



# A FORCE FOR GOOD:

Amplifying the third sector youth work workforce's contribution to economic growth and social change in the Scottish Borders.

---

## ANNEX B:

Understanding the third sector youth work workforce in the Scottish Borders:  
Research findings



1.	Introduction to Annex B: Understanding the Third Sector Youth Work Workforce in the Scottish Borders: Research Findings.....	3
2.	Landscape review: working conditions in youth work .....	7
3.	Profile of Third Sector Youth Work in the Scottish Borders .....	9
4.	Fulfilment .....	10
5.	Security .....	17
6.	Effective Voice.....	24
7.	Opportunity.....	27
8.	Respect.....	34
9.	Other workforce development considerations .....	37

For more information on this report, you can contact:

YouthBorders: [info@youthborders.org.uk](mailto:info@youthborders.org.uk)

The Lines Between: [hello@thelinesbetween.co.uk](mailto:hello@thelinesbetween.co.uk)



YouthBorders is a Company Ltd by Guarantee with Charitable Status: SC313338. Scottish Charity Number: SC037680.



Registered in Scotland: YouthBorders, c/o Deans Accountants, 27 North Bridge Street, Hawick, TD9 9BD

## **1. Introduction to Annex B: Understanding the Third Sector Youth Work Workforce in the Scottish Borders: Research Findings**

- 1.1. The Lines Between (TLB) was commissioned by YouthBorders to conduct research to explore the workforce development needs of third sector youth work (TSYW) organisations in the Scottish Borders. YouthBorders, supported by South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE), were eager to understand more about working conditions in TSYW in the Scottish Borders and where there is scope to align the sector more closely with the principles of the Fair Work Framework.<sup>1</sup>
- 1.2. This work is positioned as the initial exploratory stage, engaging with TSYW organisation, of a wider initiative to support the economic development of the South of Scotland.
- 1.3. The research aims were to:
  - Establish a better understanding of the dimensions and demographics of the TSYW workforce in the Scottish Borders;
  - Deliver evidence of TSYW workforce development needs within the context of current and emerging regional and national policies;
  - Identify barriers to workforce development for the workforce and employers; and
  - Explore areas of potential growth and opportunities for workforce development in the Scottish Borders.
- 1.4. It is anticipated that this work will provide YouthBorders, SOSE and wider stakeholders with a foundation to help design appropriate programmes and support for the TSYW workforce in the Scottish Borders in the future. This includes taking a more strategic approach to workforce development, retaining leadership and planning succession, and to build sector capacity.

### **Methodology**

- 1.5. TLB designed a robust mixed-methods approach to deliver this research, including a desk-based review, surveys, one-to-one interviews and focus groups.

#### *Review of the Third Sector Youth Work landscape*

- 1.6. The first stage of the research was a desk-based review of the TSYW landscape. The full landscape review is provided as Annex A.
- 1.7. The landscape review exercise informed the design of the evaluation framework and research tools, and provided key insight into the context, purpose and impact of youth work in the Scottish Borders. It sets out details of policies, strategies and legislation which underpin the work delivered by the TSYW workforce in Scotland, including the National Youth Work Strategy, Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Supports and Services Framework.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fairworkconvention.scot/>



- 1.8. The review considers economic development, with examples of how TSYW can contribute to tackling youth unemployment, improving employability skills and promoting entrepreneurship amongst young people. The review also considers opportunities for economic development in the Scottish Borders, including the Edinburgh and South-East Scotland City Region Deal and the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal.
- 1.9. The impact of youth work on different aspects of young people's lives, including health and wellbeing, confidence and education is explored, with examples of work being delivered by TSYW organisations in the Scottish Borders such as TD1 Youth Hub, LGBT Youth Scotland and Stable Life.
- 1.10. Working conditions within the youth work sector are also considered, including discussion of wages and training opportunities. As these issues were more pertinent to the primary workforce research, these specific findings from the review are included as an introductory section within this Annex.

## Surveys

- 1.11. Invitations to participate in this research were sent to the 41 member organisations in the YouthBorders network and their 200 employees and 600 volunteers<sup>2</sup>. While this does not include every youth work organisation in the Scottish Borders, the sample represents a broad spectrum of views from within the TSYW workforce in Spring 2021<sup>3</sup>. YouthBorders promoted the research heavily across its network to encourage participation.
- 1.12. TLB designed two surveys to collect information about the local labour market and workforce and factors shaping it. The first was an in-depth survey of TSYW workforce managers in the Scottish Borders, covering employment practice, concerns, gaps and opportunities within the sector. All 41 managers<sup>4</sup> were sent the survey, which nineteen completed, a response rate of nearly 50%.
- 1.13. The second survey was sent out to the wider TSYW workforce. A survey link was given to all 41 managers in YouthBorders' network, who were asked to distribute the survey to their staff and volunteers. It contained questions about pathways into youth work, qualifications, training and satisfaction with working conditions in the sector. This survey was completed by 64 members of the TSYW workforce in the Scottish Borders, including paid Youth Workers, Project Coordinators, volunteers and trustees working a range of full-time, part-time, sessional or voluntary roles.
- 1.14. Survey respondents were asked to leave their contact details if they were interested in taking part in a qualitative interview for the next stage of the research.

<sup>2</sup> Estimated numbers of the workforce

<sup>3</sup> The online surveys were open from 19<sup>th</sup> March to 30<sup>th</sup> April 2021. Interviews took place from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 4<sup>th</sup> May 2021 and focus groups were held on 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> of May 2021.

<sup>4</sup> Manager is used as a generic term to mean the lead or most senior person in the organisation – either in a paid or voluntary capacity.



### *Interviews with TSYW workforce*

- 1.15. Drawing on insights from the landscape review and workforce surveys, TLB conducted 15 one-to-one interviews with Youth Workers, volunteers and managers working within the Scottish Borders TSYW sector. Interviews explored:
- Participants' route into youth work;
  - Qualifications and training;
  - Career ambitions; and
  - Challenges and opportunities in their career path.
- 1.16. All interviews took place over video conference or telephone. Participants shared detailed and thoughtful insights during interviews, which were recorded and transcribed.
- 1.17. The analysis focuses on the recurring themes that emerged in interviews, including experiences in the workforce and the sectors' ability to deliver outcomes for young people. However, given the diversity of roles and experience within the sector and region, the views and experiences of those who participated in the research are not necessarily representative of the workforce as a whole. Given that this was a qualitative, in depth study, comments made by one or two participants have been included in this report to present valid points and reflect the range of voices and experiences which were heard in the research.

### *Focus groups with managers and stakeholders*

- 1.18. TLB organised two focus groups: the first was with six youth work locality managers from across the region. The second was with stakeholders from key organisations across the Scottish Borders, including Borders College and Scottish Borders Council, and national partners to the local youth work sector, including Youth Scotland and CLD Standards Council for Scotland.
- 1.19. These focus groups offered strategic level insight, exploring strengths, threats and opportunities for the TSYW workforce in the Scottish Borders.

### **Report structure**

- 1.20. The following chapters set out findings from the research. Chapter 2 contains a profile of the TSYW workforce based on survey results.
- 1.21. The main body of the report is structured around the Scottish Government's Fair Work Framework. The Framework sets out the ambition that "by 2025, people in Scotland will have a world-leading working life where fair work drives success, wellbeing and prosperity for individuals, businesses, organisations and for society".



1.22. The Framework has five pillars:

- **Fulfilment:** All types of work at every level can be fulfilling where the tasks, work environment and employment conditions taken together are well aligned to the skills, talents and aspirations of the people who carry it out.
- **Security** as a dimension of fair work can be supported in a variety of ways: by building stability in to contractual arrangements, adopting at least the Living Wage, giving opportunities for hours of work that can align with family life and caring commitments, employment security agreements, fair opportunities for pay progressing, sick pay and pension arrangements.
- **Effective voice** as a dimension of fair work can include approaches to trade union recognition and collective bargaining; direct and indirect involvement and participation; communication and consultation arrangements and procedures that give scope to individuals and groups to air their views, be listened to and influence outcomes.
- **Opportunity:** Fair opportunity allows people to access and progress in work and employment and is a crucial dimension of fair work. Attitudes, behaviours, policies and practices within organisations - and, crucially, the outcomes these produce - signal and reflect the value placed on fair opportunity.
- **Respect** at work enhances individual health, safety and wellbeing. Dignified treatment can protect workers from workplace-related illness and injury and create an environment free from bullying and harassment.

1.23. The remainder of this annex is set out as follows:

- Chapter 2 details relevant findings from the landscape review about working conditions in youth work;
- Chapter 3 provides an overview of the TSYW sector in the Scottish Borders;
- Chapter 4 explores the theme of Fulfilment;
- Chapter 5 discusses Security;
- Chapter 6 looks at Effective Voice;
- Chapter 7 relates to the theme of Opportunity;
- Chapter 8 explores Respect as a principle of Fair Work;
- Chapter 9 looks at other workforce development considerations beyond the principles of Fair Work;





## 2. Landscape review: working conditions in youth work

- 2.1. It is difficult to provide a comprehensive review of working conditions within the TSYW sector in Scotland because there is limited specific data available. In addition, the amount of detail youth work organisations publicly share about their working conditions varies.
- 2.2. YouthLink Scotland estimates there are 80,000 youth work practitioners in Scotland.<sup>5</sup> However, it is unclear how many positions across Scotland are part-time, temporary, seasonal or voluntary. Within YouthBorders' network<sup>6</sup> of 41 organisations, 31% of paid staff (64/204) are employed on a full-time basis and 69% (140/204) are part-time staff.
- 2.3. Youth work is part of the broader family of informal education practice called Community Learning and Development (CLD). In 2018 a national research study to understand the workforce working with Scotland's communities was undertaken by the CLD Standards Council for Scotland (CLDSC)<sup>7</sup>. This found:
- There is a gender pay gap in the CLD workforce and male workers are underrepresented in the sector overall. Women make up 75% of the CLD workforce. Men tend to hold higher-paid positions.
  - There is an ageing CLD workforce and around 25% of the workforce intend to retire or leave the profession in the next five years.
  - Ethnic diversity is low in the CLD workforce.
  - The CLD workforce is highly qualified. Most public sector employers require CLD specific qualifications for staff while many third sector employers do not.
  - The CLD workforce is highly committed but stressed.
  - There are staff development needs that employers are concerned they may not be able to address. Practitioners and employers both identified that leadership and management skills and digital skills are the most common development needs of the CLD workforce.
- 2.4. There is little data available about the average wages of Youth Workers in Scotland. Looking more broadly at the third sector, remuneration appears to be lower than the private or public sector. The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) analysed a sample of 3,500 jobs posted on the third sector recruitment portal, Goodmoves, between April 2018 and March 2019. Their findings<sup>8</sup> showed that the mean hourly pay in the Scottish voluntary sector is £12.59, which is below both the private sector (£13.64) and public sector (£15.64).

