



Stepping Stones Year 4 Annual Impact Report



Background

What is Stepping Stones?

Stepping Stones, funded by The National Lottery Community Fund, is a partnership youth work project that supports young people aged 10-18 in the Scottish Borders, with the aim of improving their emotional health and wellbeing, and life chances.

Project Workers support young people based on their personal needs, helping them to achieve their full potential and develop skills through non-formal education activities within a universal youth work setting. Stepping Stones is not time limited, allowing each young person to engage for as long as they need. Focused support with young people includes the setting and reviewing of personal goals which inform the four projects impacts:

1. **To improve young people's emotional health and wellbeing, leading to greater resilience, increased confidence, higher levels of self-esteem and greater capacity to cope with life's challenges.**
2. **To increase participation and engagement of young people, who have been identified by ourselves and through partners as the most vulnerable and disengaged, in their communities where they live, learn and play.**
3. **To better equip young people to deal with risky behaviours which impact on their future life chances e.g. drugs, alcohol and sexual health.**
4. **To improve targeted services and activities through greater collaboration with new and existing partners.**

The project, coordinated by YouthBorders, is delivered by a partnership of seven locality youth work organisations from across the region. The delivery partners are; Beyond Earlston, Cheviot Youth, Rowlands, Escape Youth Services, Connect Berwickshire Youth Project, TD1 Youth Hub and Tweeddale Youth Action.

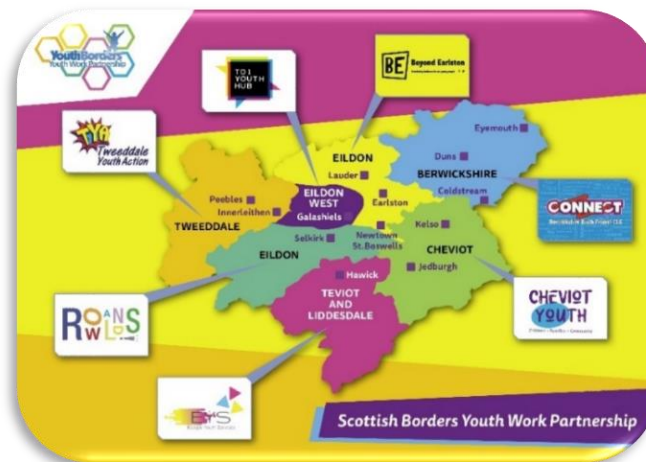


Figure 1: Scottish Borders Youth Work Partnership Locality Map.

This Stepping Stones annual impact report is prepared for The National Lottery Community Fund (NLCF). This report includes a summary of main achievements, details on who took part, how we have built on people's strengths, connections with other organisations, the difference we are making, finance, risk and learning and next steps for year five. **All names and identifiers have been changed in case-studies and quotes to anonymise the participants and beneficiaries.**

Summary of Main Achievements from Year 4



- Since starting Stepping Stones, 73% of young people agreed that their emotional health and wellbeing has improved; 67% agreed that they participate more, and feel more engaged in their community; 75% agreed that they are more aware of potential risks and 77% of young people agreed that Stepping Stones has helped them.

Project Team

- Stepping Stones Project Team have continued to meet up virtually every 6 weeks, to share staff updates, tools and resources and to discuss any challenges or barriers as a team. One-to-one meetings have also taken place between the Project Coordinator and Project Workers.
- Youth Work Managers developed and discussed their Stepping Stones Delivery Plans for year four 2021-2022. Project Coordinator submitted final plans to TNLCF in April 2022.
- A new Workforce Development Fund, up to £250 from the central budget, was available for each Project Worker for personal development opportunities including training and resources.
- TD1 Youth Hub were able to appoint a new Stepping Stones Project Worker in September 2021.

Governance

- The Written Agreement was implemented from 1st September 2021, with the intention to strengthen the Youth Work Partnership by clearly laying out expectations, roles and responsibilities associated with the delivery of Stepping Stones. We will continue in our commitment to develop and improve the project with the shared intention of achieving impact.
- Database review questions were revised to simplify the wording and remove any repetitive questions. Youth Work Managers and YouthBorders Board of Trustees accepted this proposal and changes were made to each database profile on 1st July 2022.
- Youth Work Managers continue to meet fortnightly, creating a regular opportunity to share and discuss Stepping Stones delivery.

