



YouthBorders: Our Year 2020/21

Working together to improve the lives of young people in the Scottish Borders through voluntary and community-based youth work.



www.youthborders.org.uk



Introduction

YouthBorders is the network of voluntary and community-based youth organisations in the Scottish Borders, supporting and promoting good quality youth work. As a membership organisation YouthBorders facilitates networking opportunities and events and provides information and advice to voluntary and community-based youth organisations, their volunteers, trustees, youth workers, and other partners in the community. YouthBorders is recognised regionally as the strategic voice of third sector youth organisations and works closely with partners in the public sector to improve outcomes for young people. YouthBorders is an area association of Youth Scotland.

“We have a vision of a voluntary and community-based youth work sector which is connected, collaborative, respected, and recognised; working together to improve the lives of young people in the Scottish Borders.”

In September 2019 we published a refreshed Strategic Plan 2019-22 which has three high level priorities:

- A youth work sector which collaborates
- A membership which is connected, empowered, and represented
- A membership which is supported, confident and competent

This report captures our activity during the period 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021. This year has been challenging for the youth work sector in the Scottish Borders and for our own organisation due to the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic. Reflecting on the year we are proud of the resolve, resilience and commitment of our network despite the new context in which they were required to work.

“As a member of YouthBorders, I would like to say that the support from YB has been absolutely fantastic and will have benefitted other youth groups in the Eildon area as well as ourselves massively. Their support to the youth sector in the locality is vital.”

“Thank you for the resources you shared they were helpful, and it was reassuring to talk to you”

“I think that the bulletin is bright, easy to read and feels streamlined. Content I think is excellent and relevant.”

“The support we received was invaluable with regards to practical steps to maintain the wellbeing of our staff and young people with regards to COVID measures.”



2020/21 A Year in the Context of Covid-19

This year has required YouthBorders to utilise all of our resources, skills, expertise and resilience to work as a team to support our network. We were able to draw in additional funds from The Fore, Foundation Scotland, and Scottish Government Wellbeing Fund to enhance the core services and support we were able to provide for our membership. We had hoped that in 2020/21 we could take proactive approaches to supporting our members to prepare for times of diminished capacity, resource and build resilience. However, Covid-19 presented a whole set of new challenges and opportunities where we and our members had to react, adapt and respond.

We prioritised:

- ✓ providing trusted and current information about the youth work guidance and permitted activity to our members, whilst also seeking to inform and influence national partners about the needs and experiences of the Scottish Borders
- ✓ workforce wellbeing
- ✓ sustaining and reaching out to keep groups connected and included with our network
- ✓ workforce development to respond to new needs (digital youth work / emotional health and wellbeing)
- ✓ securing organisational income – making the most of emergency funding opportunities for YouthBorders and our members.

We have managed to respond to the new context whilst also retaining the integrity, ambition, and vision of our Strategic Plan. Some areas of activity have slowed or been redirected to respond to Covid-19, but generally we feel that we continue to make good and significant progress against our plan. As an organisation we have had to respond to our statutory and regional partners and their changing capacity, priorities and availability.

The YouthBorders Network: 31st March 2021

- **Member Organisations:** 40 organisations providing 65 youth groups (increase of 3 new organisations since 2019/20)
- **Workforce:** Youth Workers 217 and Volunteers 610
- **Beneficiaries:** Young People 3678 (increase from 3354 in 2019/20)
- **Active Partners:** 33
- **YouthBorders Staff:** 4 (3.5 full time equivalent)
- **YouthBorders Board:** 9



Ambition 1: A youth work sector which collaborates

Youth and Families Specialist Network / All Members Network

- YouthBorders plays a facilitating role in convening the quarterly meetings of the Youth and Families Specialist Network. This is a sub-section of our full members, characterised by those providing targeted or specialist support to young people and their families (either by method or by demographic). The Youth and Families Specialist Network met 4 times during 2020/21:
 - April 2020 (Mental health with guests from Scottish Government and SAMH)
 - June 2020 ('A New Normal' – reflections and peer support)
 - October 2020 (Impacts and Learning from Covid-19)
 - March 2021 (Emotional HWB Community Framework with guests from Scottish Border Council)
- In response to the specific circumstance of Covid-19, YouthBorders convened two special meetings, our first 'all members' network events which took place in April and May 2020 creating a peer support space and discussion around the future of youth work in the context of Covid-19.