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/resources/engaging-young-people-in-heritage/youth-work-approach/#:~:text=In%20Scotland%2C%20there%20are%2080%2C000,%2C%20social%2C%20and%20personal%20development.>

<sup>6</sup> Data from YouthBorders annual membership renewal census information at April 2021.

<sup>7</sup> <https://cldstandardscouncil.org.uk/about-cld/working-with-scotlands-communities-2018/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://tfn.scot/news/tfn-goodmoves-salary-snapshot-report>



- 2.5. There are also variations in salaries depending on where you live and work. Research into earnings in Scotland<sup>9</sup> published by the Scottish Parliament indicates that the average hourly wage of employees who work in the Scottish Borders (£12.14) is lower than the Scottish average (£14.05).
- 2.6. A review of the 'children & young people' and 'youth' sectors on goodmoves<sup>10</sup> reveals a wide spectrum of salaries. These depend on the seniority of position and size of the organisation, with the majority above the 'real' Living Wage (£9.50 per hour) and the National Living Wage (£8.91 for 23 years and older)<sup>11 12</sup>, and a few below.
- 2.7. CLDSC is the professional body for people who work or volunteer in Community Learning and Development, including youth work. CLDSC are responsible for approving professional qualification and courses for the CLD workforce; to maintain a voluntary registration system for practitioners delivering and active in CLD; and to develop and support induction, CPD and ongoing training.
- 2.8. In the Scottish Borders there has been slow growth in voluntary registration for third sector practitioners with just 9 practitioners registered (5 as full members, and 4 as associate members). Registration amongst public sector CLD practitioners is higher in number (34 registrations) and in August 2020 was 80% of the local authority CLD workforce were registered. The percentage of the Third Sector workforce registered is considerably lower. There are currently no CLDSC approved training programmes delivered by organisations based in the South of Scotland.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> <https://digitalpublications.parliament.scot/ResearchBriefings/Report/2021/2/19/32a8c620-b227-4951-b642-44fe823009d1#43d4dae3-ac86-444b-8354-9a6dea331e3d.dita>

<sup>10</sup> <https://goodmoves.com/> [accessed 05/03/2021]

<sup>11</sup> [The National Minimum Wage in 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/the-national-minimum-wage-in-2021)

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.livingwage.org.uk/faqs#t134n1749>

<sup>13</sup> All data has been provided by CLDSC





### 3. Profile of Third Sector Youth Work in the Scottish Borders<sup>14</sup>

## Sector Profile

84% Community based Third Sector youth work organisations



16% National Third Sector youth work organisations



Over half (58%) have a wide area of coverage, either delivering youth work services across the Borders or serving several parts of the region. The remainder work within specific towns or localities

## Staffing Levels



## Demographic profile



Women make up 71% of the workforce. 32% of those in management roles were male and only 23% of those in practitioner roles were male



30% of the workforce is under 35, and 20% is over 54 years old



Staff identifying as having a disability or long-term health condition made up 17% of the workforce



Diversity is low in the workforce. All bar one of the respondents identified themselves as being white. 8% identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual or other sexuality

Based on 19 Manager Survey and 64 Workforce Survey responses

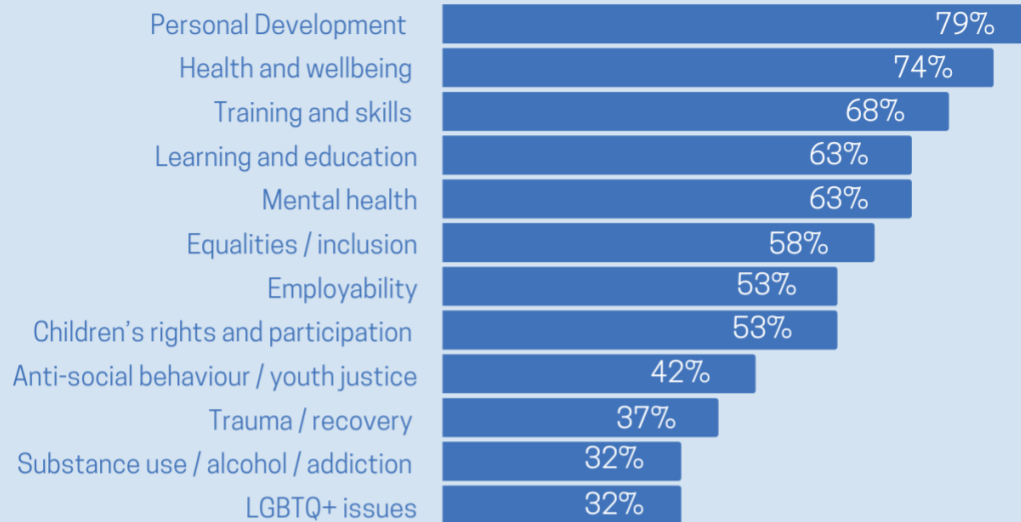
<sup>14</sup> The information in this section is based on responses from the YouthBorders Network



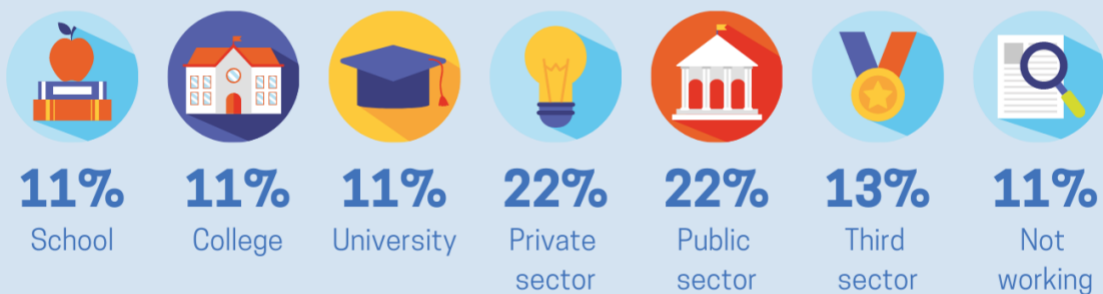
## 4. Fulfilment

# Fulfilment

### % of organisations supporting young people in Scottish Borders with...



### % joining the third sector youth work sector from...



“ I had a very supportive youth worker as a troubled teen and it was my life goal to do the same as her and help young people. ”

“ There is an extreme lack of support for young people in the Borders and I feel there has been for a number of years. I wanted to give something to these young people that could potentially change their lives. ”

“ I enjoy working with people and being able to have a positive impact on their lives. I just seem to have fallen into Youth Work and I love it. ”

Based on 19 Manager Survey and 64 Workforce Survey responses



## Fulfilment and motivation for joining the workforce

- 4.1. All types of work at every level can be fulfilling, if the tasks, work environment and employment conditions taken together are well aligned to the skills, talents and aspirations of those doing the work.

“Probably one of the biggest attractors I think to this sector, that feeling empowered to be able to have sort of control of your own destiny and that feeling of being able to make a difference. Just funding from the central government and sustainability long term and it would be wonderful.” (Manager)

- 4.2. Fulfilment was evident across workforce interviews with repeat mention of a sense of purpose, satisfaction and value. Often discussions of fulfilment referenced the significant impact of youth work on young people and communities, as noted in 4.6 to 4.12. Youth Workers described themselves and colleagues as ‘passionate’ and talked about camaraderie, highlighting the stimulating, sociable and rewarding nature of their work.

“For me, it’s learning a lot of new skills, new ideas, new ways of thinking. It’s never been a point where my role has been staid or anything like that, or repetitive or, “What will I do? I’ll do the same as last year.” No year is ever the same.” (Manager)

- 4.3. Opportunities for input, freedom and variety within work were highlighted. Some commented on the entrepreneurial aspects of work in the sector, requiring adaptability and vision when responding to funding opportunities. Others described work that aligns with their interests, such as creativity or passion for working with animals, noting the variety of activities they provide for young people. A few mentioned the satisfaction of work that requires them to tackle new challenges, problem solve and think on their feet.

“As a manager, I am particularly interested in staff who have that passion to make a difference...we have parameters obviously, funding parameters, outcomes that we’re working towards securing, but within those parameters there’s so much freedom to deliver whatever sort of skills, whatever sort of activities, whatever reaches young people, connects with them, and helps make a difference.” (Manager)

- 4.4. A small number described a potential risk of burnout due to the recent challenges of supporting communities through COVID-19 and the shift to digital delivery. One conveyed frustration at a lack of awareness of Youth Workers’ fulfilling and valuable work by external stakeholders.
- 4.5. Reflecting across their careers, interviewees explained that they joined the workforce to make a difference; some were drawn to the sector because they had benefitted from youth work as a young person. There was a breadth of skills and experience across interviewees; some had spent a whole career in youth work - others transitioned to the sector at a later career stage, bringing valuable skills, perspectives and experience.

## Impact

- 4.6. There were repeated references to the impact of third sector youth work during interviews. This impact ranged across individual young people and their wider community. Specific benefits for young people in rural areas were also highlighted.



4.7. Examples of impact for young people include:

- Helping young people to build a positive outlook and consider their futures
- Working with young people who do not engage with schools
- Supporting positive shifts in family dynamics
- Engaging with young people who have additional support needs
- Providing opportunities for accreditation and skills development
- Helping young people to develop confidence and self-esteem
- Supporting young people directly into employment or training, or enhancing their employability
- Introducing young people to new experiences, including creative, sporting and social activities
- Access to trusted, supportive adults

4.8. The examples of impact reflect Scotland's Youth Work Outcomes and resonate with themes set out in the Scottish Youth Work Research Steering Group's research on the Impact of Community-based Universal Youth Work in Scotland.<sup>15</sup> More detail on this research and the Youth Work Outcomes is in the landscape review in Annex A.

