

Cross-Party Group on Children and Young People

Tuesday 4th February 2020

13:00 – 14:30

Scottish Parliament, Committee Room 2

The Youth Work Sector Crisis and Funding

Co-chairs: Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP and Sam Harris, young co-convenor

Minutes

Attendees:

Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP	Iain Gray MSP	Richard Lochhead MSP
Abi Rose	Finlay Johnston	Megan Burt
Adam Wilson	Fiona Souter	Megan Grant
Aiden Patterson	Franny McGrath	Mhairi MacRaild
Alan Hunter	Fraser Falconer	Michele Meehan
Amy Woodhouse	Gary Brown	Millie Harris
Andy Black	Gemma Campbell	Morgan Ross
Angus Maclean	Hannah Birse	Murrie Thomson
Antonella Valbonesi	Helen Forrest	Neil Young
Audrey Thomson	Jack Taylor	Nicole Murray
Barry Fisher	Jackie Barr	Nigel Brett-Young
Beth Oxley	Jackie Stewart	Nina Collins
Beverley Akinlami	James Ross	Norrie Tait
Blake	Janis McCulloch	Paul Daly
Caitlin Nichols	Jim Duffy	Pauline Cavanagh
Cameron McKail	John Kennedy	Peter Moir
Carolyn Fox-McKay	Johnny Hendry	Reid Aiton
Catherine Bromley	Katie	Rhona Jones
Chris Ross	Kelly Munro	Rosie Sumsion MSYP
Claire Benton-Evans	Kenina Williamson	Ross Martin
Claire Woodcock	Kenny McGlashan	Rosy Burgess
Connor Johnston	Laura Sharpe	Sam Harris
Conor Moran	Lauren Asher	Sara McFarlane
Craig Wilson	Lesley Kay	Sarah Anderson
Dave Bremner	Lianne Findlay	Sarah Paterson
David Ashford	Liz Paton	Sarah Rogers
David Brackenridge	Louise Goodlad	Scott Fraser
David Mackay	Louise Slorance	Sharon Dalglish
Denise Spence	Marie-Claire MacAskill	Sophie Blair
Dona Milne	Marion Allison	Stephanie Thomas
Doreen Jenkins	Mark Molloy	Susan Hunter
Eddie Nisbet	Martin Davidson	Susan Stewart
Elaine Tuckwell	Marysia Wojtylo	Tim Frew
Emma Kyles	Maxine Hawthorn	Wendy Jordan
Emma Rogan	May Chamberlain	Willy Barr

1. Welcome from Chair

Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Sam Harris, young co-convenor, who will be co-chairing the meeting and is specifically interested in this meeting's subject as he is training to be a youth worker.

2. Confirmation of Previous Minutes

The minutes from the previous meeting were agreed. Other business to be revisited at the end of the meeting.

3. Panel contributions

Sam introduced the panel of speakers and reminded them that they each only had 3 minutes to speak.

Tim Frew, CEO, YouthLink Scotland

Tim outlined how youth work changes lives and helps young people to build confidence and relationships, boost career prospects and have fun. All of this boosts young people's mental health and wellbeing, which has a big impact on their lives as adults. Youth work has a huge social return and is also valuable in terms of volunteers.

He noted that the youth work discussion is pushed by young people. In Argyll & Bute, young people went on strike because of cuts to youth work services. Along with cuts, there has been a reduction in staff and budgets have decreased, because organisations are trying to raise money instead of focusing on delivery.

Cuts have affected all public services, but Tim highlighted that big cuts on a small sector has a lasting impact.

Denise Spence, CEO, Girl Guiding Scotland

Girl Guiding Scotland has 60,000 members across all LAs, and currently has 8000 girls and young women waiting to join.

They are passionate about partnership - unique in Scotland is LA and third sector. The Scottish Leaders Forum is working together to share best practice.

They believe in the parity of professionalism and esteem for learning and are passionate about the informal education sector. It is important that this sector has investment in the form of prevention. There has been a big focus on early years and youth work is the next part of the journey. If the government choose to invest more, youth work can show a bigger return.

Rosie Sumison MSYP, Scottish Youth Parliament

SYP believe in youth work; they launched the Youth Work and Me campaign in summer 2019, in response to continuous cuts. They consulted with 116 young people over a month about their access to opportunities.

