



Strategic Plan 2019-22: Year 1 Update

Year 1 Progress Update (as presented by our Chief Officer, Susan Hunter, at the AGM of YouthBorders on 24 September 2020).

On 25th September 2019, YouthBorders introduced our new Strategic Plan to our membership and stakeholders at last year's AGM. The plan sought to clarify our purpose and direction, and to clearly communicate our intentions as both an organisation and a network. Our plan has 3 ambition areas for the sector and for our membership:

1. Collaboration and Partnership
2. Voice and Community
3. Workforce Development

The last 12 months really have been a year of two halves – pre-Covid and post since March of this year. However, we feel that our Strategic Plan has helped to guide us through the past 6 months and to ensure that our actions and decisions remain grounded by the direction set out in the plan. When writing the plan last year, we could never have anticipated the circumstances that our organisation, our members, our partners and the wider youth work sector would have experienced during 2020. We believe we have acted responsively to the needs of our members during Covid-19 and that we have been able to deliver some new opportunities and improvements to our services because of the necessary changes to operating resulting from Covid-19.

It is my intention today, to highlight *just some examples* of the work that the YouthBorders team have delivered with and for members and partners during the past 12 months.

1. Collaboration and Partnership

A youth work sector which collaborates

YouthBorders has for a long time been driven by the ambition and desire for increased collaboration and partnership. Being a network, of now 42, organisations it is the natural way in which we want to work with our members and our strategic partners.

In the past 12 months we have worked with our seven member partners to mature the governance and decision-making of the Scottish Borders Strategic Youth Work Partnership. This group involves trustees and senior staff from 8 organisations and has overview of strategic opportunities for community-based youth work. This year the group have developed and approved a common salary framework for youth workers in the 7 delivery partners, has taken steps to increase joint activity for holiday programme (which was impacted by Covid-19), the group continues to seek strategic funding opportunities and to strengthen the governance model we have in place.



This Partnership has been instrumental to the delivery of Stepping Stones, our multi-year National Lottery Funded project which provides youth work support to the most vulnerable and disengaged young people in our communities. The Partnership has commissioned a common database framework for the project, and since using this online recording last September 202 young people have joined Stepping Stones, with 96 young people moving on from the programme. Carly McAllan, our Stepping Stones Project Coordinator, has made a significant impact on supporting Project Workers with embedding the project evaluation framework in to practice, and to facilitate peer support and training opportunities for the Stepping Stones staff team. Our Year 2 impact report will be available in late October.

YouthBorders continues to work in partnership with other agencies and organisations to further our vision, and I want to highlight the positive partnership working that we have in place with Scottish Borders Council CLD Youth Learning team for the infrastructure of supporting Youth Awards. Youth Awards bring real value to young people's youth work experience, providing them with accreditation and qualification for their efforts. This requires quality assurance, verification and moderation, and we are very appreciative of Martyn Lawrenson from CLDS for his leadership in this area. In the past year, working with CLDS and Julie Hynd and Laura Kemp from Youth Scotland 50 youth practitioners in the Scottish Borders have been trained in delivery of youth awards at Hi-5 Stem, Dynamic Youth and Youth Achievement Award level. Youth awards have been a real asset to online and digital youth work programme during lockdown.

Our third objective within this area of our plan is to contribute to and benefit from significant developments – there is probably no bigger or significant development than the impact of Covid-19. We have appreciated the support and partnership of existing and new partners this year, particularly as we navigated the changing landscape brought to us since March. We acted promptly to secure support on behalf of our membership through the Scottish Government Wellbeing Fund which enabled us to provide financial support for membership and insurance, provided 1:1 coaching sessions for senior leaders, and gave every member a stack of resources to bring in to their youth work practice. We added our voice as a regular attendee and contributor to the national Youth Work Recovery Group, led by YouthLink Scotland; and worked with sector leaders across Scotland to prepare the initial draft national youth work guidance to support safe resumption of youth work activities as restrictions ease.

2. Voice and Community

A membership which is connected, empowered and represented

As a network, it is core to our work that our membership is connected, empowered and represented. Of notable highlight was the regional stakeholder event which we hosted with CLDS to bring our members and partners together to inform a new national youth work strategy. This event was a timely check-in with the sector and the report which was produced as a result is an excellent companion to our own strategic plan to help inform our direction and activity. Whilst the publication of the national strategy is delayed, the local insight continues to be of benefit to our work on a weekly basis.

Facilitating networks and events is an established YouthBorders activity, including our regular youth work managers group and Youth and Families Specialist Network. These forums have transitioned to online spaces well, and in the spring we hosted our first all members network on Zoom. These networks are critical to how YouthBorders is informed by our membership and to provide updates and communication to our members. The Youth and Families



Specialist Network has evolved this year and now includes a thematic topic identified by the members – this has included poverty, mental health and volunteering to date.

Effective and timely communication is both a challenge and opportunity for YouthBorders, and we have made small changes to improve the quality of our weekly e-bulletin, have significantly increased our social media presence on both twitter and Facebook, have introduced a specific training and child protection mailing list, and now have a members WhatsApp group. The development and implementation of new brand guidelines in autumn last year, we believe has added to the quality of our external communications.