4.9. Specific impacts for communities and young people in rural areas included:

- Connections, activities and opportunities for young people experiencing rural isolation or affected by transport poverty
- Volunteering opportunities
- Working with groups who may feel particularly marginalised in rural areas, for example, LGBTQ young people or those who are neuro-diverse
- Making young people feel seen and valued
- Advocating for resources for young people who may be overlooked in areas dominated by older populations
- A trusted presence in rural areas; offering scope for effective engagement with young people that statutory services may not be able to achieve.

4.10. Staff noted that impacts for some young people might not be instantly evident, but their community presence provides a long-term perspective. For example, they described recent encounters with former service users, who thanked them for their input, years before. Family members also highlight the difference youth work has made.

“One young lady who at 13 or 14 started coming to the youth project and was a right handful... just two months ago, she asked me for a reference for a job, employed at a

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/media/3183/impact-of-community-based-universal-youth-work-in-scotland-november-2018.pdf>



*local organisation in the Borders, which I was happy to provide. You wouldn't have believed that 10 or 12 years ago, but there you go. That's not untypical." (Trustee)*

- 4.11. One Youth Worker suggested that community awareness of the value of youth work was evident during the early stages of the pandemic:

*"What the community feel about our organisation is equally incredible. During COVID, for the first time ever, people turned around and said, "We want to give something back, can you open a kind of goodwill fund?" You tend to find that the people that have got less, do contribute more. There was maybe a couple of hundred pounds left out of £10,000. It's really overpowering that people turn round and are gratified and say, "This is a reason that I need to give back because I'm not a taker, you've helped me, we're on our feet, thanks, but how do we give back for what you've done?" Just the reaction that we got from the young people and partners, schools and food banks and stuff like that." (Youth Worker)*

- 4.12. A small number of participants suggested there was scope to amplify the impact of youth work by working in partnership with schools and colleges. Partnerships were viewed as a route to engaging young people who could benefit from youth work approaches and opportunities to socialise and develop skills in non-formal learning environments.

### Training and qualifications

- 4.13. The survey data shows a breadth of skills and qualifications across the workforce. Interviewees described youth work training and qualifications linked to social policy, education, community learning and development and also relevant transferable learning from other sectors.
- 4.14. There was some variety in the levels of training described by interviewees. It spanned formal qualifications and accredited courses delivered by further and higher education providers to learning in workplace settings, attending specific courses of interest, to 'learning on the job'. Many described encouragement by managers to access training opportunities; a variety of structured and informal staff development approaches were identified.
- 4.15. Interviewees noted the importance of training for new workforce entrants. A wide variety of free, funded and fee-based training options were described, including those offered by YouthBorders.

*"As part of YouthBorders we get quite a few opportunities to do like various types of training and I think I've done a couple of the social media, media ones, and I always find them quite useful, and it's certainly made me think about it differently." (Communications Officer)*

*"I've done a few bits of training with YouthBorders, I did the STEM training, we've done autism training. Over the last few years I've done several things with YouthBorders, which has been useful." (Youth Worker)*

- 4.16. Specific courses mentioned in interviews reflect the diverse nature of youth work provision for young people in the Scottish Borders. Courses included: child protection, first aid, self-harm, drug and alcohol use, suicide interventions, supporting young people





with autism and ADHD, digital tools, eating disorders, mentoring, mental health, STEM, dealing with challenging behaviour, and social media strategies.

- 4.17. The role of the pandemic in stimulating learning about digital delivery and providing new access to online training opportunities was commented on frequently.

“In the first lockdown, I think I did 20 online courses. So it was things like just brushing up on ADHD and autism and things I normally wouldn't get a chance to really focus on” (Youth Worker)

- 4.18. In conversations about training, multiple benefits were described:

- Maintain skills, allowing Youth Workers to respond to young people's evolving needs, and keeping abreast of emerging approaches and delivery models.
- Creating informal spaces for Youth Workers to meet and learn. Some highlighted the crucial role of networking for small third sector organisations, allowing staff to share skills and build relationships with peers and mentors.
- Opportunities to introduce partner organisations to sessional workers which increases capacity for growth.
- Keeping staff engaged, and encouraging them to feel valued and invested in.

“The funding is sometimes an issue, it doesn't give that security for a long-time career but we do invest in people and the training and the support and experience.” (Manager)

- 4.19. Some staff suggested there are innate youth work skills and qualities that they felt could not be trained.

“You can't teach someone to be able to engage with young people or have golden banter; they've either got it or they don't.” (Manager)

- 4.20. The concept of innate skills highlights the unique value of youth work provision in the wider context of efforts to effectively engage with some of Scottish Borders most disadvantaged or disengaged young people. However, it also poses a challenge for workforce development; if important skills such as an ability to connect with young people cannot be trained, what must be done to attract the right staff? On this point, one interviewee highlighted the importance of the 'grow your own' model – a strategy to provide opportunities and support for service users to become part of the workforce in the longer term.

“I think there's also something about finding these special gems out there, these people that are born to work with young people, these people that have got something to say, that have got something to share, that have got a way to connect with young people and make a difference.” (Manager)

- 4.21. Managers and staff often noted the importance of soft skills and the ability to connect with young people and acknowledged these are difficult to teach. However, many aspects of youth work involve skills, competencies and professional ethics that can be learned. Bodies including YouthBorders and Youth Scotland offer training which explores





the principles of youth work and other important skills for working with young people, including practical skills and knowledge such as first aid and child protection.

4.22. Of interest, we highlight an observation by one participant in the stakeholder group that a new youth work qualification offered by Borders College has received significant interest since being introduced. This is a potential area of growth for the workforce in terms of the number of quality applicants who may be joining the sector in the near future.

4.23. Staff reflected on training needs, and barriers to accessing training. There was an appetite for training related to a range of topics and issues. These highlight the aspirations of staff to ensure high standards in their own work and in the delivery of youth work by their organisations. Examples of training which staff were interested in included:

- Domestic violence
- Managing boundaries with young people
- Mental health first aid
- Working with young people in outdoor settings
- Working with young people through different messaging and video conference platforms
- Training for trustees on roles including ways to add value and duties
- Training for leaders on governance and management of trustees
- Business/financial management for leaders of third sector youth work organisations
- Measuring and understanding impact

4.24. In discussion of barriers, some staff suggested both time for training and availability of training was an issue for their organisation, noting the importance of factors such as location, transport and costs for small services in rural areas. One interviewee mentioned their team's fundraising efforts to cover training costs, noting the difficulty of securing unrestricted funding. A small number expressed frustration that training delivered by some providers is only provided during working hours; this is a barrier for volunteers or part time staff who supplement their income through jobs in other organisations.

4.25. Barriers were also highlighted for staff who wish to join the workforce and obtain qualifications:



*“‘Grow our own’ is the methodology in youth work and yet access is a big issue, that many of them don’t have the academic qualifications for the entry qualifications and so on, and neither do they have the funding to pay for some of that qualification so there’s a big uphill struggle there.” (Manager)*

4.26. An interviewee made a wider point about the challenge of establishing a Borders-wide strategic approach to workforce development. They identified scope to build content



aligning to the CLD Competencies Framework<sup>16</sup> and the National Occupational Standards for Youth Work<sup>17</sup> but expressed concern at the lack of a critical mass of staff requiring training. They suggested that regional or national approaches could make this viable.

- 4.27. Interviewees reflected on the difficulty of adopting the Modern Apprenticeship Framework for youth work because it requires a youth work organisation to pay a salary for two years at a minimum of 16 hours a week. This structure does not easily align with funding terms and subsequently the contracts and terms that smaller youth work agencies are able to provide. The challenge of funding volunteer training was also highlighted:

“One of the issues around funding is that the vocational qualification group which is great for a lot of young people who don’t have, you know, a great experience at school and who don’t come out with qualifications, them being able to go down the SVQ route is really useful for them but there is a huge issue around funding for that because if they’re volunteering then they don’t really attract any funding.”  
(Manager)

- 4.28. Stakeholders expressed a desire for closer working with youth work services to develop tailored training and qualification offers that are viable within workplace structures and meet development needs.

<sup>16</sup> <https://cldstandardscouncil.org.uk/resources/the-competences/>

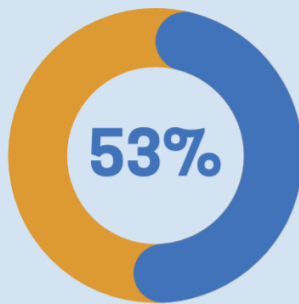
<sup>17</sup> <https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/media/1674/youth-work-national-occupational-standards-lsi-yw-2012.pdf>



## 5. Security

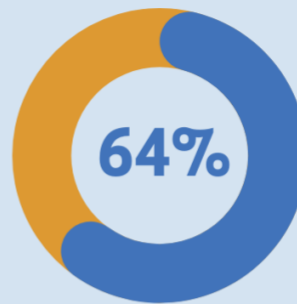
# Security

### Contracts of employed staff



Of staff on a permanent contract

42% on a temporary or fixed term contract\*



Of staff in a salaried position

33% paid hourly\*



**58%**

of organisations employed at least some staff on **fixed term contracts**



**11%**

of organisations employed a small proportion of staff on **zero hours contracts**

### Perception of job security among staff

Very secure

**20%**

Quite secure

**54%**

Not very secure

**22%**

Not at all secure

**4%**

### Rates of Pay



Max

**£12.50**

**£13.40**

**£15.60**

**£20**

Average

**£9.50**

**£10.95**

**£12.70**

**£16**

Minimum

**£8.20**

**£9.74**

**£11**

**£10**

**Trainee YW / YW Assistant**

**Youth Worker**

**Senior Youth Worker**

**Manager / Project Coordinator**

Based on 19 Manager Survey and 64 Workforce Survey responses, including 45 employed members of the workforce

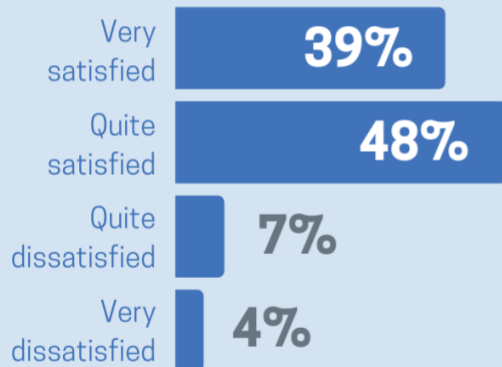
\*The remaining % did not answer



## Security

### Satisfaction with current contract\*

including pay, holiday allowance, pension, benefits etc.