Scottish Borders Strategic Youth Work Partnership

- The Youth Work Partnership¹ has been galvanised as a space for peer support during this year due to the dynamic circumstance of Covid-19. In April 2020 we began supporting this group of youth work managers to meet on a weekly basis on Zoom; at the summer we reduced this frequency to fortnightly and this cycle remains. This is a significant increase in time together and opportunities for information sharing, peer support, and collaborative working.
- This Partnership continues to deliver Stepping Stones (funded by NLCF since 2018 and coordinated by YouthBorders) and worked to submit an application for continuation funding; and this continuation funding was confirmed in March 2021 sustaining investment into youth work delivery for Stepping Stones until August 2024. Stepping Stones impact reports can be found at www.youthborders.org.uk/publications
- This Partnership also responded to the opportunity to apply to the Scottish Government Youth Work Education Recovery Fund and was successful in securing £60k of funding to deliver a coordinated youth work holiday programme during April, summer and October 2021 for young people most impacted by Covid-19. This is being coordinated by YouthBorders, with additional staffing capacity; and also involves partnership contribution from CLD at Scottish Borders Council.
- This Partnership agreed to commission Northern Star to engage in an impact evaluation of the Partnership to consider the 'added value' for partner organisations of working in this collaborative way. We also asked Northern Star to prepare a history/timeline of the partnership development and to make recommendations as to how the Partnership can be fit for the future. This report is due for dissemination during summer 2021.

¹ Comprised of Beyond Earlston, Cheviot Youth, Connect Berwickshire Youth Project, Escape Youth Services, Rowland's (Selkirk), TD1 Youth Hub, Tweeddale Youth Action. YouthBorders is a facilitative leader to this Partnership.



Case-Study 1: 2020 Inspire Awards

The 2020 Inspire Awards were run by a partnership team from CLD Service Youth Learning Team, Volunteer Centre Borders (VCB) and YouthBorders. Covid-19 forced a re-imagining of how the 2020 Inspire Awards could be delivered.

Partners were committed to recognising and celebrating the positive impact and outstanding contributions made by young people in their communities, homes and schools during 2020. The team skill shared and learned from each other to remotely deliver in an ambitious timescale within existing staff capacity and with a small budget.

The awards were digitally delivered using social media, a web-based nomination form and email networks across the partnership. We received **70 nominations** for **194 young people**. This was a significant increase from previous years with nominations coming from families, friends, neighbours, schools, youth projects and community groups. We facilitated a judging panel representing the three partners and involving young people.

There was a social media announcement of all young people who received the award and those selected for the “20 under 20” campaign. The 20 under 20 campaign aimed to shine a light on young people and groups who had gone over and above in 2020.

Incubating new ideas and collaborations

We have seen increased collaborative activity particularly between member groups but also with artists, environmentalists, and local enterprises. YouthBorders plays a role in connecting partners and amplifying their practice. Examples include:

- Connecting Threads (Southern Uplands Partnership) YouthBorders has connected them with a number of youth organisations along the length of the Tweed.
- Alchemy Film and Arts festival will work with a partnership of our ‘wee groups’ at Focus Youth Club, Langlee Youth Club and Tweedbank Youth Club to introduce film making to these young people.

YouthBorders has also collaborated with BANG as a strategic partner in the development of their Branching Out Youth Project. We have also engaged with and developed new relationships with Borders College, DYW Borders and SDS to better understand and respond to the employability needs of young people in the context of Covid-19.

YouthBorders joined the DBI Borders implementation group and are working with member groups involved in a test of change as DBI expands to 16 and 17 year olds.