If you give young people a platform, they will astound you. Youth work allows them a place at the table and makes sure they are heard, therefore giving them a voice.

Through part of their campaign, they encouraged young people to share three photos of how youth work has changed their lives. From this, they learnt that without youth work, young people feel there would be more isolation and poverty.

Marion Allison, Head of the CLD Standards Council

Youth work requires skills, knowledge and understanding of the culture. CLD are the professional body for youth workers. As part of the youth work sector, they hear about different educational attainments and yet the government insist on putting money into formal education.

Youth work can help with the ageing population that needs to be sustained. Young people need the skills to have a career path, and youth workers are needed to show these skills.

Paul Daly, Policy and Research Manager, LGBT Youth Scotland

LGBT Youth Scotland works with those aged 13-25. Their work includes 1-1 youth work, and with more people coming towards digital services, this helps them to access remote areas.

Frontline services are their priority but are increasingly challenging, as their budget has been at a standstill despite the increasing costs. Funders are interested in short-term projects more than the long-term projects that LGBT Youth Scotland offer.

They currently have 27 FTE staff and 23 funders from 11 local authorities.

Case study: In Glasgow, there is an increasing demand. Young LGBT people in Glasgow have complex needs including poverty, but there is no local funding.

LGBT Youth Scotland understand that times are difficult for local authorities, and some may think that youth work funding will reach all children and young people but there is also a need for specialised youth work.

Those who attend LGBT youth groups feel a great sense of relief. Young people they work with can be particularly vulnerable, especially around mental health, bullying, and hate crime. There is a need for specialised youth work services, especially with the rise of serious concerns among LGBT young people, including self-harm, attempted suicide and completed suicide.

Michele Meehan, Head of Youth Worker Programmes, Youth Scotland

Youth Scotland support a diverse membership in youth projects. They help 66,000 young people a year access youth work. However, cuts are threatening community youth work to a non-recoverable level. It may take years to build the local presence, volunteers and safe space back up again. There needs to be a focus on sustaining these existing groups.

Most groups have minimal staffing or are volunteer run, so they need support in training. Youth work covers some very complex needs, which takes skills and knowledge. Youth Scotland developed accredited youth work training. Small groups need an infrastructure group like Youth Scotland.

There is a real need to recognise and protect universal youth work. Targeted work is important, but youth work takes away the stigma of accessing help in the community.

Craig Wilson, Senior Head of Operations, Prince's Trust Scotland

Youth work is proven to build young people's confidence and set up life learning and work. Vulnerable young people are being left behind and cuts exposes the third sector to risk, but also young people's trust in services. Youth workers attached to schools are increasingly rare. Currently, we cannot see any funding being spent on youth work partnerships.

Place based regional development is welcomed, but national organisations can also bring important help. Youth work and the third sector are experts in engaging young people and helping them overcome issues and create trusting relationships.

This must be places at the heart of government services.

Neil Young, Youth Team Leader, St Paul's Youth Forum

St Paul's Youth Forum was created by the church in the North East of Glasgow.

Now there are more employed staff, a greater upskilling of staff and an increased focus on young people to find out the problems in their own area. Since the creation of the youth forum, youth crime has been cut down by 97%.

Simple youth work principles mean that the forum is able to thrive; all activities are free, young people choose to take part, there is a building up of trust and a long-term approach is used. Young people are partners in the learning journey; 50% of the management board are young people.

St Paul's Youth Forum would live to see a move from short-term funding, which has a huge impact on planning and retention. They need staff and funders who bring long-term commitment.

Franny McGrath, Operations Manager, YMCA Tayside

YMCA is a national youth work organisation, who work with around 10,000 children and young people.

Franny is based in Perth and Kinross, where there has been a withdrawal of universal youth work provision. The need for mental health support has grown from 33% to 66% and has resulted in schools having to bring in support as well. There is a correlation between the rise of mental health and fall of youth work provision.

There are many faith-based youth work organisations, but they mainly rely on volunteers and some paid staff. The average staff member is lasting about 2 or 3 years, as councils and schools pay more, and they feel isolated in the role.

YMCA has funded 5 youth work organisations and set up youth voice committees in each area, so young people are leading the work in Perth & Kinross.

