



YouthBorders: Step into Spring



Background and Acknowledgements

Youth work is an informal educational process, which deepens young people's understanding of self, community and the world around them, whilst supporting them to bring about positive change.

“I’ve made a bag and I’ve learned to feel more comfortable around people again.” [Young person]

“The children/young people have had an amazing time, formed relationships, made friends and created memories.”
[Project staff member]

About YouthBorders

YouthBorders is the network of more than 40 voluntary and community-based youth organisations in the Scottish Borders supporting and promote good quality youth work, with a vision of a 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. Working as a network, YouthBorders aims to improve outcomes for young people, enabling them to reach their fullest potential through quality youth work experiences.

“[name] has felt really proud that she has fitted in, she hasn’t felt alone or down like she can at school.”
[Parent/carer]

The purpose of Step into Spring was to provide community-based targeted youth work during the school Easter holidays (2nd to 17th April 2022).

Working to a service level agreement with Scottish Borders Council (SBC), YouthBorders managed the administration of funding enabling new interventions targeted at children and young people from particular priority groups.

Step into Spring outcomes:

- Young people are confident, resilient, and optimistic for the future
- Young people participate safely and effectively in groups
- Young people broaden their perspectives through new experiences

Twelve delivery partner organisations were offered funding to provide Step into Spring activities which included arts, sports and physical activities and outdoor learning experiences. The twelve delivery partners were At Birkhill House CIC, Beyond Earlstoun, Eat Sleep Ride CIC, Escape Youth Services, The Learning Space, Nature Unlimited, One Step Borders, Rowland’s Selkirk, School’s Out Peebles, Stable Life, TD1 Youth Hub and Tweeddale Youth Action.

This report was authored by The Lines Between – a social research agency with expertise in accessible and engaging research and evaluation activity.

Thanks to At Birkhill House CIC, School’s Out Peebles and Stable Life for providing some of the images used in this report.



Priority Groups

Activities were targeted at certain priority groups of young people, including those from particular geographical areas:

- those living remotely
- those living within SIMD1 and 2 areas or SBC Covid-19 Index Red areas
- young carers
- children and young people with a disability or additional support need
- young people from minority ethnic families
- care experienced young people
- LGBT+ young people
- home-schooled children young people
- Gypsy Traveller children and young people

“All 20 were viewed as most impacted by Covid due to family circumstances/ bereavement/ employment loss. 6 children were from low income areas. 6 children have ADHD diagnosis. All 20 live in rural areas.”
[Project staff member]



Format and Funding

Step into Spring was financed by Scottish Borders Council – the fund was administered by YouthBorders on behalf of its membership. All organisations participating as the programme’s delivery partners were paid a fixed day or half day rate, inclusive of staffing costs, food, insurance, management, and other overheads.

There was also scope for additional enhancement funding to cover transport, activities and experiences. In total, £32806.50 was expended on youth work activities.

Most delivery partners, delivered on budget but a small number reported that transport costs were higher than anticipated putting planned activities over budget. Funding from the local authority to YouthBorders enabled the efficient financial administration of the fund with due diligence checks in place; and for the programme’s external evaluation.

“This was a great opportunity to be able to offer holiday activities to some of the young people we support and who would normally not be able to attend such activities due to various barriers – i.e. cost, travel issues etc. The young people thoroughly enjoyed the activities and the social aspect of participating.”
[Project staff member]