Ambition 2: A membership which is connected, empowered, and represented

Strategic Representation

- YouthBorders has been confirmed as a continued member of the Children and Young People's Leadership Group and attended all 7 meetings of this strategic grouping in 2020/21. YouthBorders has been an active contributor on areas of work including: emotional health and wellbeing, advocacy, children's rights, and the reporting and planning for the Children and Young People's Services Plan 2021-23.
- YouthBorders has continued to make the case for strategic investment into community-based youth work and targeted services for young people in need of additional support. The CYPLG have committed to continuation funding to March 2022 for current third sector youth organisation commissions. This will then be reviewed as part of a wider strategic commissioning review and take cognisance of the local authority's role in the implementation of the Community Emotional and Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework from Scottish Government.
- YouthBorders continues to represent our membership within the CLD Strategic Partnership and Plan and considers the year ahead 2021/22 as being an opportunity to strengthen this relationship and recognition of the Strategic Youth Work Partnership and third sector youth work. YouthBorders has regular meetings with the CLD Youth Learning Team Leader. YouthBorders has actively contributed to the shaping of the new Strategic Plan with a particular focus on emotional health and wellbeing, employability, workforce development, and the forthcoming national youth work strategy.
- Child Poverty has been a key driver for YouthBorders and our networks work with young people whose circumstances have been further impacted by Covid-19. YouthBorders is a member of the Child Poverty Planning Group and has contributed to action planning and reporting in 2020/21 and for 2021/22.
- YouthBorders has engaged with the new Public Protection structures in the region and is a deputising member of the Child Protection Delivery Group, lead for CPDG communication to third sector youth organisations, a member of the VAWG Executive, and a member of the Child Protection Training and PPC Communications groups.
- Since May 2020, YouthBorders has been invited to join SBC and the TSI Partnership at regular meetings related to Third Sector matters.
- Nationally, YouthBorders has been an engaged member of the YouthLink Scotland Youth Work Covid-19 Recovery Group; from this role we have also become a member of the Covid-19 Youth Work Guidance writing reference group.
- YouthBorders joined Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights) in 2020 to recognise the important role of youth work as human rights work. We have added our voice to national briefings on Children's Rights.

Support for 'Wee Groups'

- A sub-section of our membership are 'wee groups' – those which operate once a week, are led by volunteers, operate in very rural communities, and groups which are just starting out/setting up.
- These groups have been most impacted by Covid-19 in their capacity and opportunity to continue youth work delivery. This has been felt acutely by those who would usually meet in community centres managed by Live Borders. There has been no community centre access for 12 months and the reopening date is now forecast as 30th August



2021. Our Development Officer and Chief Officer have continued to listen to and understand the needs of these groups and to make representation to our partners at Live Borders and Scottish Borders Council.

- Some of the 'wee groups' that meet in village or church halls have had minimal engagement with YouthBorders in the past year and have delivered minimal opportunities for young people which we fully understand because of the voluntary nature of their commitment and the impact of the pandemic on their own lives. We continue to include these volunteers in our news, updates and offer of support.
- With funding from the Scottish Government Wellbeing Fund in summer 2020 we provided funding to our volunteer led groups which covered the costs of their YouthBorders/Youth Scotland membership and insurance. We felt it important that we keep these groups in the network even if they weren't meeting young people and this funding was an opportunity mitigate this potential impact.
- Our Membership Officer has been successful in growing the network with Transform Arts CIC, Alchemy Film and Arts, and Live Learn Earn joining the network this year.

Maximising Funding Opportunities

YouthBorders this year has had the opportunity to work with strategic partners to support and secure additional investment into youth work in the Scottish Borders.

- [Cashback for Communities Youth Work Fund](#) – YouthBorders are a grant assessor on the local cashback panel, advocating for third sector and quality youth work opportunities to be invested in.
- [YouthLink Scotland / Scottish Government Social Isolation and Loneliness Funding](#) – YouthBorders were identified as a trusted partner by YouthLink Scotland to make a bid for funding which would alleviate isolation and loneliness. We worked with 2 members (BANG and Interest Link Borders) providing youth work with ASN youth, granting them each £1750 for additional youth work activity between December and March.
- [Corra Shift the Power](#) – YouthBorders were approached by Corra Foundation to be local partners in the distribution of Comic Relief Shift the Power funding. YouthBorders supported a panel of young grant makers to devise criteria, assess application, interview applicants and make recommendations for grant awards. This totalled £20k of investment into the YouthBorders network, over two rounds – 1st for mental health programme; and the 2nd for micro grants to enable youth work activities/physical activity to boost mental wellbeing.
- [Creative Scotland / SBC Creative Learning Network](#) – YouthBorders were approached by Scottish Borders Council Creative Learning Network to be partners in a bid to Creative Scotland to administer a small grants scheme to support creative practitioners to work with community groups. This totalled £42k of investment with more than £30k of this benefiting organisations and young people in the YouthBorders network; the remainder working with schools.
- [Tiny Changes](#) – YouthBorders have a growing relationship with Tiny Changes due to their focus on the Scottish Borders. This is in early stages but may include providing local insight and support to their funding programmes.