Willy Barr, Manager, Citadel Youth Centre

Citadel Youth Centre, which is celebrating its 40th birthday this year, works with young people in Leith. They host 5 clubs per week, after school groups and also work across schools through the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF). They are a community-based youth centre and a safe place to try new things, meet friends and make healthy food and snacks.

They employ 50 volunteers from the local community, without whom they wouldn't manage. Despite gentrification of the area many families are still living in poverty, so the citadel is busier and more diverse in the work it does, than when Willy started in 1995.

Mark Molloy, Youth Services Manager, Dumfries and Galloway Council

As an employee of a local authority, Mark echoed the need for youth work. In Dumfries & Galloway, he has the pleasure of getting to work with young people every day. On Monday 10th February, Dumfries and Galloway Council will be launching research into community-based youth work, including some of these statistics: 82% of young people have increased confidence and 73% feel less isolated.

They understand the need for an evidence base as well as stories. There has been good work to come out of what schools have done with the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF), but looking round the room, Mark wondered if the money would have gone further in youth work?

There is a need for youth work that is not just focused on school-based delivery, but community based as well.

Cameron McKail, Jack Kane Centre

There is a clear need for more investment. Round the table, we continuously hear stories about how great youth work is. Everyone knows the value of youth work so this is the place where it should be celebrated.

In Cameron's personal experience, youth work allowed him to work at his own pace, and he was treated as an equal. Youth work takes place with individuals not on individuals. Cameron was able to complete an intercultural residential in Italy, which was a great educational experience. He learnt gained cultural awareness, friendships, and boosted confidence. He now wonders if these opportunities will still exist with the advent of Brexit.

This kind of work can't be achieved overnight; it takes time to build relationships in youth work. He ended by reminding the group that YouthLink showed that the return is £7 for every £1 spent on youth work.

Alex Cole-Hamilton had to leave the meeting, so Sarah Paterson stepped in to assist Sam Harris.

Sarah asked Richard Lochhead his thoughts on the presentations.

Richard Lochhead MSP

Richard is the Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science, which means that youth work is within his remit.

He thanked everyone in the room for their work and was humbled by what he heard in the presentations. He has been in post just over a year and has been humbled by the projects and organisations he has visited during that time; however, he knows there are more organisations to visit. He has met with youth workers, youth teams, local authorities and the third sector, and is very aware of the issues that young people in Scotland face.

An example of an organisation that he met with is Murray Youth Matters, who were welcomed to Parliament last week, where he gave out certificates to the young people for qualifications they had received.

Another example is Royston Youth in Action, based in Glasgow. He heard about their link with Erasmus+, and the benefits of youth work for those young people.

He wished every council in Scotland could have been in the room to hear the presentations. He noted the need for good partnership across the country, which will ensure youth work is not taken for granted, as every pound of youth work is an absolute investment.

He wants to raise the profile and articulate the value of youth work in Scotland, as he is also conscious that not many people know there is a Minister for youth work.

He is unsure about the money going forward; through 10 years of austerity, they have done their best to look after government funds, but the local authorities need to do more. The budget will be announced in Parliament in the coming week.

Questions for the Minister

Tim Frew, YouthLink Scotland, asked if the Minister has any thoughts on regulations in terms of aspiration and the UNCRC (right to play and alternate forms of education), especially when in relation to local authorities?

Richard Lochhead MSP replied that the government are in the middle of a review of the youth work strategy and issues with community learning and development. These are ongoing discussions, including whether or not there are statutory obligations. In terms of budget, this is down to decisions at local authority level as well. It is important to raise the profile and show the value of youth work; there is a need to promote this.

Marion Allison, CLD Standards Council, noted that when you look at their survey from last year, the demand of youth and community work services is not being met. How can we coalesce with partnerships? What do we want as a bigger society and how can we galvanise the employers?

Richard Lochhead MSP replied that they have the commitment to bare that in mind. More and more people should hear the stories that were told today. There is a need to convey this message to society as a whole and the government can help to do that.

Craig Wilson, The Prince's Trust, focused on costs and mentioned attainment and the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF). There are many organisations and collaborations who could do serious impact work with a proportion of that. Talking with schools is challenging. Is there a way we can consider how some of those sort of government initiatives can focus on youth work and challenges?