Communication

- Stepping Stones Facebook page was set up in September 2021 to welcome year four and raise the profile of Stepping Stones, including sharing of impact. Stepping Stones information and contact details were also presented on each locality website.
- YouthBorders commissioned Ogilvie Design to create a short animation video for Stepping Stones. A group of Stepping Stones young people from Escape, Rowlands and Beyond Earlston joined together from across the Scottish Borders to develop the Stepping Stones animation movie. This movie has been used to raise the profile of the project.

Who took part?

- In total, **109 young people received support** in year four of Stepping Stones, a slight reduction from 114 young people in year three. There were **62 new young people** who joined Stepping Stones and **62 young people completed** the project in year four. Moreover, **59 young people are expected to continue** into year five of the project (see table 1). Table 2 shows the breakdown for each quarter in year 4.
- Out of the 109 young people who were supported, **53 were male** and **56 were female**.
- Alongside the 7 part-time Project Workers, **26 volunteers** have been directly involved in the project.

Table 1: The number of young people from each youth organisation who have joined, received support, completed the project in year 4 and the number of young people expected to continue into year 5.

	TD1	Connect ¹	Rowlands	Earlston	Escape	TYA	Cheviot	Total
Joined	14	2	10	14	9	4	9	62
Supported	19	6	12	28	19	7	18	109
Completed	11	4	7	13	8	5	14	62
Continuing	10	6	6	12	12	6	7	59

Table 2: The number of young people who joined, were supported and completed the project each quarter in year 4.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Joined	38	11	8	9	62
Supported	75	68	58	52	109
Completed	23	12	9	18	62

Table 3 shows the eligibility criteria for participating in Stepping Stones and how many young people fall into each participating reason – each young person may be eligible for more than one reason. These are selected jointly by the young person and the Project Worker. The most frequent reason for participating in the project were having a **lack in confidence** (72 out of 109 young people). The second and third reasons were; additional support or behavioural needs, and disengaged. These participation reasons are consistent with year three data.

Table 3: The number of supported young people who fall under each participation reason in year four.

Participation Reason	No. of young people
1. Lack Confidence	72
2. Additional Support or Behavioural Needs	57
3. Disengaged	42
4. Underachieving	40
5. Risk Taking Behaviour	37
6. Disability or Mental Health Issue	35
7. Deprived Area	33
8. Low or Non Attendance	32
9. Identity Issues	10

¹ Connect Berwickshire's Project Worker left post in December 2021, which has resulted in a gap in reporting. The organisation also had a period without a Youth Work Manager. This is now resolved and the new manager is actively working with YouthBorders and other partners to relaunch Stepping Stones within the Berwickshire community.

How have we built on people's strengths?

One-to-One Sessions

Throughout year four, Project Workers have provided **1201 one-to-one sessions**, supporting Stepping Stones young people, an increase from 961 in year three. These sessions have been key to building rapport with the young people, identifying areas for support and monitor their journeys throughout their time on the project. Project Workers provide a safe and welcoming environment where everyone is respected, valued and listened to without judgement. Feedback was captured from young people through Reviews and Personal Planning:

I love having a trusted adult to talk to, that was one of the problems when I moved out of foster care, so this means a lot.

I have found someone I can trust now, you've helped me with contacting other people that can help me too.

I have been trying out the things you said could help me feel more confident around others, and some have really helped.

I can have fun and talk about serious stuff the same time.

[Worker] is always listening and that is important to me. I often don't need someone to lecture me just someone who listens and judge me.

I feel I have a person I can talk to even if it is embarrassing.

Group Work Sessions and Activities

Project Workers provided a total of **157 group sessions and drop-in's** for young people this year. These sessions were a mixture of small focused Stepping Stones young people, and opportunities to integrate into wider groups that the organisation provides. Below is a summary of group activities from year 4:

- Wellbeing advice, support and guidance sessions through girls and boys only groups. This allowed young people to have a safe place to discuss any worries or taboo subjects that they may not talk about with others.
- Arts and crafts including a Summer Weaving Programme At Birkill House, activities with Transform Arts CIC and Make, Do and Mend group.
- Baking and cooking including experience with FoodPunks.
- Sports and physical activities such as football, running, boxing, golf, fishing, gardening, walking and a girls only exercise class.
- Young people were also involved in Halloween, Christmas, Easter and Summer programme planning and activities which involved trips to the cinema, pantomime, Ryze, Edinburgh zoo and go-karting. Stepping Stones young people attended these trips alongside other peers, strengthening friendships and were made to feel very much part of the wider organisation.
- Some young people also built confidence to attend weekly drop-in sessions within the universal youth work offer after the holiday programmes.