Communication

With support from Foundation Scotland's RRR funding we put in place a review of our membership communication channels and invested in training for our Business Support Officer to grow our social media presence. Activity associated with communication during



this year included:

- Re-development and design of youthborders.org.uk – giving us a fit for purpose website which includes our membership joining pathway.
- Since January 2021 we have tailored our weekly e-bulletin to our members, and in February 2021 we launched our monthly YouthBorders News.
- We reviewed our social media presence and developed our own social media style guide, joined Instagram and claimed our space on LinkedIn.
- We have offered our members the opportunity to engage in social media surgeries with Youth Scotland and Young Scot.
- We participated in a range of national and regional social media campaigns including youth work week, #NeverMoreNeeded, #IWill,
- We engaged our membership and featured our members during our “12 Days” campaign which ran over the Christmas break and in a special E-Bulletin celebrating the achievements of our network during 2020.

Case Study 2: #BordersWellbeing

#BordersWellbeing is a partnership digital campaign which supports the publication of the *Young People’s Guide to Mental Health and Wellbeing*. The campaign was delivered by a Partnership of Scottish Borders Joint Health Improvement Team (NHS Borders/Scottish Borders Council), YouthBorders, Scottish Borders Youth Voice and national partners Young Scot. The Partnership worked with 18 ‘Campaign Supporting’ organisations to widen the reach of the campaign.

The Scottish Borders Emotional Health and Wellbeing Group committed to a redeveloped the Young People’s Guide to Mental Health and Wellbeing. This was led by JHIT and supported by Quarriers, YouthBorders and the wider membership of the Emotional Health and Wellbeing Group. The digital campaign was designed to support the dissemination of the guide to young people, professionals and parent/carers.

Summary:

- Re-development of the Guide to Young People’s Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Developed young people’s health and wellbeing microsite hosted by Young Scot
- Launched six-week digital campaign based around the six ways to be well to promote the resources and engage young people through wellbeing challenges and prizes
- Strengths of the approach included partnership working, new approach to sharing mental health and wellbeing information with young people, a wide range of supporter organisations that work with young people.

Impact:

- All secondary age student has the Guide on their Inspire Learning iPad
- 20,000 social media users were reached by our campaign.
- 420 users visited the health and wellbeing microsite during the 6-week campaign
- Young Scot membership grew during the campaign



Ambition 3: A membership which is supported, confident and competent

Youth Work Workforce

Training and awareness raising activities continue to be a core element of our support to member groups to develop confidence, knowledge and skills for youth work practice. In 2020/21 we provided 26 (increase from 24 in 2019/20) training opportunities with 261 (increase from 252) practitioners attending these sessions. Training this year was in the main online, we were able to utilise additional resource to purchase training providers to deliver and enable us to provide subsidised or free training. We remain thankful for the partnership with Youth Scotland which supports our training programme. After piloting through 2020, in 2021 we committed to publishing a Training and Events calendar and all bookings now takes place using Eventbrite.

Topics of training included:

- Leadership coaching (1:1)
- Child Protection
- Gambling Education
- Gaming and Gambling
- Good Mood. Good Food. Good Health.
- Grief, Loss and Bereavement
- Introduction to Mindfulness
- Street Work
- STEM Toolkit
- Living Works – Suicide
- Consent and health relationships
- Outdoor games
- Youth Work Outdoors
- Social media/comms
- Certificated emergency first aid at work

In addition to the training which we organise and provide directly to our members, YouthBorders continues to be a recognised partner for the promotion of multi-agency training opportunities. This includes multi-agency Child Protection training at 3-levels; What's The Harm training; Alcohol and Drugs Partnership training; and Violence Against Women partnership training. We have also worked to promote e-learning opportunities with ASH Scotland, and for Borders practitioners to attend training with LAYC and Youth 1st in Fife where additional capacity has been available. This has been made possible due to online training offers brought about by Covid-19.