### Annual leave

**30.7 Days**



Average annual leave.  
The range was 22 to 40 days

### Flexible working arrangements for staff

% of organisations offering...



**100%**

Flexible working times



**100%**

Remote working



**90%**

Part time staff



**84%**

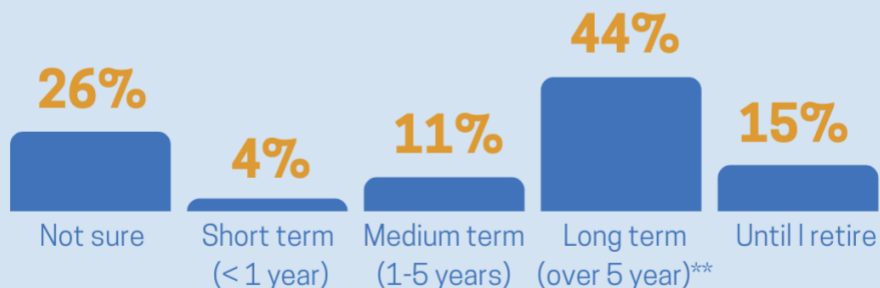
Time off in lieu



**74%**

Compressed hours

### How long do you intend to remain in the youth work sector?



Based on 19 Manager Survey and 64 Workforce Survey responses, including 45 employed members of the workforce

\*The remaining % did not answer



- 5.1. Security as a dimension of Fair Work can be supported in a variety of ways: by providing stability in contractual arrangements, adopting at least the Real Living Wage<sup>18</sup>, giving opportunities for hours of work that can align with family life and caring commitments, employment security agreements, fair opportunities for pay progressing, sick pay and pension arrangements.
- 5.2. In interviews, participants reflected on security, the impacts of job insecurity, and on work-life balance and flexible working.

### Job security

- 5.3. Overall, over half of employed staff who responded to the workforce survey have a permanent contract (53%), and almost two thirds (64%) are in a salaried position. Over half of managers (58%) employ at least some staff on fixed-term contracts. One in ten (11%) use zero-hours contracts to hire a small number of staff.
- 5.4. When asked how secure their role was, one in five (20%) felt very secure and half (54%) quite secure. The remaining quarter felt not very secure (22%) or not at all secure (4%).
- 5.5. Central to interviewees' perceptions of job security is third sector funding arrangements. The mix of short-term and medium-term funding of projects and roles creates uncertainty for both managers and staff. For example, one manager noted that their staff had received six-month extensions of their contract letters eight times. Across organisations, there were several examples of redundancies or needing to let employees go at the end of contracts if no new funding had been sourced.
- 5.6. Interviewees highlighted how disruptive these changes could be. Organisations lose staff and volunteers with skills and experience. Changes are stressful for staff – not only those who face losing their role but for those who remain and managers who have to plan, decide on and communicate the changes. Staff turnover can also be disruptive for the young people themselves, who lose a valued, reliable and trusting relationship.

“We had a reasonably big service...but then we didn't get the money to carry those posts on, so we were left with the core team of four, and we've had as many as ten before” (Manager)

- 5.7. In these conversations, interviewees reflected that project-by-project funding could hamper strategic development, as organisations are reactive to funding opportunities. This highlighted the need for managers to be business focused and consider long-term growth. Positively, one manager noted that they have seen some changes in funders' attitudes during the pandemic and hope this can be sustained:

“It's taken a global pandemic for our funders to realise that they can mobilise themselves and start funding people with a click of a finger. Conversations have been started by, “Tell us what you need, and we'll give you the money?” What it's proven

<sup>18</sup> The Real Living Wage (currently £9.50 per hour) is different to the UK government's National Living Wage (£8.91 per hour) in a number of ways: The Real Living Wage applies to anyone over the age of 18 (as opposed to the National Living wage which applies to those over the age of 25), is calculated based on the basic cost of living in the UK (as opposed to median earnings) and has a London weighting.



*to me is that if we can do it during the pandemic, surely it's going to be a lot easier for them to continue doing it without the pandemic?" (Manager)*

- 5.8. Managers, however, did identify some positives of working to a project-to-project funding model. These included opportunities to move staff and volunteers within organisations to meet project needs and funding, which allows organisations to take advantage of existing skills and enables staff to develop by exposing them to different experiences. As well as supporting evolution within organisations, they provide scope to reassign staff who may prove to be unsuited to a particular role; as noted earlier, innate skills in youth work are essential.

“*I've got a few friends that are within other youth organisations in the Borders, and they're the same as me. They've been on the job a long time now. I think it's a lot of having to prove yourself so that your boss will actually apply for more funding for you.*” (Youth Worker)

- 5.9. The impact of job insecurity for some individuals was evident in the emotive language used during interviews. Participants spoke of being on 'a cliff edge' or 'looking over their shoulder' because of uncertainty. Managers talked of managing the risk and 'putting on a brave face' with staff while awaiting funding decisions, but balancing this with being honest with their team.

“*I'm always watching and hoping... I know my contract has less than a year left on it, and it's always at the back of your mind, thinking do I need to go back to what I was doing before? You don't feel safe; I don't anyway... I just kind of carry on, and I do what I do, because I want to have as many kids coming in as possible. But it does make me keep an eye on other projects in the area just in case. So it doesn't make you feel that you'll always have a job; that's quite harsh I think.*” (Youth Worker)

### Hours and pay

- 5.10. The infographic at the beginning of the chapter illustrates the different rates of pay across the sector. Although average hourly pay rates increase with seniority, the minimum and maximum ends of the pay scale for specific roles vary significantly between organisations. For example, one organisation paid a trainee Youth Worker £12.50 per hour, while another paid a Project Manager less than this at £10, despite it being a more senior position with greater responsibility.
- 5.11. The lack of consistency across pay within the sector highlights the potential to support youth work organisations by developing skill/role profiles and pay framework guidelines for the industry.
- 5.12. It is important to note that issues with pay are not an issue specific to the TSYW sector, but rather a region-wide challenge. Research into earnings in Scotland<sup>19</sup> published by the Scottish Parliament indicates that the average hourly wage of employees who work in the Scottish Borders (£12.14) is lower than the Scottish average (£14.05).

<sup>19</sup> <https://digitalpublications.parliament.scot/ResearchBriefings/Report/2021/2/19/32a8c620-b227-4951-b642-44fe823009d1#43d4dae3-ac86-444b-8354-9a6dea331e3d.dita>





- 5.13. Another common interview theme was discussion of staff moving around or leaving the sector to secure more hours. This was noted as a particular challenge for part-time and sessional staff, some of whom may only work a few hours with one organisation and need multiple jobs for additional hours and pay. This may or may not be another youth work job. If these staff can work enough hours in only one position, it often makes more sense to do so, which might result in them leaving the youth work sector entirely.
- 5.14. Respondents gave examples of staff leaving their organisation. One manager noted three of their team had left to join the care sector. While this was a lower skilled role, with lower hourly pay, more hours were available. Chasing hours in this way causes the sector to lose skills and experience, particularly frustrating given the challenge of finding staff with the right innate qualities for youth work.
- 5.15. Managers also talked about the lure of more attractive public sector employment packages. While they acknowledged that youth work-related roles within Scottish Borders Council are rare and that there can still be uncertainty because of public sector cuts, managers understood why staff members could regard this as a more secure and sustainable career path.
- 5.16. Several commented on income insecurity being a particular issue for the workforce at transition points, for example when they have a family or wish to buy a home. Mortgages were mentioned frequently; one noted that banks can be cautious about Youth Workers, due to the lack of a stable income, hence people's desire for more consistent hours. Staff also consider leaving for organisations that offer better benefits packages to ensure, for example, income security during maternity leave.<sup>20</sup> This example has implications in terms of perpetuating gender inequality and impacts on the gender balance of the workforce. In contrast, older members of the workforce appeared less concerned by working hours, rates of pay or job insecurity.

“We’ve had a couple of staff moving on, moving on to teaching, moving on to other vocational careers. Largely because they’re looking, we’ve had female staff who have been wanting to have a family, that have been looking to buy property, moving to evidence a secure income.” (Manager)

- 5.17. Additional part-time work which some Youth Workers rely on has become more at risk during the pandemic – for example, hospitality work. Sometimes this extra income is needed to make their youth work role viable. If these additional sources of income cannot be relied on, it may cause issues for the sector in the long term.
- 5.18. While interviewees highlighted hours as a challenge, the survey suggests a relatively high degree of satisfaction with terms and conditions of employment in the sector. The vast majority are either very satisfied (39%) or quite satisfied (48%) with their current contract. We highlight that this is a highly engaged and motivated workforce - regardless of feelings of job security, many would like to remain in the sector – 44% indicated they would stay for over five years. This highlights that while job insecurity is a challenge within the sector, many members of the workforce have accepted this, as their sense of fulfilment outweighs the insecurity.

<sup>20</sup> While statutory maternity pay is paid, this results in income loss for expectant/new mothers.



## Sustainability and Manager Overload

- 5.19. Managers told us that funding models hamper the development and sustainability of their organisations. In these conversations they described the breadth and scale of their roles. Examples include funding applications, liaison with the board, developing partnerships, networking, overseeing policy, covering staff absences and – crucially – financial, people and building management. They outlined how an inability to cover the costs of expanding senior level capacity or employ a deputy leaves them unsupported and ‘lonely’. This leads to feelings of overload; ultimately, unsustainable workloads can cause burnout and threaten health; if managers go, this presents a risk for organisations in the sector.

“I certainly feel like the custodian of a charity and you have to want to drive and progress that organisation, and that sometimes requires you to work more than your contracted hours to achieve that.” (Manager)

“I think I work too much, I think that’s been established at every board meeting”. (Manager)

- 5.20. One trustee also noted an overreliance on volunteers, and the need to remember that volunteers need to be appropriately trained and skilled.