Facts and Figures

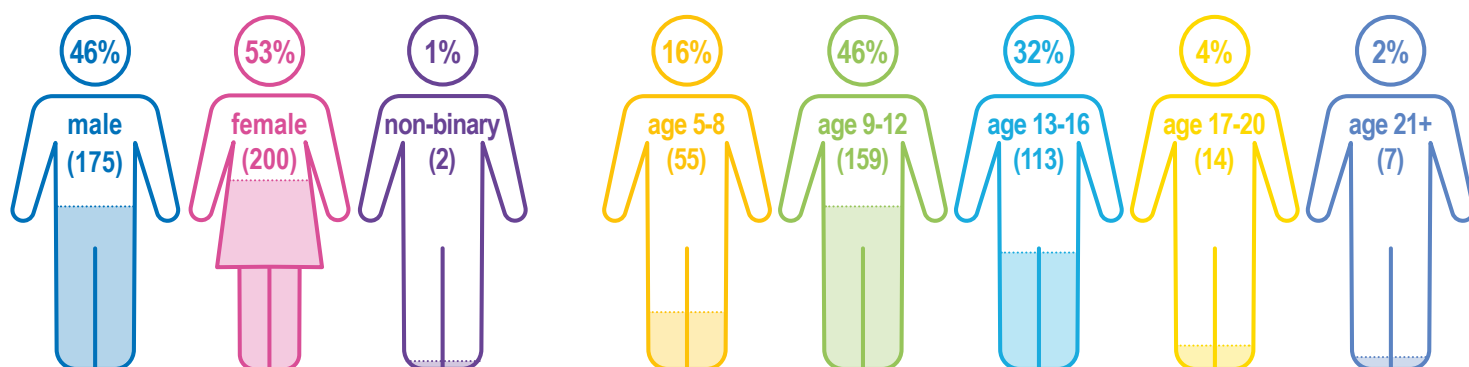
The organisations involved in Step into Spring were At Birkhill House CIC, Beyond Earlston, Eat Sleep Ride CIC, Escape Youth Services, The Learning Space, Nature Unlimited, One Step Borders, Rowland's Selkirk, School's Out Peebles, Stable Life, TD1 Youth Hub and Tweeddale Youth Action.

Number of Sessions:



“The funding plays a vital role in being able to provide activities to our young people and low or no cost at all. With the increasing impact of Covid 19, families are reluctant to provide children with wants as their NEEDS take priority. But in this current generation the wants are interlinked with needs for mental and emotional development and growth. Without this funding our programme wouldn't have been able to be free to some of the individuals who require this the most.”
[Project staff member]

Places and Profile: 571 places were taken up by 377 different young people



Only some* of the 12 projects were able to record information about the priority groups status of young people. From the records completed it was known that of the children and young people taking part in Step into Spring:

167
live in remote or remote rural communities
(from 7 projects)*

70
have a disability or additional support need
(from 8 projects)*

61
are those most impacted by COVID
(from 7 projects)*

34
live within an area of SIMD 1 or 2
(from 8 projects)*

19
are LGBT+
(from 8 projects)*

12
are home-schooled
(from 8 projects)*

21
are from minority ethnic families
(from 10 projects)*

17
are young carers
(from 10 projects)*

61
live within one of the Council Covid-19 Index Red Areas
(from 7 projects)*

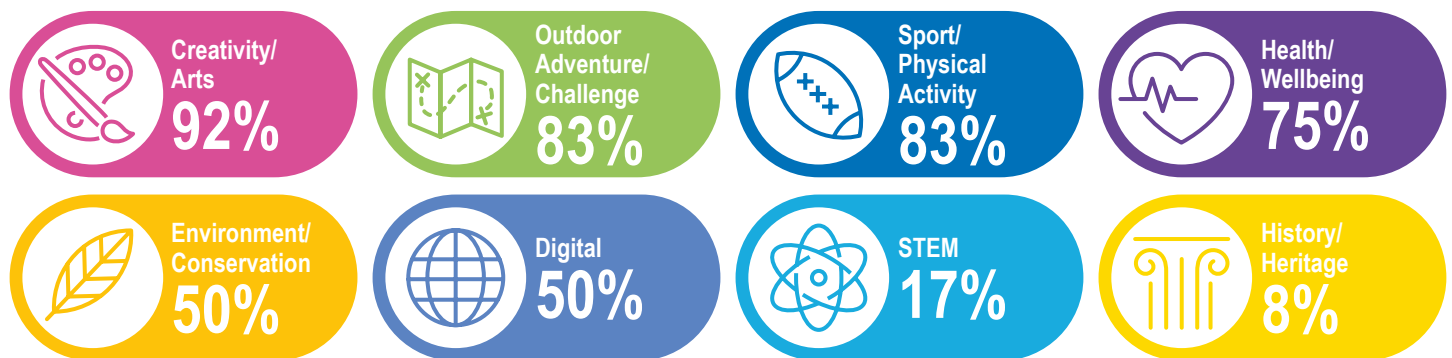
27
are care experienced young people
(from 9 projects)*