“I attended the holiday activity sessions as well as group work, which means I've felt like I'm part of something” – young person.

“He is showing a huge change in confidence as the last few years, we have been nagging him to join us on trips and now he is jumping on everything he can” – project worker.

Joint Activity

In total, there were **12 joint activities** in year four. Joint activities include those with two or more Stepping Stones localities joining together, or one Stepping Stones locality and any other group of young people from another organisation. Some joint activity highlights are presented below.

Kinetic Art: As part of the October Holiday Programme, young people from Tweeddale Youth Action joined up with Beyond Earlston for a joint event with Transform Arts CIC in Peebles. The young people enjoyed the variety of kinetic art activities and a BBQ by FoodPunks.

Integrated Youth Café: Young people from Borders Additional Needs Group (BANG) joined Rowlands and Beyond Earlston for four joint sessions on arts and crafts and film making with Alchemy. This group was great for building confidence and sharing opinions together. *“It’s given me opportunities to mix with others and feel part of something and also talk to someone that I can trust” – young person.*

BANG Film Premiere: In April 2021, young people from Rowlands and Beyond Earlston attended the BANG film premiere event. The event celebrated the Autism film premiere, ‘Autism: My superpower and Me’. This film was created, directed and produced by autistic young people and funded by Shared Care Scotland. The event itself was brilliant and young people got involved by taking pictures and speaking to the BANG members afterwards. *“The film was really good, I really enjoyed it and I’m excited for BANG to come back to Rowlands” – young person.*

Inclusive Youth Work - Christmas Event: BANG, Beyond Earlston and Rowlands also joined together for a Christmas event at Geek Retreat in Galashiels. Young people played board games together, got involved in some group discussions, exchanged Christmas cards and enjoyed some good food. This joint experience with BANG was a great opportunity for young people to work with young people who have additional needs.

Stepping Stones Animation Video: A group of Stepping Stones young people from Escape, Rowlands and Beyond Earlston joined together to create a Stepping Stones animation movie. This movie was created by young people to promote and communicate Stepping Stones to a wider audience including young people, parents/carers and strategic partners. Young people worked together as a team to help structure the script, practice and record the audio and then sketch the drawings to direct the animation. Ogilvie Design then brought young people’s words and ideas to life using hand drawn digital animation to create the movie. It’s fantastic to see young people try something new, move out their comfort zones and interact well with other young people from across the Scottish Borders. *“That was fun. I liked being part of something important” – young person.*

The Stepping Stone Animation Movie is available on YouthBorders website and can also be viewed by clicking this link: [Stepping Stones - YouTube](#)

Summer Beach and BBQ Trip: Young people from Escape, Tweeddale Youth Action, Beyond Earlston and Rowlands joined together for an afternoon in the sun at Eyemouth beach. Young people from different localities were in charge of organising an activity for the whole group to take part in including stone painting, ball games and a scavenger hunt. It was brilliant to hear how much young people enjoyed the experience and appreciated the opportunity to join up with other young people from across the Borders. *“I don’t know how many, but I’ve met loads of new friends” – young person.*

“Just to let you know, [young person] very much enjoyed yesterday. She wouldn’t stop talking about it when she came home. That you for taking her” – parent.

“It was brilliant! We had a busy programme of activity and some big spend at various attractions but this beach day was the favourite for these guys by a mile!” - youth work manager.

Young People's Development

Below is a list of volunteering and learning opportunities Stepping Stones young people participated in during year 4:

Young People's Development	
<p>Volunteering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drop-in sessions, dancing group, arts and crafts, local café, abundant Borders, Stable Life, gardening group, radio group, cooking sessions, primary 7 transition groups and Girl Guiding. <p>Work Experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Various work placements and experiences Mentoring workshop with Youth Scotland and Place2Bee Christmas market sale / tombola – selling tickets, talking to customers and raising funds for the youth group Money handling at tuck shop 	<p>Learning and Training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 21 Youth Awards including Dynamic Youth Awards, Hi5 Awards and Saltire Awards. Police Scotland training course Camera training Driving theory course No One Left Behind (NOLB) training Stage 3 Retail training via Skills Development Scotland CV writing, applying for college courses and jobs and interview practice Over-night Big Ideas Weekend in Stirling Planning and taking part in holiday programmes on trips and activities The Big 6 programme

“I have signed up to volunteer on my own, and now part of NOLB1, so more volunteering starting there and the gym which should help me meet more people” – young person.