“We tend to forget the volunteers are volunteers. But volunteers generally will go over the odds to ensure that service is maintained. But it does tell on people after a while, you know, rocking up two or three times a week to a room full of 14 or 15-year-old kids can be quite stressful” (Trustee)

“It’s easy for me to say, “Well we have a pool of 60 volunteers, so we need to draw on these volunteers.” But that doesn’t bring you any continuity in the workplace, because it is a skill set that you’ve got to maintain, and not everybody’s got the same level of skill set. So to just have 60 names doesn’t ease the situation at all.” (Trustee)

- 5.21. The pandemic has also engendered additional costs for organisations, stretched capacity, and added to the management workload.

## Flexible working

- 5.22. Overall, there were positive views on flexible working opportunities in the sector, as shown by the survey. All organisations offer flexible working times and remote working, and the majority employ part-time staff and offer time off in lieu or compressed hours.
- 5.23. Staff and volunteers are expected to understand they are signing up for at least some evening and weekend working. However, for many organisations, the only fixed hours are their sessions with young people. Beyond this, Youth Workers can generally work their remaining hours when suits them, with managers keen to give staff autonomy around busier spells, such as preparing or running summer programmes or residential.

“My staff team have their own freedom to work their own workload. We have the time commitments, contact time with the young people, that’s set in stone, but there’s a huge amount of flexibility around when they’re doing their session planning, their evaluating, their recording. I think that’s important and it’s certainly something that was really attractive to me and I really value that.” (Manager)



- 5.24. Flexible structures work well for some staff, such as those working part-time hours because of family commitments or other jobs elsewhere. In return, managers look for flexibility from staff if there are gaps to be filled, e.g. an extra session that needs to be covered. This is usually achievable, but some managers provide cover occasionally when part-time staff had family or other work commitments which they cannot change.
- 5.25. There is a general sense that staff and some volunteers will 'go the extra mile' and work more than their contracted hours. In many cases this is because more work is needed than there are staff or resources available. A few said that those starting their youth work career would work extra to show willingness. There is also the potential for some to over-perform to justify their roles because of perceptions of job insecurity.
- 5.26. Views on whether extra hours should be expected were mixed. Several felt this was typical for the sector and were generally happy to do more. Some managers expressed their desire for staff to do more. One reflected that they view their staff as having a paid role, and an occasional additional volunteer role. However, a small number of Youth Workers feel it is exploitative – of managers and funders – to rely on goodwill of paid staff to run a project or organisation. A particular challenge in the Scottish Borders was travel, with questions around whether this should be counted within an employee's hours.

“They know that people are going to give more hours, so they only give them a few hours. That's exploitation as far as I'm concerned, you have to do a proper analysis of how much work is involved in doing something. Especially if you're travelling to a place, if you've got a four hour contract, and that's considered your place of work and you're not paid for the time to get there, that's awful as well, you should be paid for travelling time.” (Youth Worker)



## 6. Effective Voice

- 6.1. To have an effective voice, a workforce needs a safe environment where constructive dialogue allows views to be sought out and listened to. In this chapter we explore how formal and informal channels allow staff in the sector to voice issues and ideas.

### Seeking out views

- 6.2. There is clear evidence that the views of the workforce in third sector organisations in the Scottish Borders are regularly aired and considered. Several respondents described their organisation's small, close-knit team, often with staff who have worked together for a long time. They reflected that this creates open, friendly environments where people are comfortable being honest, challenging ideas and voicing their opinions.
- 6.3. Staff have many opportunities to use their voice. The most mentioned channel was weekly, fortnightly or monthly team meetings. While these are often focussed on workload and activity planning, they are seen as a good forum for issues and ideas to be raised. A small number suggested that the shift to remote working through COVID-19 has made regular contact across teams more important.

“So setting up a more formal sort of communication channel, even if it's just to touch base and see how everyone was doing. We tend to talk things through in the round, at the drop-ins we discuss what's happened at the drop-in, there's an open forum where staff can sort of appraise each other as well. But they also feel comfortable to challenge and be challenged themselves. I would say there's probably always room for improvement, but I think we're much better than we used to be.” (Manager)

- 6.4. Respondents also described more formal mechanisms to share feedback and have their voice heard, which rely on the accessibility of the manager or the chair of the organisation and the ability to work with trustees.
- 6.5. Discussion about voice tended to focus on positives such as open and co-operative working environments.

“We're quite a small close-knit team, so everybody's very open, and some of the staff have been there quite a while as well, so you get to know each other, they're comfortable being honest. The formal mechanisms are there in terms of if they needed to speak to senior management or myself individually, or obviously if it was regarding ourselves to go to the board level.” (Manager)

- 6.6. However, a small number raised challenges around having an effective voice within their organisation. One Youth Worker called for regular line management and supervision. They highlighted the importance of feedback on performance and the need for a clear management structure. One noted that team meetings are useful, but it is also vital to be able to raise issues in confidence without a fear of negative repercussions.



“You don’t want to invoke a whistleblowing policy just to say that a manager’s a potential problem with some of their behaviour, or some of their practice, you need to be able to confidently be able to raise concerns... Because youth work organisations are so different there isn’t this common practice which gives employees that larger voice. Having that representation and being able to raise concerns without thinking that something’s going to reflect badly on you is absolutely critical.” (Youth Worker)

- 6.7. Other challenges included how COVID-19 restrictions have limited the extent to which new staff have been able to observe alternative ways of working, through attending networking events or to have informal learning or conversations. This has reduced the opportunities to learn and bring outside ideas into their organisations. Another reflected on the difficulty of not having someone in the organisation who is willing and able to facilitate open discussions, particularly on more sensitive issues.
- 6.8. A few shared examples of the impact of feedback and sharing learning, for example staff holding lessons or events.

“I think [feedback is] key. They’re the people who are delivering on the frontline, they’re doing the job, they’re doing the work, they’re feeding the information back so I can go and get more funding.” (Manager)

### Trustees

- 6.9. Trustees are volunteers who share the responsibility of governing a charity and directing how it is managed and run.
- 6.10. There were mixed views on the role of trustees within the TSYW sector. Some Youth Workers and managers felt their trustees took a keen interest in the work of the organisation and believed they could have a conversation with them directly if needed. In interviews, trustees were enthusiastic about engaging and gave examples of how they did so, for example by attending drop-in sessions or weekly meetings. A trustee from one organisation outlined how their staff will ask to pitch funding ideas to the board, and that they have an annual away day to discuss ideas. Another manager explained how they will have full staff consultations involving trustees for any large or controversial changes in the organisation.

“We have a link from trustees to staff - staff are always at the AGMs, trustees will pop in from time to time, they’ll see stuff, they’ll get the chat.” (Manager)

“That regularly happens, we’ll get a worker saying, “I have this idea for a project for the summer, can I come and talk to the trustees about it?” And we’ll set up a special item on the agenda so they can pitch their idea.” (Trustee)

“I used to sit down with the staff every week, and just get that feedback, even though I was a volunteer trustee, you still want to know what’s going on. But now that’s done through the senior youth worker, but I’d like to think the boards still get involved and you’re hearing what’s going on at the coalface.” (Trustee)





“I mean we’ve got a manager, but I sort of think my employers are our board of directors, over and above the manager... If I’ve got any issues I do know my board of directors and who covers certain areas, so I do speak to them when I need to which is good... When we need to, we’ll get ideas, because they are quite involved and they’re quite supportive.” (Youth Worker)

- 6.11. However, others felt their trustees could be more involved. One Youth Worker reflected on their board’s ability to make decision about their job, even though many do not have experience working in the sector and have a limited knowledge of the day-to-day experience of being a Youth Worker. They outlined the steps their manager had been taking to get the board involved and understand the demands that are placed on staff, particularly during the last year.

“I just feel that sometimes the board don’t really understand. It’s going back to that whole thing of people think all you’re doing is just sitting around having a wee cup of tea and going, “Oh hiya.” It’s just so much more if you dig underneath, there’s so much more to it. So sometimes I feel there’s that barrier with the board, they don’t really know what’s going on.” (Youth Worker)

- 6.12. A few managers noted that while they would be happy raising and discussing issues and ideas with their trustees, levels of engagement and interest varied.

“Some [trustees] work and some don’t, some people you never hear of, and some people never respond. So we have all of that, but that’s the same as any committee and you’re quite used to it if you’re working in the third sector.” (Manager)

“Some of our trustees take onboard the responsibilities they have towards myself and other members of staff and to the charity as a whole. I don’t think certain trustees over the years have quite got that. The other thing is that trying to engage trustees more than I possibly do is quite difficult. I would like all my trustees to have a certain level of training and any training that we do is open to trustees, but they don’t seem to be that interested in learning more.” (Manager)

### Trade Union membership

- 6.13. None of the interview participants who were asked were members of a trade union. While there was some knowledge of unions and an acknowledgement that representation could be useful, respondents did not feel this was relevant for them.

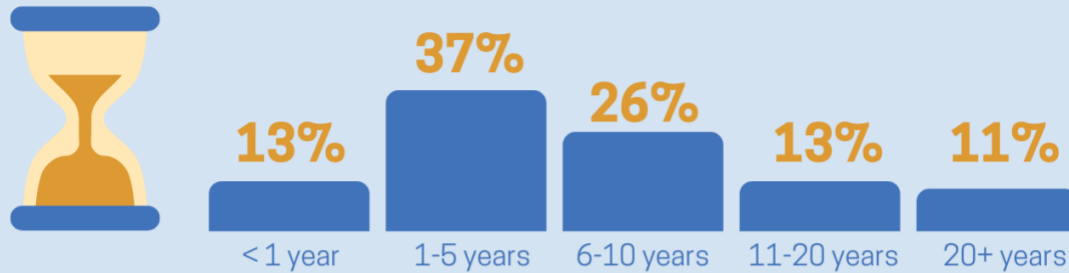




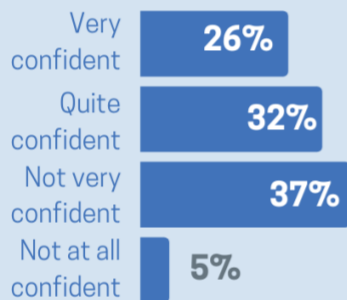
## 7. Opportunity

# Opportunity

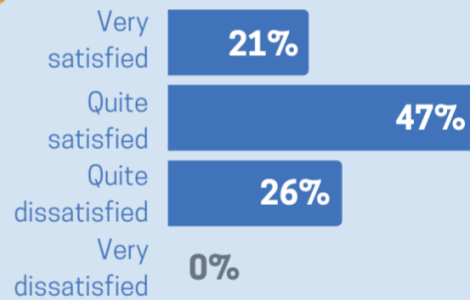
### Length of youth work career



### Managers' confidence in ability to recruit staff with appropriate skills and experience



### Managers' satisfaction with quality and experience of candidates who apply\*



### How would you rate opportunities to develop a career in youth work...?



Based on 19 Manager Survey and 64 Workforce Survey responses

\*The remaining % did not answer



- 7.1. This section focuses on progression opportunities in the third sector youth work sector in the Scottish Borders. We explore opportunities and barriers to entering and progressing in the sector, as well as opportunities to benefit from training and skills development.