0
are known to be from Gypsy traveller families
(from 7 projects)*



Activities Provided

Step into Spring supported a diverse range of activities across the 12 delivery partner projects.



“It is a huge thing for the young people to have days out like this mainly because of the cost but also the lack of confidence. They miss out on so much by not attending school so it means so much. They are memories that last a lifetime.” [Project staff member]

“The young people groomed a pony, tacked it up, had a riding lesson/hack and untacked the pony. They then had lunch and a craft activity in our log cabin which involved painting/decorating a horseshoe or Easter Egg.” [Project staff member]

“The activities took place in Peebles Community Centre from 8-6pm daily. We were out in the local area everyday visiting parks, sports pitches and forests. We went on 4 day trips to a farm, gymnastics centre, Harestanes Adventure Park and Almond Valley Heritage Centre. We baked, painted, planted, played, sang, danced and played on digital devices – using a child-centred free play approach.” [Project staff member]

“One of our young people hadn’t been out of their home town in a couple of years, one had never been to Edinburgh, another always wanted to climb a hill. The chance for them to shine in different skills was invaluable.” [Project staff member]

“Our LAAC and Young Carers group visited the Glasgow Science Centre – a chance to explore STEM activities.” [Project staff member]

“The group got the train up to Edinburgh and were given a budget about what they could do and see whilst up there. They decided they wanted to the Edinburgh Dungeon and they booked and organised it themselves... they went around Edinburgh exploring, treating themselves to some food.” [Project staff member]



Experience and Impact

Evaluation took place through young people completing simple survey forms which were available online and as hard copies at the projects they were attending.

159 returns were received from 132 children and young people, and 27 from parents/carers on behalf of a young person.

Feelings and experiences reported by young people taking part in Step into Spring activities:

100%
felt supported to
take part
(84% a lot, 16% a little)

99%
felt safe
(86% a lot, 13% a little)

92%
had learned
something new
(74% a lot, 18% a little)

79%
had gone to new places
(60% a lot, 19% a little)

100%
felt able to take part in
everything they wanted to
(86% a lot, 14% a little)

91%
had tried new things they
hadn't done before
(69% a lot, 22% a little)

76%
had learned something new
about themselves
(47% a lot, 29% a little)

“Our young people are very nervous and struggle in new environments but we had the money to employ two support specialist practitioners and it was an absolute success.”
[Project staff member]

“My daughter has Dyslexia and has a Language Disorder so is very shy and keeps herself very alone. She has really benefited from being around other children and the leaders at the group have been amazing with her.” [Parent carer]

Changes reported by young people as a result of Step into Spring activities:

99%
would like to try other
new things
(81% a lot, 18% a little)

97%
had done something
they were proud of
(74% a lot, 23% a little)

97%
felt good about
themselves
(68% a lot, 29% a little)

94%
felt more confident
(62% a lot, 32% a little)



Step into Spring Outcome 1:

Young people are confident, resilient, and optimistic for the future.

Mags Powell, CEO at Stable Life describes their Step into Spring sessions and the impact on how young people feel about themselves.

“Stable Life is a charity that supports young people who have been referred for behaviour or social issues, and we use the horse as a tool to engage with young people and help build confidence, resilience, life skills, a whole raft of different things – a lot around mental health and wellbeing.”

“The sessions that we did for Step into Spring were Pony Care sessions – these consisted of young people coming in, they would spend some time grooming the pony and then we would take them for a riding lesson, and then they have to untack their pony and give the pony some feed. We would then have an arts and craft session in our log cabin and lunch.”