Staff Development

Staff continues to attend and suggest training for their own personal development as well as learn skills to better support their young people. Below is a list of learning opportunities Stepping Stones Project Workers received in year 4:

Staff Development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional Development Award Understanding and Managing Behaviour Place2Be Mental Health Champion Foundation Programme Child Protection Awareness Understanding Autism Awareness Bereaved Through Substance The Promise Kooth The Feel Good Activity Kit Children Scotland Three Sisters consultancy Antibullying Alliance BANG Inclusive communication Fortnightly counselling sessions Getting to Grips with Evaluation Writing GLOW substance use Nurture Principle 5 Respect Me Anti Bullying Diabetes Epilepsy Neglect Toolkit Gambling First Aid Training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Penumbra-Y: Roc Scottish Drug Forum SQA Level 1 Netball Coaching Arts in therapy – Health in Mind Scotland's Mental Health First Aid B-eat Eating Disorders Training C-Card workshop Introducing British Sign Language Sand play intervention Attachment and ACE training Cedar facilitator training Distressed not difficult: Recognise and communicate with traumatised children Emotional Freedom Therapy Trauma informed schools & community practitioner Understanding & Supporting Children & Young People Impacted By Trauma Case Studies through the lens of Trauma Training Under Pressure SFT Essential Solution Focused Therapy APT Accreditation Level 2 Anna Freud - Trust a million and me Project Management – Open University

Connections with other organisations

A benefit of working as a partnership includes the collaboration between a range of external partners. Networking and building on existing and new relationships with partner agencies and other support services has not only been valuable in gathering and maintaining a good support circle for young people and their families but has also raised the community profile of Stepping Stones, provide new opportunities of engagement for our young people. This year Stepping Stones worked with **at least 34 partners** across the region. These partners include: statutory services including primary and secondary schools, Colleges, CAMHS, CLD and Scottish Borders CHIMES Service; arts organisations e.g. Transform Arts CIC and At Birkhill House CIC; and specialist third sector organisations such as Peebles CAN, Stable Life and BANG. Below is the full list of partners we worked with during year 4.

Stepping Stones Partners	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents / Carers / Guardians • Guidance Teachers / School Staff / Nurse • Skills Development Scotland (SDS) • No One Left Behind (NOLB) • Community Learning and Development • CAMHS • Social work • Scottish Borders CHIMES Service • Live Borders Active Schools Coordinator • Developing the Young Workforce School Coordinators • Quarriers Resilience for Wellbeing • Spectrum - Outreach • We are With You • Penumbra • Children 1st • Relate • Abundant Borders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aberlour Sustain • Borders Additional Needs Group (BANG) • Rape crisis • Consultant sick kids • Peebles CAN • At Birkhill House CIC • Transform Arts CIC • Alchemy Film and Arts • Born in Scotland • Eat, Sleep, Ride • Stable Life • RUTS • Youth Action Scotland – The Big 6 • Volunteer Centre Borders • Newbattle Abbey College • Church of Earlston • Burnfoot Community Hub

What difference are we making?

Project Workers support young people to complete evaluation questions to monitor and track their progress. Project Workers can compare the young person's results at an individual level. Young people answer these questions at baseline and subsequent follow-ups every 10-12 weeks. Below are the results from quarter 4 (June – August 2022). A total of 51 young people completed the questions.

Outcome 1: Since starting Stepping Stones, **73% of young people agreed that their emotional health and wellbeing has improved.**

I'm coping better in new situations because my confidence is starting to increase.

Mum says I cope a lot better and seeing [project worker] calmed me a lot.

Outcome 2: Since starting Stepping Stones, **67% of young people agreed that they participate more, and feel more engaged in their community.**

[Young person] signed up for every possible activity and his feedback is positive and enthusiastic.

I took part in activities I never thought I would ever attend.

Outcome 3: Since starting Stepping Stones, **75% of young people agreed that they are more aware of potential risks** and think about the consequences before making decisions.

I sometimes do risky things even I know I shouldn't but I can reflect and take responsibility for my actions.

I'm a wee bit more risk aware... think things through a little bit more.

I'm making positive choices in life - like giving up smoking, accepting encouragement and advice.