Our funding partnership with NHS Borders for the Health and Wellbeing Development Officer concluded in December 2020 after the first year of the project. The project delivery was significantly impacted by Covid-19. Moving forward NHS Borders have continued to fund YouthBorders for the administration and coordination of training for the network and to enable us to identify training provider capacity for health and wellbeing related topics for our network.



Case Study 3: Covid-19 Wellbeing Fund

With Covid-19 being the context of the year, we were committed to supporting the wellbeing of our workforce. Funding from the Scottish Government Wellbeing Fund enabled us to:

- Provide financial support for membership renewals and insurance to keep groups within the YouthBorders and Youth Scotland network.
- Prepare and distribute 40 Wellbeing Packs, filled with activities for young people's wellbeing, resources for youth workers, pedometers, and a Members Wellbeing Guide.
- Maintain a membership Padlet of up-to-date Covid-19 and youth work resources.
- Provide 1:1 Leadership Coaching for 10 leaders/managers within our Network.
- Provide access to high quality Mindfulness sessions for teams and individual youth workers within our network.
- Offer 1:1 Membership Support sessions on any matters related to Covid-19 and youth work guidance or practice.
- Lead a collaborative virtual walking challenge, which engaged nearly 20 youth workers from our network and partners taking part in daily and weekly step counting.

Membership Capacity Building Support

- 21 (17 in 2019/20) organisations access PVG service through YouthBorders and have administered the processing of 36 (down from 57 in 2019/20) completed PVG applications for volunteers and staff in youth work settings. PVG services via Volunteer Scotland changed on 1st March 2021 and we are updating our systems, policies and procedures accordingly.
- Building on our annual membership pack we introduced in November 2019, we went further in 2020 and produced a fully detailed pack for our network including an annual programme of training and events. This is available at our website www.youthborders.org/publications
- Significant work through 2020 has been about health & safety, covid guidance and risk assessment. YouthBorders has provided a critical role in supporting and communicating guidance with our members. Our Development Officer and Chief Officer have engaged with the YouthLink Scotland Covid-19 Youth Work Recovery Group, and our Chief Officer has been part of the Guidance Reference Group with YouthLink Scotland. We have been at the frontline of the youth work guidance and have taken our members questions and concerns directly to YouthLink and Scottish Government. Our Development Officer designed and continues to maintain a Padlet board with relevant information, YouthBorders has also produced frequent guidance briefings for our members and we use our bulletin and social media to reinforce the messaging.

Supporting Youth Work Boards

To sustain the Membership Development Officer post we have secured funding from the Eildon Community Fund (Scottish Borders Council) which commenced in November 2020. With this we have been able to plan and implement our ambition for proactive support to organisations around policy and governance. These support sessions began in January 2021 and have covered:



- Trustee recruitment, board diversity and trustee induction
- Development and implementing policies in your youth organisation.
- Child protection policies and procedures
- Volunteer recruitment and induction

Future plans for 2021 is to continue these programmes of support. Our programme is informed by need brought to us by members or through our use of trend data.

Fair Work

In autumn 2020 YouthBorders engaged in dialogue with SOSE (South of Scotland Enterprise) and in January gained investment to undertake workforce research. The Lines Between have been commissioned to carry out this research which will be concluded in June 2021. This will help us to better understand the longer-term workforce needs of individuals and employers and should inform YouthBorders as to what role we can play in meeting these needs. This area of work is organised around the principles of Fair Work. There is a specific focus on career pathways and qualification routes/barriers for youth workers. We aim to use the data to demonstrate leadership around this area and to use the CLD Strategic Partnership as the mechanism to create leverage and make strategic progress.