Richard Lochhead MSP heard that some attainment funds are being used for the right things and others are not. There needs to be more work on data, as it is invaluable. The benefit he has as part of the education team, is that he can bring this up and help the working to be more joined up. He also noted that head teachers in schools are looking for good examples of where to put their funding.

Amy Woodhouse, Children in Scotland, asked how we can be smart with the money we have and with mental health colleagues looking to invest in school counselling? Some people round the table might say that youth work would be more effective.

Richard Lochhead MSP replied that they are rolling out the mental health councillors' resource into schools and working with colleges and universities as well.

However, they are open to ideas about how youth work can play a bigger role in schools.

Willy Barr, Citadel Youth Centre, noted that whilst PEF funding is great, the reality is that they have staff on fixed contracts from PEF and don't know if this is continuing. They've always made small amounts go a long way, but how long can they go on like this? What would be the impact of a whole network of partnerships and support collapsing? The way youth work is funded is too fragile.

Maxine Hawthorn, Aberlour, noted that Aberlour are a third sector organisation and want to work in early intervention and prevention. They work with young people excluded from school and the route where the funds go is very patchy. They have great examples of how young people's lives have been turned around. We need to have more open roots for more sustainable funding.

Sarah Paterson, YouthLink Scotland, said that Richard talked about raising the profile of youth work, but she feels that it needs to go beyond the rhetoric.

Richard Lochhead MSP agreed to take forward many of these issues. He left the meeting.

4. Floor Discussion

YouthLink Scotland agreed to write a report from the meeting and send a letter to Richard Lochhead MSP.

Lauren Asher, young co-convenor, expressed her pleasure at seeing and hearing how many people are invested in the lives of young people. 'If we fail to fund youth work, we fail the young people.' She asked that a question be added to the report: What is the commitment to young people who are accessing youth work that might not exist in a few years.

Tim Frew, YouthLink Scotland, was glad to see the volume of people at the meeting. In terms of the youth work strategy, the government must raise the value of youth work. Research is strong evidence of the impact. How will the Minister raise that with the wider society?

Marion Allison, CLD Standards Council, noted that people are experiencing high levels of stress; they are in competition instead of partnership. We need to make sure people are supported at all aspects of their career.

Angus Maclean, Befriending Networks, asked that since there is a youth work strategy, are we all working with the government? If this next five years is really key, action should be coordinated; these voices shouldn't be lost and should be shared with local authorities.

Barry Fisher, Duke of Edinburgh, made the point that people have lost a bit of momentum in storytelling and need to be prepared to get behind young people more often. He had a plea about the youth work strategy – if it doesn't deliver, the sector needs to be brave about their thoughts going forward. There is money, but the drivers are not pointing enough at youth work.

Laura Sharpe, See Me Scotland, noted that in terms of school-based counselling, we have not addressed the issues in Northern Ireland, England and Wales. They struggle to identify the number that is needed, and level of accreditation that is needed. Youth work provision is there in Scotland. Attainment is on literacy and numeracy instead of health and wellbeing, but evidence shows that health and wellbeing work better for attainment. A wider evidence base needs to be addressed.

Doreen Jenkins, South Lanarkshire Council, noted that youth workers are still trying to be recognised as professional people, but still getting crumbs from the table of education. There is a youth strategy in place, but there needs to be a political change in how this is financed. 85% of young people's time is spent in the community, but the biggest budget is given to the 15% spent in formal education. She wants to see a shift in some of that money coming across to youth work. Youth workers should feel more comfortable professionally.

Jim Duffy, Awards Network, spoke about formal and non-formal learning, but there is a need for parity seen by the government. All money is school led, so youth work is at the behest of the schools. Youth work can help with closing the attainment gap, but a slice of that money is needed to demonstrate the impact in these areas.

Tim Frew, YouthLink Scotland, said that if they want to know the full impact of a service then they need to fully fund it. He is calling for cross-party talks with different leaders. It will be their support and that of young people that will drive the change.

Sam Harris, young co-convenor, gave a closing statement: 'A village creates a person and for young people that village is youth work.'

5. Agree actions

Sarah Paterson thanked everyone and noted that the sheer number of attendees shows the strength of feeling in the youth work sector. She asked that they send on written submissions, which will make up the report.

Chris Ross updated members on the letters to the UK and Scottish Government which came out of the last meeting in November 2019. These are drafted and will be sent out.