Outcome 4: Since starting Stepping Stones, **77% of young people agreed that Stepping Stones has helped them.**

I've had it tough lately and had a lot to deal with personally but I believe in myself more now, and with help I've been able to make decisions so that my future looks brighter.

Stepping Stones gave him confidence and a safe space when our family fell apart.

You have totally helped me make decisions for the better, make plans, and get other help from other organisations too, and I know without that I wouldn't be going to college and applying for jobs. You've been a good guide, safe to talk to and never judged, and I can't thank you enough, because I genuinely feel like I've got a chance and a future now.

I feel calmer and try to solve difficult situations without lashing out. My relationship to my brother improved and I made friends. I felt quite lonely especially after my parents separated but I feel better about it and enjoy life.

Evaluation Survey

In December 2021, we asked our Stepping Stones young people to reflect on their overall experience and impact from involvement in Stepping Stones. This survey was for young people who are currently, or have previously been supported through Stepping Stones. We will continue to meet the needs of Stepping Stones young people and adapt what we are doing accordingly to ensure we provide opportunities where young people are confident, resilient and optimistic for the future.

- ✓ **90%** of young people agree that they know where to go to get access to trusted information to make informed choices and decisions.
- ✓ **84%** of young people agree that their confidence has increased since being involved in Stepping Stones.
- ✓ **87%** of young people agree that they can use their skills and experiences to better cope when things in life are difficult or challenging.
- ✓ **81%** of young people agree that their self-esteem has increased since being involved in Stepping Stones.
- ✓ **84%** of young people agree that they have an increased sense of belonging to their community since being involved in Stepping Stones.
- ✓ **79%** of young people agree that they consider the potential risks before they make choices about where to go and what to do.
- ✓ **69%** of young people agree that their involvement in Stepping Stones has increased their ability to work well with others in a group.
- ✓ **65%** of young people agree that they have an increased ability to express their point of view.

Case Studies

When a young person leaves the project, they work with their Project Worker to develop a case study outlining their journey. Such case studies give an insight into how Stepping Stones is already changing lives for young people across the Scottish Borders.

Outcome 1: To improve young people's emotional health and wellbeing.

Case Study 1: This young person **struggled at school** as he felt like he did not fit in with his peers. He spent limited time out with the household, was socially **isolated, socially awkward, low in confidence, self-esteem, motivation, and lacked direction**. He was referred to Stepping Stones from a local CLD worker as he needed **additional support**.

This young person wanted to become **more independent** and to be able to **leave the house** to go for a walk, visit the hairdressers and travel by public bus on his own. We developed a **trusted supporting relationship**, where I was able to start challenging him. Within weeks, he **increased his confidence** to go regular walks on his own and was able to manage a haircut by himself. The young person continued to attend one to one sessions and set further challenges and undertook positive activities including the gym and engaged in some **volunteering** to develop his ability to **cope with social situations**.

By **building a strong, encouraging relationship and communicating** with other services such as No One Left Behind (NOLB) and Skills development Scotland, this young person is now **healthier physically and emotionally**. This significantly **improved his mood, outlook and ability to engage** on a greater level. By taking small steps to socially integrate and challenge himself, he was able to feel some success and pride, which soon changed his outlook to one that is **optimistic and purposeful**. He has successfully completed Stage 2 NOLB training course, created a new CV, practiced mock interviews, applied for college and is now awaiting an interview. He has also now started Stage 3 NOLB, which is set to include work experience.

“My mood and mindset has changed significantly.” – young person

“It’s amazing how much things have progressed. I’ve got you and X to thank for this or I’d still be sitting in my room playing games online.” – young person

Outcome 2: To increase participation and engagement.

Case Study 2: This young person was **isolated** from friends and was involved in **risk taking behaviour** within the community. He had **not attended school** in well over a year and was therefore **underachieving**. This young person attended some evening drop in sessions at the youth club but initially would **not engage** in Stepping Stones.

After some chats about the Stepping Stones project, the young person decided to give it a go and work alongside me and a catering service. This person was immediately interested and got involved with some basic food preparation. After some time, the young person **built up courage and confidence** and soon started **volunteering** with the catering service 5 hours a day for 5 days of the week. He participated in a number of catering events where he was able to put his **skills into practice**. After some time, he took on more **responsibility, mentoring his peers** in the kitchen.