“When you’re riding a pony, it builds your confidence – it changes your whole demeanour. You can’t sit slouched on a pony. You have to sit up straight – so straight away that makes you feel boosted in your confidence. And the fact that they’re able to trot around and be in charge of the pony in the group gives them a sense of achievement. Moving forward with that, if they’ve got a bit of motivation from doing this, then they could come in and do lessons again, depending on their situation. It’s a chance to try something different, which might encourage them to go on and try something else.”

“The feedback we got was that they were feeling a wee bit more confident because they felt they had done a proper riding lesson. They felt more happy within themselves and more motivated, just from having fun.”



“I was worried I wouldn’t know anyone or how to do anything, but everyone was really nice and helpful. I felt part of a team and I wanted to stay longer.” [Young person]



Step into Spring Outcome 2:

Young people participate safely and effectively in groups.

School's Out Peebles offers out of school childcare provision to children aged 5-14 years. Clare Swann from the social enterprise said:

“Our programme of activities was for young people who were struggling for a number of reasons. Those attending fitted in perfectly with the previously established ‘School's Out’ group. They made friends, participated in all activities and were consulted and involved in every aspect of the programme. By the end of the fortnight, everyone was working together from schools throughout Tweeddale and they had created fond memories of Easter 2022. In particular, one young person with additional support needs had never taken part in a holiday club before. Trips to parks, farms and soft play were a first and she was thrilled to be taking part. At the beginning of the programme she was feeling nervous, unsure and anxious but by the end, she had made friends, had come out of her shell and was participating fully. Her smiles and squeals of excitement at the adventure farm were a sight to behold!”

Young people who experience barriers and challenges are supported by the charity The Learning Space. Gemma Robertson described their activities:

“We took small groups of young people, no more than three per trip as we needed to make sure the young people felt comfortable with each other. They did ever so well on our trips – they are some of the most vulnerable young people in our area so it took a lot. The boat and bird watching was a huge hit – it tapped into a number of our young people's interests and we practised photography skills. The Northumberland Country Zoo inspired our group to work with animals and look after the environment more. Two young people who went on the Edinburgh trip have both had eating disorders – they had pizza together which was a lovely positive experience.”



“I learned that it's good to help others. I helped a friend when making the pizzas.” [Young person]



Step into Spring Outcome 3:

Young people broaden their perspectives through new experiences.

Jan Barr, Project Co-ordinator at Nature Unlimited describes how children and young people start to see things differently through their Step into Spring sessions.

“Our main focus is allowing children to play like they did when we were kids. We had freedom to roam and to take risks, make mistakes, learn social skills, without adult intervention. Kids rarely get the opportunity to do that anymore – they sit on their screens and when they do any kind of activity, it’s always supervised and directed. We have activities going on in the sessions, such as natural art or woodland games, but as much as possible, we give children the freedom to make their own choices and take responsibility – so it’s more about how we do things rather than what we do. Every session is different, depending on participants’ interests and on the opportunities afforded by the site (we used five different woodlands, across the Borders, during Step into Spring.”

“Just realising that on their doorstep there’s loads of fun to be had and they get to use their imagination. A stick can be a fishing rod, a magic wand, whatever – nature provides those opportunities just to get creative in any way they want to do – sometimes they do reflect video games that they’re playing, and they do that outdoors.”

“You get kids who are very, very shy at the beginning and then they make friends, especially with a mixed age group. Some of the older ones might take responsibility for the younger ones and that’s kind of a way for them to build their own confidence. Maybe they don’t get on with their peers that well or they’re very very shy with their peers. But when it comes to younger kids they do seem more comfortable, and it does give them confidence.”



“The opportunity to go to a place I would normally find too difficult to go to... To go on the visit with another young person as I very rarely talk or meet with other young people.” [Young person]



Young People's Voices

Enjoyment:

Young people described what they had enjoyed most about taking part in Step into Spring activities. The most common themes were specific named activities (from bonfires to horse riding to bowling), creative activities, visits to new places, spending time with people, getting out and having fun.