Case Study 4: Langlee Youth Club, Galashiels

Langlee Youth Club is an un-constituted group run by a team of passionate volunteers providing safe, inclusive and fun activities to young people aged 8-11 in the Langlee area of Galashiels. The volunteers are committed to the young people of Langlee but had limited experience of youth work and the process of applying and administering funding. With support from the Development Officer for membership, Langlee was successful in receiving CashBack funding in late 2019. The group required additional support from our Development Officer with the administration and reporting required by the funder. Through this process the membership officer was able to build a strong relationship with the group and their lead volunteer which has developed over the past year. Our Development Officer for membership has been able to support the youth club to apply and receive Covid-19 relief funding through Youth Scotland, as well as money for outdoor equipment through the Corra (Shift the Power), and more recently they have been supported to apply for the Rural Action Fund to provide outdoor activities for their young people.

This strong relationship has enabled the Development Officer to work with the group to understand the changing Covid-19 guidance for the youth work sector. As a result, the group has been able to carry out several activities throughout the year, safely in line with the guidance reaching 50 young people in the community. These activities have included a socially distanced BBQ and a Christmas treasure hunt.

In addition, the Development Officer has been able to work with the volunteers to encourage take up of training. This has included suggesting that the group engage with 'Outdoor Youth Work' as a way of gradually re-starting sessions with their young people as Covid19 restrictions ease. As a result, despite a lack of capacity due to their own childcare commitments, the volunteer team have developed their skills over the past year and are ready to welcome the young people back with new ideas and ways of working.

The positive working relationship with the lead volunteer as enabled our Development Officer to support the group to take up opportunities within the network and work with other members. This has included food and cookery, developing an outdoor youth work project, and engaging with plans for film making sessions. Overall, the strong relationship with YouthBorders has enabled Langlee Youth Club to become more resilient as an organisation. Resilient in terms of financial stability going forward, skills developed, being supported by a network, confidence, and their ability to react, and adapt to changes. This resilience ultimately puts them in the best position to offer quality youth work for the young people they support.



Organisational Changes and Development

Covid-19 and Virtual Office

YouthBorders moved to home-based working in March 2020 and over this year have made a number of changes to support our staff to be able to continue to deliver capacity building support to the sector. This includes online networks, events and training and through proactive communication through our e-bulletin, new website, and social media channels. On 1st April 2021 we officially became a 'virtual office' for the medium to long term and have changed our registered address, employee terms of employment etc. We have introduced new policies, risk assessments, and provided staff with additional equipment to support them in their work from home.

Board of Trustees

Our Board of Trustees have met 6-weekly during 2020/21 to provide sound governance to YouthBorders. We were joined by a new Member Trustee, Susan Law during 2020; Allyson McCollam joined us at our AGM as a co-opted Trustee. In autumn 2020 we co-opted Frances Mullan as our Trustee Treasurer. During the first few months of 2021 we have been recruiting for a new Chairperson to succeed our current Chair who is standing down after 6 years of service in June 2021.

Fundraising and Local Supporters

Our work this year has been possible due to the financial investment from a range of key funding partners including: Scottish Borders Council, NHS Borders, YouthLink Scotland, Corra Foundation and The Hunter Foundation administering Scottish Government Wellbeing Funding, The Gannochy Trust, The Fore, The National Lottery Community Fund, Foundation Scotland and SOSE.

In addition to our grant funders and strategic funding partners, YouthBorders engaged in community-based fundraising and support. Our staff team took part in the Virtual Kiltwalk in September 2020, with their efforts matched by the Hunter Foundation raising £1670. In November 2020 we were selected as a local community cause by the Co-Op. We are registered with AmazonSmile which makes small but regular donations.

Our trustees engaged with local businesses and supporters and we are grateful to the financial contribution from the Westerleigh Group (Borders Crematorium), Stobo Castle Health Spa, Buccleuch Charitable Trust, and the Mainhouse Trust.

Quality Frameworks

- During 2020/21, YouthBorders became an Awards Aware organisation, recognising our commitment to young people's achievement and learning through non-formal routes and qualifications.
- We invested in our organisational IT infrastructure and security and achieved Cyber Essential accreditation in early 2021.
- Covid-19 impacted on our time scale to re-accredit our Investors in Young People status, but this work will commence in May 2021.



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

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