This young person's **confidence has increased** and he is extremely **happy with how far he has come** since starting Stepping Stones. He has **overcome his fears** of speaking to customers, **learned** new culinary skills, following recipes, and weighing ingredients and even **met new friends** through participating in the summer programme. He has almost completed his **Youth Achievement Award** and has recognised how far he has come and the **impact he has made**, not only on himself, but the whole team. He continues to work with us, building on his **self-development** and he is **positive for the future**.

“He is building such strong relationships with staff and other peers. So good to see.” – project worker

“X is desperate to get their YAA so we sat looking to get more evidence, they got more of the booklet filled out. They are so motivated right now it's great!” – project worker

Outcome 3: To better equip young people to deal with risky behaviours.

Case Study 3: This young person has frequently been **absent from school** for long periods of time. They had previously received support from other agencies, however no great difference was achieved as school attendance and **mental health** was remaining the same, if not worsening. Following their **parents separation**, the young person resides with their dad and younger siblings. Dad has **long-term health issues** which has resulted in the young person undertaking **caregiver role**. This long-standing situation has undoubtedly had a huge knock on effect on their attendance at school, and all that brings beyond academia.

Through Stepping Stones, the young person has **opened up to discuss deeper issues** within their family life and the impact this has had on them and their education. It was obvious from the start of our sessions that this young person has a **personal ambition and desire to succeed** and **aim high** with **professional goals**. I engaged with school and support staff to ensure that a workable **educational support package** was in place for this young person. This has enabled them to physically come into school, complete work and meet with staff who can **support learning**, and their **educational needs**.

Focusing on the individual and working at their pace, this young person has **grown in confidence** with the support they have had not only from myself, but also thanks to my **engagement with other multi-agency partners**. They have a better **understanding and appreciation of not only themselves and situation**, but also their **mental health**. The young person was re-referred to a relevant support partner which has enabled them to better understand and embrace information, particularly around **coping techniques and strategies**.

“This young person has embraced new opportunities presented to them which will help enrich their personal growth and development.” – project worker

“They now openly show an interest in other trips and would be keen to explore and consider taking part in other experiences.” – project worker

What have we spent this year?

Stepping Stones Project Funding (Localities)

PROJECT FUNDING	QTR 1	QTR 2	QTR 3	QTR 4	TOTAL YR 3		
	TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL	<i>BUDGET</i>	ACTUAL	PROJECTED OVER/ UNDER SPEND
INCOME							
Income from National Lottery	£123,922.00				<i>£123,922.00</i>	£123,922.00	£123,922.00
TOTAL						£123,922.00	£123,922.00

EXPENDITURE	QTR 1	QTR 2	QTR 3	QTR 4	BUDGET	ACTUAL	PROJECTED OVER/ UNDER SPEND
7 x Project workers and Activities	£115,122.00 ²				<i>£115,122.00</i>	£115,122.00	
Project monitoring and evaluation database	£312.50	£312.50	£312.50	£312.50	<i>£4,800.00</i>	£1,250.00	£3,550.00 ³
Project support and development			£288	£1,672.24	<i>£3,000.00</i>	£1,900.24	£1,099.76 ⁴
Social Action				£1,000.00	<i>£1,000.00</i>	£1,000.00	
TOTAL	£115,434.50	£312.50	£540.50	£2,984.74	<i>£123,922.00</i>	£119,272.24	£4,649.76

² Underspend on staffing is being managed by Rowlands and Connect; and a reprofiled budget for Connect is due to be considered for approval by the partnership in October 2022.

³ Each of the 7 partners will receive £507 towards membership database investment/development or other spend agreed by the Youth Work Partnership in year 5 from this underspend.

⁴ Due to vacancies in two localities: Rowlands and Connect have yet to claim Workforce Development Fund therefore this will carry forward into year 5.

Stepping Stones Project Funding (Central/YouthBorders)

YOUTH BORDERS FUNDING	QTR 1	QTR 2	QTR 3	QTR 4	TOTAL YR 3		
INCOME	ACTUAL	ACTUAL	ACTUAL	ACTUAL	BUDGET	ACTUAL	PROJECTED OVER/ UNDER SPEND
Income from National Lottery	£35,420.00				£35,420.00	£35,420.00	
TOTAL						£35,420.00	