- “Cooking on the fire and playing chaos tig and hide and seek.”
- “I liked being able to ride a horse with people supporting me.”
- “Bowling was great – I got a strike and it was my first strike!”
- “The speed of the boat. I want to own a boat one day.”
- “Toasting marshmallows and being with friends.”
- “Making charcoal and making all the things that day.”
- “[name] loved the horse riding. For the first time in a long time I've seen her smile and laugh. I'm gutted that it has come to an end as I found it really helped her in a lot of ways. I honestly think this is a great thing for kids that just need some help with stuff. Would be nice to see this continue to help more kids.” [Parent/carer comment]
- “Without the funding I wouldn't have been able to send my two girls to this. They would have been stuck at home with my eldest daughter looking after them who is studying for exams. This has really given my children memories and experiences that they wouldn't have had.” [Parent/carer comment]

Achieving and learning:

Young people described things that they had made or learned during Step into Spring activities. The responses ranged from arts and crafts, to physical activities, cooking skills and facts they had learned from visits to places of interest.

- “Made a pizza which taught me how to cook.”
- “Learning how to properly land a front flip.”
- “How to make bowls out of paper.”
- “I learned about taking photographs of animals and sea birds.”
- “I loved seeing bits of meteorite that had landed in people's houses – it was on display.”
- “How to make a cast of a print of a wild animal.”
- “How to ask for help, how to work as part of a team. To try things even when I am scared.”
- “I took photographs while out and then used the photographs as reference to paint a picture.”
- “[names] met new friends, they have gained confidence and it has encouraged their social skills.” [Parent/carer comment]
- “I learnt about the horses and caring for them. I learnt how to throw and catch a ball better.”



Project Voices

Benefits and Learning

Projects highlighted how important Step into Spring had been for the young people involved.

“Step into Spring has been hugely successful and we have seen some great outcomes from our young people taking part.”
[Project staff member]

“These trips provided experiences for our young people they would not normally have been able to access. It promoted much needed social interaction and formation of links between them as well as with our volunteers. Actions from this are to link up volunteers with young people, develop an arts and crafts group of our own, expand on the confidence built up by trying new activities.” [Project staff member]

Staff also identified some of the practical issues they faced in organising and running activities, and some of the situations they encountered in different households.

“Connecting with parents digitally is an issue.”

“Children dressed in pyjamas at pick up because families couldn’t afford heating.”

“Families who were working but couldn’t afford to take time off over the holidays.”

“We have taken away a rather large piece of learning – delivering a week of activity immediately after a week’s holiday doesn’t work!... We’ve taken this on board for our summer programme planning – holiday at the end!”

“Transport and fuel costs are such a challenge – community transport is unaffordable and inaccessible for young people.”

“Many young people do not attend school and find activities during holidays busy and intimidating – the dates should not be restricted to school holidays.”

Projects also described adapting their programme of activities because of individual needs, group preferences or practical issues including Covid cancellations and poor weather.

“One young home-schooled young person attended once and found it was too much – sensory playing with other children – we had to adapt and arrange 1 to 1 sessions.”

“Due to capacity we were able to offer our service to double the young people we initially thought.”

“Changes to the programme were made as they were requested by the young people wanting to take part.”

The experience of taking part in Step into Spring and the way the programme had been administered was described positively by all of the projects that had taken part.

“YouthBorders are immensely helpful, they are so flexible and supportive.”

“Excellent support and guidance from YouthBorders, quick and easy administration of grant.”



Summary

Step into Spring has been very well received by children and young people, and by the projects delivering the activities. Projects have had an easy-to-access source of funding which has enabled them to provide much-needed supported activities for children and young people, many of whom were in priority groups and have experienced disadvantage or isolation in recent times. The vast majority of young people taking part have experienced a very positive participatory experience, and believe they have increased in confidence and willingness to try new things.

“The children/young people have had an amazing time, formed relationships, made friends and created memories.” [Project staff member]

“I got out of the house and tried new things.” [Young person]

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