### Career progression

- 7.2. Views on career progression opportunities were very mixed. Survey results, in the infographic, show that half of the workforce has been in the sector for five years or less. As such there is a pool of newer entrants who are looking to progress. The results also suggest that both managers and the workforce feel there are opportunities. Most feel there are good, very good or excellent opportunities to further their career in their own organisations, in the Scottish Borders and in Scotland. However, staff and volunteers appeared to have a more positive perspective about local opportunities than managers.
- 7.3. However, feedback from our conversations paints a slightly less positive picture. Most feel there are opportunities to enter the sector at a junior level, to gain experience and develop skills. The ability to progress, however, becomes limited by the smaller number of senior or management level vacancies which arise. A few also felt it is not overly clear to a new entrant or someone considering the sector what the routes of progression are and some survey respondents called for more collaboration between organisations to create clearer pathways. One commented that they did not feel there was progression in the voluntary sector unless a volunteer wanted to apply for a paid position.

“I keep an eye on what’s out there. With YouthBorders there’s a lot of room to develop and do coursework, and lots of training, but I don’t know if there’s anywhere else to go for youth work, not really... As a whole, I wouldn’t say it’s a career - it is a career but it’s not somewhere where there is a lot of room to improve and move on.”  
(Youth Worker)

### Barriers

- 7.4. Several barriers to career progression were described. One of the most common was the geography of the Scottish Borders and the difficulty of travelling long distances for work and training. This has multiple implications – it can make it difficult to recruit staff, and for staff to network. For junior staff who may need to make up their hours across more than one youth work job, it is more challenging to work for several organisations in the region than it might be in Edinburgh, for example, where it is possible to travel easily.
- 7.5. Another common challenge is that uncertainty around funding and capacity makes it difficult to create vacancies, full-time posts or additional senior level posts. Several respondents noted that junior level posts are often part-time and a few explicitly mentioned pay as a barrier to people entering and progressing in the sector. While part-time hours suit some, for example those working around family commitments, many described the challenges a younger person would face paying their bills from a part-time job on the minimum or living wage.

“Bigger contracts would probably be more ideal, and it probably would attract people that have been to Uni and done community education and things like that. You normally see people who have done that thinking, ‘Oh I might do CLD work,’ but



*if it was a bigger contract for youth work they might think, 'What about becoming a youth worker?'" (Youth Worker)*

“*If I'm working with [part-time staff member] and he's doing two sessions a week and he's looking for more hours, [our manager] would probably say, "By the way there's more hours going at such and such." It's not about losing staff, it's a way of holding on to them... He works at a pub and he wants out of that to get more youth work jobs. He's quite mobile, he can drive, so it's in [our manager's] interest to keep him in youth work and get him out the pub, because he'll come with skills and ideas."* (Youth Worker)

- 7.6. In relation to progressing to senior roles, a few described these as less appealing as it would see them move away from youth work into management, funding applications and paperwork. Conversely, some managers described how they would like to have a deputy or junior management position, not only to ease their own workload but to be able to upskill a colleague.

“*I've got ambitions for succession planning and growing the next manager for the organisation, that would be the ideal. But securing funding and having the capacity to have an effective number two who's in the position to sort of take over the reins is very challenging."* (Manager)

*"If only I had the money, I would go out and hire a deputy straightaway. You know, it's just one of those things, there's always too much work and it gets relentless."* (Manager)

- 7.7. Some respondents felt that a lack of understanding of the role of a Youth Worker could also be a barrier for some new entrants. They reflected on colleagues who have joined their organisations and found the work more challenging than expected, or who found the evening and weekend work more burdensome than anticipated. This highlights potential for exploring more opportunities for work experience and volunteering opportunities to introduce potential new entrants to the sector.

### **Finding someone with the right skills**

- 7.8. Managers had mixed views on recruitment. In the survey, a majority felt confident they could recruit staff with the appropriate skills and experience to meet the person specification and satisfied with the quality of the candidates who apply for positions. However, four in ten were not confident, and three in ten dissatisfied with potential candidates. Issues undermining satisfaction were a lack of skilled workers in area, of workers who can handle outdoor rural settings and of people with a driving license. Some suggested that being in a rural environment meant there was not a big population to draw workers with these skills from.

“*There have been a few exceptions where I've suddenly thought, "Boy have we got the right person." Everything has been a situation of... we'll have to offer the post to this particular person, and we have to keep our fingers crossed, and we'll do lots of support, lots of training involved. Even then it doesn't work sometimes."* (Manager)

*"I always struggle if I'm advertising for a new post, because [in our area] youth workers don't grow on trees. Our demographic is we're an ageing population, and*



*we've really got to winkle out youth workers in our communities that don't even know they're youth workers i.e. have those transferable skills, and they have the interest." (Manager)*

- 7.9. Three quarters of managers require staff to have specific qualifications to join their teams. These qualifications varied considerably depending on the post, ranging from a degree, HNC or Professional Development Award in youth work, to certificated training such as first aid and child protection. Only one manager indicated that they require their volunteers to have qualifications, though this was described as 'some knowledge and experience'.
- 7.10. Only two managers (11%) said they supported or required their employees or volunteers to register with the CLD Standards Council for Scotland. Stakeholders championed their use as a kitemark for quality:

“If you receive a funding application from an organisation which has staff and volunteers which are registered with the Standards Council, then you've got a baseline of commitment to quality practice there before you even start... we're trying to say to the funders it will help you make your decision, you don't need to spend time digging into the quality, that they've already acknowledged that.” (Stakeholder)

- 7.11. One interviewee explained that there is one centre for accrediting the SVQ in youth work in the South of Scotland, the absence of different levels of qualification were described as a 'block' for staff in the Scottish Borders..

### Creating opportunities

- 7.12. Various suggestions were given for how additional opportunities could be created. These included working with schools and colleges to provide work experience, placements or modern apprenticeship entry routes into the sector. These were considered important to give potential new entrants an honest and balanced introduction to the sector and to the work of potential employers. Another suggestion was to ease the burden on smaller organisations to make it easier to take on volunteers.
- 7.13. Survey respondents also proposed several ideas to encourage more people into a youth work career. These included: open days in youth groups so people could learn more about the work, better promotion of youth work, better terms and conditions for staff, more secure positions, more awareness of the benefits to young people helped by youth work, and better promotion of job opportunities and career pathways. Others suggested showcasing the experiences of long-serving staff or young people who have recently undertaken traineeships/apprenticeships.

### Greater visibility

- 7.14. In our survey, managers were asked about the avenues they use to advertise any job opportunities. All organisations advertised on their own website and almost all posted opportunities on social media platforms. Facebook was used most; Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn less so. Job websites were also used; Indeed and Goodmoves by around half, Community Jobs Scotland and S1Jobs by a small number. Other sites included Government gateway, Creative Opportunities Scotland, Adzuna, YouthLink Scotland, Youth Theatre Arts Scotland and CABN. Three quarters also relied on word of mouth.



- 7.15. Interviewees expressed a range of views on visibility. Some were positive, noting the small network in the Borders means that most people in the sector are aware of vacancies and other opportunities. A few praised YouthBorders' website and e-bulletin in highlighting opportunities and noted there is visibility on the Scottish Borders Council website. Using supported employment e.g. Community Jobs Scotland was also mentioned. While this group were positive about visibility, they again reiterated the broader barriers of pay rates and being able to offer sufficient hours. A retired trustee felt that it is more challenging for people who want to volunteer to know where to go to find information and understand how they could use their expertise.
- 7.16. Related to visibility, some discussed the need to create a better understanding of youth work more generally. This includes making people more aware of what youth groups and Youth Workers do, as well as making communities aware of the positive impact of the work in a broader sense.

“I think without maybe having a specialism linked, a lot of people are still thinking that youth projects are like where there's a pool table, you know, kids' behaviour, you place them in a tuck shop, and you maybe do some arts and crafts or play a game of rounders. I've never played rounders here in the Borders, I've never once played rounders.” (Manager)

“People think that the youth clubs are just for scabby bairns and I think it's been like that since the 70s, it's all, 'Oh it's just the poor kids that go there, because their parents don't look out for them and they're roaming around the streets, it's just the wee poor ones that are there,' which is actually not the case at all, we're right across the board.” (Youth Worker)

“I have a sticker stuck on my desk now that says, 'Who can I tell?' Because I have to remind myself that sometimes what you're asking me, not everybody knows what we do, so therefore I have to think, 'Well actually who can I tell, is it a councillor who's going to sing our praises, is it another organisation, is it our Community Council, is it the school, is it our Facebook, is it the newspaper?'” (Manager)

### Supporting career progression through training and skills development

- 7.17. For those beginning their career and those not interested in a management role, there is potential to build a career as a senior Youth Worker. Virtually all managers in our survey reported that they enable staff to attend external training (e.g. YouthBorders or Youth Scotland). Four fifths or more also said they provided in-house training, induction and probationary reviews, monthly review meetings, and annual appraisals. Three quarters support staff through further or higher education courses/CPD and two thirds have on the job shadowing. Only one third offered staff an annual allowance of days dedicated to training or learning activities, and one fifth used mentoring schemes.
- 7.18. Only one third of managers had personal development plans in place for staff, indicating that the majority of training opportunities offered to Youth Workers are reactive to what is available rather than planned and proactive.
- 7.19. Two thirds of managers (63%) indicated that their staff or volunteers had completed work-related qualifications in the past 3 years, with the most common being Youth Scotland's PDA in Youth Work (SCQF Level 6) and ILM Leading in Youth Work (SCQF Level





9). Similarly, over half (54%) of the staff survey indicated they had completed at least one qualifications as part of their role in the past few years. Of those who had, the most common was Community Learning / Community Education (16%) and Youth Scotland's Ready for Youth Work course (10%).