Our representative role is another defining characteristic of what we do, providing a regular, informed and trusted voice of our sector and when required of individual or small clusters of our membership. We contribute directly in to regional community planning structures through our participation in the Children and Young People's Leadership Group, and the CLD Strategic Partnership. We also secured our continued involvement in the design of the new Public Protection structures, working in partnership with Children 1st we have a place on the Child Protection Delivery Group, and directly on the Violence Against Women and Girls Executive, and Public Protection Training Forum. We have also contributed to topic specific groups including the Mental Health Taskforce and Emotional Health and Wellbeing Group.

The quality, innovation and resilience of the youth work sector in the Scottish Borders deserves to be recognised and celebrated. YouthBorders will proud to nominate 7 of our members for National Youth Work Awards across 6 categories. The National Youth Work Awards in March recognised TD1 Youth Hub, Borders Additional Needs Group, David Shields and Colin Easton as winners, finalists, and life-time achievement award recipient. The event rightly put youth work in the Borders on the national map.

3. Workforce Development

A membership which is supported, confident and competent

Supporting our membership to grow and develop is at the heart of what we do as an organisation, and this past year has seen us support new and small groups to grow and develop, to support larger groups to manage through difficult and challenging times, and for us to welcome new group in to our network. We are now a network of 42 diverse and unique organisations, each one contributing to the provision of youth work opportunities in the Scottish Borders. Twelve organisations joined our network in 2019/20; this is a significant increase to our rolling average of three new members each year. We are proactively committed to growing and strengthening our network, being led and informed by our members and offering all our members relevant support and trusted representation.

Ayliffe Rose, joined the team in January and has made a welcome and positive impact on our offer and relationship with smaller groups; this includes specific capacity building work with Langlee Youth Club, Borders Additional Needs Group, and Youth Wellbeing Coaching. Ayliffe has led our membership information during Covid-19 and most recently has hosted both 1:1 support sessions for members and group sessions for preparing for indoor youth work activity. Often what we do for and with members is unseen due to the nature of the support – but to give you a flavour this year has included: reviewing funding applications, assisting in the recruitment of staff, providing policy templates, signposting to training opportunities, being a reference for funding applications, tailoring welcome packs and registration forms for new groups, identifying appropriate funders for a new idea, assisting Chairs and trustees with



strategic or personnel issues, introducing members to one another, and administering numerous PVG checks for volunteers, trustees and staff.

Training and providing learning and development opportunities to the 218 paid youth work staff and 461 volunteers in our network requires coordination and planning, and we are grateful to have Jemma Laidlaw and Gary Ashbolt working on this area of our business. To date, in this calendar year we have offered 25 training opportunities delivered by a range of partners including Youth Scotland, Fast Forward, SB Rape Crisis Centre. Covering a range of workforce needs including games, suicide prevention, healthy relationships, mindfulness, gambling, and child protection. We have also worked in partnership with Joint Health Improvement Team and Quarriers to devise and deliver a new Peer 2 Peer session for practitioners around the themes of grief, loss and bereavement – this was developed in direct response to unmet need identified by our membership. Our members engaged in our Training Needs Assessment earlier this year, the findings of which give us the foundations for planning and adapting our future training content and delivery. We are also nurturing a new forum for training and learning with practitioners from the network.

In addition to developing the workforce of our network, we also had the opportunity this year to host a university student on her final year placement. We enjoyed having Dearbhail McNamara with us at YouthBorders and the research report she published on Youth Workers as Trusted Adults has created a useful and information resource for our future work. Our own staff team have also had the opportunity to access continuous professional development this year – with all eligible staff now joined as associate or full members of the CLD Standards Council for Scotland. The staff team have engaged in mentoring relevant to their role, have attended training on fundraising and evaluation, have joined online webinars on a range of governance and sector related topics, and have engaged in coaching and leadership development.

Looking Forward: activity for the year ahead

We have made progress in furthering our Strategic plan, but many of our actions require us to work on these continuously as we strive towards excellence in all that we do. There are of course activities which have been delayed because of Covid-19 and new opportunities which have arisen as a result.

In the next twelve months our activity will include:

- Continuation of Stepping Stones, sharing its impact, and securing its future
- Delivering a modified Inspire awards in partnership with VCB and CLDS this winter
- Engaging with the developments of National Youth Work Strategy and work with local partners to support development of regional strategy statement for youth work in the Scottish Borders
- Establishing a Voluntary Youth Network and introducing YouthBorders Subscribers to our networks. We will continue to review the format of our current networks in light of Covid-19 restrictions and changes
- Commissioning an independent evaluation of the Scottish Borders Strategic Youth Work Partnership, and to seek recommendations for strengthen the Partnership for the future
- Supporting the wider children's sector to further children's human rights through incorporation of the UNCRC in to Scots Law



- Developing an Inclusive Youth Work Toolkit in partnership with Borders Additional Needs Group, drawing on the learning and experience of Branching Out Youth Group
- Securing additional investment to support us with workforce mapping, audit and sustainability – supporting emerging and existing youth work leaders in the Scottish Borders
- Continue to build internal capacity for communications and to create capacity to support the redevelopment of our website content
- Work with the new membership and chair of the CYP SLG to ensure the voice of community-based youth work remains understood and valued through community planning and wider children's services

We look forward to delivering and developing these opportunities and initiatives with our members and partners in the year ahead.



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