

He is working on building his CV, developing interview skills, attending ‘Job Club’ training and applying for jobs. His aspiration is to be a youth development worker, in a more concentrated area, developing a whole youth work programme more in depth.

“For me, youth work means giving every young person or child chances and opportunities: helping them to develop skills; to meet new people; and to enjoy life. Youth work is about learning informally and leads to young people achieving their potential.

“As a role model for other young people I hope they see me and my journey as something they can learn from and aspire to their own goals. A good youth worker is also someone who is there for young people, supportive, encouraging but also challenging.”