7.20. Despite these opportunities, managers and the workforce both cited a number of barriers to training and gaining qualifications. As shown in the infographic, a lack of awareness of these opportunities and the time commitment are key challenges. For managers, the cost of training is also a barrier; in most cases the organisations themselves pay for training, although a small number noted that third parties (e.g. a funder or local authority) might pay, or the staff member would pay themselves. It is clear that unless there are solutions to these barriers can be found, an expansion of training options is likely to have limited impact.

7.21. One Youth Worker talked about how they work with their manager to establish what skills are likely to be needed in the future, and how this links to funding:

“*[The manager's] trying to get us more on mental health, because we feel that within the next few years, mental health's going to have all the money put into it, and if we have a bit of training and a bit more knowledge, that will help within our roles.*”  
(Youth Worker)

7.22. Managers also expressed concern at the skills being lost as people leave the sector. However, the potential for people moving on does not necessarily restrict the training opportunities that are available.

“*I wonder how many youth work staff come into youth work, learn amazing skills, deliver fantastic work, and then leave youth work for sustainable work for work in other areas? These skills are just being lost, they're not available to move from project to project necessarily.*” (Manager)

*“There's an assumption that they're not going to be with [us] forever, so we would like to look after them in one way by offering them a whole range of training opportunities, opportunities to do other things within [our organisation]. Simply because, when they leave, we'd like them to leave with a very strong CV, but also if they're thinking of leaving, we'd like them to be successful in what they go on to do.”*  
(Manager)

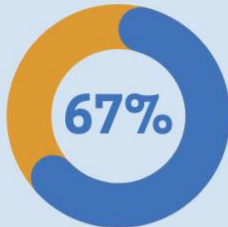




# Training and skills development

## % of managers who...

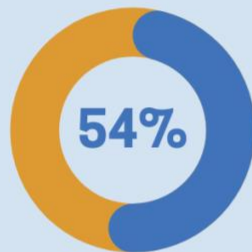
Require employees to have specific qualifications



Require volunteers to have specific qualifications



Support or require your employees or volunteers to register with the CLD Standards Council for Scotland



of the workforce have completed youth work qualifications as part of their role in the past few years



## Top barriers to undertaking more training or qualifications:

### Managers' views



**84%**

Staff commitment / time capacity



**68%**

Lack of available budget



**63%**

Cost of courses/qualifications



**63%**

Availability of suitable course / qualifications



**53%**

Travel

### Staff and volunteers' views



**41%**

Don't know about opportunities



**33%**

Time commitment



**22%**

Family/caring commitment



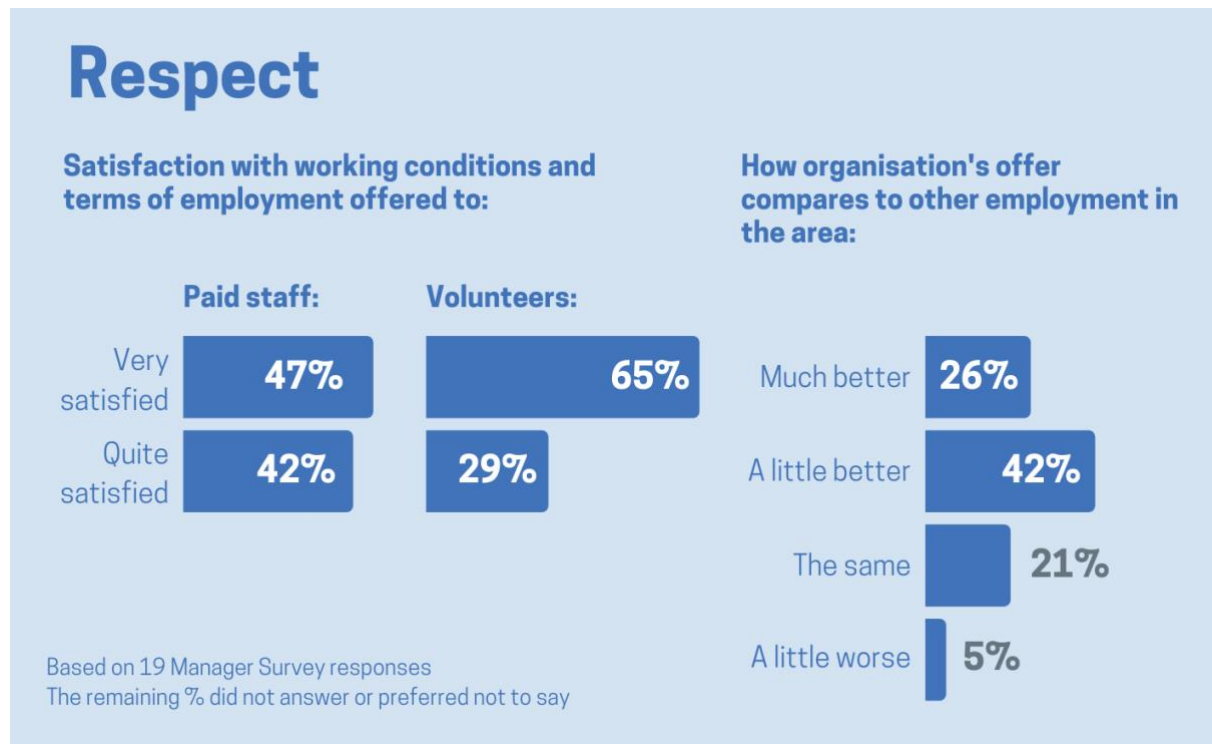
**15%**

Unclear career progression pathways

Based on 19 Manager Survey and 64 Workforce Survey responses



## 8. Respect



- 8.1. This chapter focuses on the principle of ensuring people are treated respectfully, regardless of their role or status.

### Dignity and respect

- 8.2. The sector appears to operate in a way which ensures staff, volunteers and young people are treated with dignity and respect. Respondents reflected on how this derives from both formal and informal practices. Some praised the open culture of their organisation and the tone set by their board and management. They noted examples such as ensuring staff and volunteers are treated in the same way, as volunteers may have the same skill set as staff. A relatively new entrant to the sector noted their surprise at being treated as an equal despite their lack of experience.

“Absolutely, I never had any issue with staff or volunteers on that. I think the volunteers, we were treated with respect because some of the volunteers have the same equal skill sets to the paid staff, so there was no discrimination.” (Trustee)

“I was treated as if I was fully qualified from the word go. It’s been an unusually positive experience. I’ve worked in loads of little hospitality jobs and stuff and never felt cared about or genuinely valued, so the respect is definitely there [in this sector]” (Communications Officer)



- 8.3. Two participants – a manager and a Youth Worker – commented on the importance of demonstrating the importance of people's work in instilling a sense of value and respect.

“The value of work that people do has to be recognised, and that's not just in a monetary sense... saying who is doing the more difficult job - the person who is face-to-face with their particular youth members on a regular basis, who's dealing with challenges, who's dealing with all sorts of things that are going on in their lives.... I don't think people are valued in terms of the work they do from a societal point of view. “Oh I'm just a youth worker,” I hear that so many times, “What do you do?” “I'm just a youth worker,” or, “I'm just a volunteer.” (Youth Worker)

“You have to lift other people in your staff team. When we put comms releases out, if somebody's done the work it's their name attributed to the quote. It's not about status, it's about who's done the work, who's the most knowledgeable person. That's how people have treated me in the past and that's how I want to treat my staff.” (Manager)

- 8.4. A few organisations noted steps that had been taken to create more formal policies to ensure respect. Examples included ensuring these attributes are included in contracts with workshop providers and working with HR experts on training on providing constructive feedback.
- 8.5. Specifically in relation to demonstrating respect through working conditions and terms of employment, the vast majority of managers who responded to the survey were very or quite satisfied with the package they could offer to staff and volunteers, as shown in the graphic at the start of this chapter. A majority also felt their offer was much better, or a little better, than other employment opportunities in their area.

#### Policies to ensure welfare

- 8.6. Staff health, safety and wellbeing is valued and monitored through formal and informal means. As well as health and safety policies, respondents noted steps that are taken to make both staff and young people feel safe. In particular, one staff member noted how their manager had adapted in the early stages of the pandemic, ensuring that a sensible number of young people attended in person and looking after the health of older volunteers.

“And [the manager's] been really open with people and said, “If you don't want to volunteer anymore...” She's really good with the volunteers as well, they're really looked after and really appreciated. I think that's why we have our volunteers, because some of them have been with us 13 years now. That's why we hold onto our volunteers because they are factored in as well.” (Youth Worker)



- 8.7. One manager noted the challenge of ensuring staff wellbeing when workloads can vary depending on the nature of the work. They noted that while they monitor workloads, but that staff are in the driving seat:

“With regards to staff’s work/life balance, they’re so involved in programming that they are sort of captains of their own destiny with that. There are times when it’s hard, there are times when we’ve got a two or three day residential and it’s going to be full on.... But I am looking for balance, I’m sort of aware when things aren’t great, I’m aware of staff needs.” (Manager)

- 8.8. For the most part, participants felt that their organisations had a range of policies in place to ensure the welfare of staff, volunteers and young people. These included staff handbooks and inductions, risk assessments and policies on anti-bullying, child protection and safeguarding policies, social media, and grievance.
- 8.9. A few challenges were noted. These included ensuring that policies are applied consistently across organisations and across the sector, but it was noted that YouthBorders’ provision of blank templates helps with this. Others noted the volume of policies that need to be considered and read, and that even with policy support guidance needs to be given to younger or less experienced staff members.

#### Processes to seek support

- 8.10. Participants were able to outline a range of processes which highlight how staff in the sector are supported. Again, an open culture appears to facilitate informal conversations between staff and management which allows most issues to be resolved. Transparent processes, regular supervision chats and mentoring schemes were all mentioned as contributing to this. A few also felt their staff had good relationships with trustees and could work with their boards directly if needed, noting the role of boards to advise and provide guidance. YouthBorders was also seen as a channel for additional support.
- 8.11. A few noted that generating this supportive culture might be easier for organisations in the Borders who typically have smaller teams of more experienced staff. They noted that it may be more challenging to be aware of all that is going on with a larger team of dispersed, sessional workers.

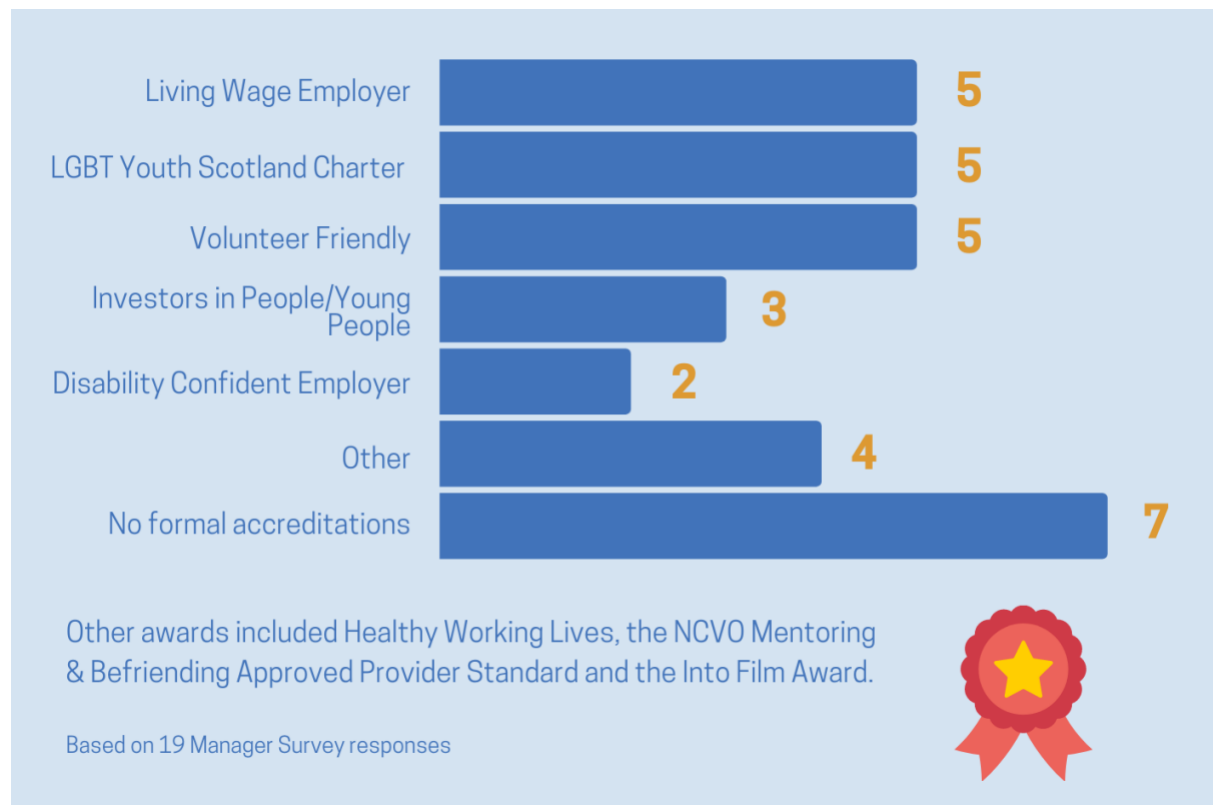


## 9. Other workforce development considerations

- 9.1. Wider workforce development issues, not linked to the Fair Work principles, also came to light during the research. These are discussed below.

### Organisational accreditation

- 9.2. Managers recognised the value of achieving formal accreditation from schemes such as Volunteer Friendly and Investors in People for their organisation. Twelve out of 19 organisations had one industry-recognised award scheme, and some had accreditation from several sources.



- 9.3. While participants appreciated the benefits of gaining formal organisational accreditations, some described the time-consuming application processes and costs as barriers to applying. They raised concerns that smaller organisations would be at a disadvantage if funders were to show preference for those with formal accreditations, given they may not have adequate funding to pay the Real Living Wage or enrol in award schemes.
- 9.4. A few noted that money invested in gaining organisational accreditations could be used to benefit young people more directly, for example hiring sessional Youth Workers or delivering projects and activities for young people.





## Additional support for the sector

- 9.5. Respondents to the survey of managers noted some additional services or support that would be useful to their organisation in the future.



*“More joined up governance so you don’t have twenty-five youth work organisations trying to solve an HR issue or an IT issue or a recruitment issue.” (Stakeholder)*

- 9.6. A few managers noted that they would appreciate support with managing trustee relationships, having experienced some challenges around setting trustee expectations and responsibilities. Other services that the workforce would value included support with recruiting and retaining volunteers and administrative support.

## Opportunities for TSYW organisations

- 9.7. Participants discussed opportunities for TSYW organisations to develop in the future. They advocated for:
- More networking opportunities across the sector;
  - Greater recognition from funders of the importance of TSYW organisations’ presence in rural areas, and their success in reaching disengaged youth;
  - Closer links between youth work organisations and providers of Youth Work Qualifications/Apprenticeships (e.g. colleges); and
  - New approaches to funding, for example long-term funding arrangements, an annual funding agreement, or regional funding packages for youth work.





“

*“There is more scope for, for want of a better word, traditional funders, the Trusts, the Lottery etc. to look differently at how they can fund the sector. The other layer to that is Government funding... a secure funding stream in the same way that, for example, the TSI – Third Sector Interfaces – get annually around regional youth work would be a massive shift in terms of how we could secure the things that I think we’re all keen in youth work sector.” (Stakeholder)*

“

*“We’re trying to shift the focus to community wealth building around commissioning and community empowerment, because national organisations may be able to offer more security but in terms of their knowledge of our communities and the reality of delivery and how you model that delivery, how you access even something as simple as premises across many rural communities, they’re a real challenge so we have to work with a network of local organisations”. (Stakeholder)*



## 10. Conclusions

- 10.1. Many informed individuals and stakeholders took part in the research. These participants shared their experiences and ambitions for the sector, providing a valuable evidence base for YouthBorders and stakeholders to draw upon when responding to the research findings.
- 10.2. The research shows a mixed picture in relation to Fair Work and TSYW. In general there was positive feedback about voice, fulfilment and respect within teams, organisations and the sector. These perhaps reflect the rights-based foundations and values of universal youth work and reflect sector culture. It is also within the scope of individual workplaces to address these specific issues through organisational practice and behaviour.
- 10.3. Performance on the Fair Work principles of opportunity and security is less positive, perhaps reflecting that these relate more to the structural challenges facing the sector. It is more difficult for YouthBorders members to address these themselves; instead, they may be more effectively addressed through YouthBorders' influence and collaboration with key stakeholders and partners.

### Workforce strengths

- 10.4. Reflecting on the evidence gathered in this research, the TSYW workforce in the Scottish Borders has many strengths. Work delivered by this sector has a significant reach within and across rural areas. Its positive impact on young people in the Scottish Borders is valued by young people, communities and stakeholders. Staff and volunteers derive purpose, satisfaction and value from their roles.
- 10.5. A breadth of skills, experience and qualifications is evident across the workforce, reflecting the diversity of work delivered. Training spans formal qualifications and accredited courses to attending specific courses of interest and learning on the job. Managers encourage staff to access training opportunities through a variety of structured and informal staff development approaches. This training enables the workforce to maintain skills, to respond to young people's evolving needs and creates informal spaces to meet and learn from others in the sector.
- 10.6. Those in the workforce feel listened to. There are opportunities to gain skills, develop networks, and participate in training. Managers, delivery staff and volunteers are treated with dignity and respect and staff health, safety and wellbeing is valued and regularly monitored.

### Development areas

- 10.7. Workforce development issues identified in the research include achieving an inflow of sector entrants with the right skills, aptitudes and qualities for work with young people. The 'grow your own' approach has an important role to play, but there are some blocks. These include issues with aligning the modern apprenticeship scheme to employment opportunities in small youth work organisations. It can be difficult to secure funding to train volunteers who may become staff. Finally, some highly skilled Youth Workers who took part in the research transitioned to the sector from a different career; their



pathway to youth work was often accidental. The challenge is how to turn this into a more intentional route, and one which also supports economic development.

- 10.8. While the workforce accesses a raft of training, some barriers are evident, particularly finding time for, and the availability of, training. Delivery staff see a growing need for thematic training on supporting young people with important issues, such as mental health. Managers described an appetite for knowledge about topics that play a critical role in organisational sustainability, including governance, management of trustees, financial planning, and measuring impact. In the past year, the pandemic has had a limiting impact on networking and informal peer learning opportunities. Challenges around the availability of qualifications include a lack of a critical mass of staff requiring training and the difficulty of adoption the Modern Apprenticeship Framework for youth work as it does not align with the contracts that smaller youth work agencies can currently provide.
- 10.9. There is scope to develop greater consistency across the TSYW workforce in approaches to line management or supervision, professional development planning, appraisal, and opportunities for staff to discuss problems in confidence without fear of negative repercussions.
- 10.10. The funding environment is a source of many workforce issues. These include arrangements that perpetuate job insecurity, roles that do not provide a real living wage requiring top ups from additional work, or contractual arrangements that ultimately drive decisions to leave the sector. The project-to-project nature of contract opportunities creates instability, and there is a lack of senior capacity for long term development work, which can lead to reactive approaches.
- 10.11. There are barriers for small organisations who wish to gain accreditation that may assist their efforts to win contracts, including an overwhelming workload for managers, and time-consuming application processes and costs. Organisations may need to create posts with insufficient hours, perpetuating the need for additional 'voluntary' hours to ensure all work gets done and the desire among some to go the extra mile without financial compensation.

### **Recommendations**

- 10.12. A full list of recommendation based on this research is included in the main report.