EXPENDITURE

1 x YouthBorders worker	£7,260.05	£7,400.31	£7,590.21	£7,597.72	£29,820.00	£29,848.29	-£28.29
1 x YouthBorders worker supervision costs	£2,982.00				£2,982.00	£2,982.00	£-
Coordinator travel; home working allowance	£71.55	£27.25	£135.90	£90.60	£320.00	£325.30	-£5.30
Central Administration @ YouthBorders	£2,115.00				£2,115.00	£2,115.00	£-
Other project related expenditure (phone)	£45.00	£45.00	£45.00	£45.00	£180.00	£180.00	£-
TOTAL	£12,473.60	£7,472.56	£7,771.11	£7,733.32	£35,417.00	£35,450.59	-£33.59

Risks and Learning

Covid-19 Pandemic and Cost of Living Crisis: The Covid-19 pandemic and its economic and social impacts have posed considerable risks for our young people. Many emotional, and mental health and wellbeing factors such as social anxiety and feelings of isolation are still apparent and are expected to remain on the agenda for some time. This has resulted in more contact with social work/emergency duty team for advice, raising issues and making referrals to other partner agencies. It is important Project Workers keep up to date with awareness training and underline their role, limits and boundaries to young people and their parents/carers when they join. With funds available for financial support for families, some Stepping Stones young people have received vouchers or cash payments to assist household income. This has been administered with funds drawn down from Scottish Borders Council by YouthBorders.

Capacity: Project Workers highlighted that some referrals, particularly from schools, are inappropriate as young people require a higher level of specialist support than Stepping Stones can provide. After quarter one, Project Workers were more aware of pressures on caseload, having to prioritise new cases and manage their workload more efficiently. The statistics presented on page 4, table 2 demonstrate this as a higher number of young people joined the project in quarter 1 compared to quarters 2, 3 and 4.

The increase in enquiries and referrals is evident, which is partly due to increased need for the service but also due to increased awareness of the work of the project amongst partners and the community. Pressure on all support services is also evident and this is reflected in the types of referrals received. Great care and consideration is required around appropriateness of referrals as well as caseload numbers.

Specialist Support: Although some young people are dealing with more serious issues and require a higher level of specialist support, there is an identified gap in specialist mental health services between early intervention and CAMHS. This issue is well known, and solutions to scope new services are underway being led by NHS Borders Primary Care, the review of CAMHS and the Community Supports and Services Mental Health and Wellbeing project board.

School: Project Workers have established close working relationships with school staff and have received several referrals through this route. Some of these referred young people have low attendance and are disengaged at school due to various reasons including: an increase in exclusions; enforced at home learning for periods of time; being hosted by other schools; an increase in truanting, and long term attendance issues due to mental health - all of which lead to poor relationships and connections with the school and staff. While these young people have disengaged with the supports in school (in particular positions of responsibility/authority), they have continued to engage with our Stepping Stones Project Workers. This fully demonstrates the strength of relationships between young people and youth workers, and the need and value of Stepping Stones as a model of Trusted Adult support. This also assists with facilitating and supporting school negotiations and discussions, ensuring young people are able to share their voice.

Staff Absences: It is important Project Workers keep their database calendars, session notes and young people's information up-to-date for Youth Work Managers to sustain alternative support or provision in case of absence.

Recruitment: Rowlands and Connect were unsuccessful in recruiting Project Workers in 2022. With the difficulty in recruiting, resource will be used to further drive recruitment to advertise the post on multiple platforms in year 5. There is also potential to lessen the contracted hours and increase the hourly rate of pay to make the post more attractive for recruiting.

Joint Activity: Project Workers considered the challenges of bringing young people together through joint activity, including the stigma of being labelled as ‘Stepping Stones person’, and some young people are not ready/willing to participate in larger group settings. The Summer Beach and BBQ trip and any subsequent joint activity will be named ‘Youth Work Partnership Activity’ instead of ‘Stepping Stones Activity’, and will be open to all young people, with Stepping Stones members having priority.

Database Questions: Project Workers highlighted that young people are becoming less engaged when answering the personal planning and review questions on the database, as some are repetitive, lengthy and confusing for younger people. This therefore is a risk that we are not collecting a true reflection of young people’s progress. Project Coordinator reviewed and updated the questions with the staff team to ensure these support all service users abilities and understanding. This change was implemented in July 2021. There is a negative impact on tracking longer term and comparative data, but the need to be responsive to young people’s experience and feedback led to an acceptance of this risk.

Staff Wellbeing: Project Workers are aware of the importance of looking after their own mental wellbeing whilst supporting young people who are facing on-going challenges. It is important Project Workers continue to have regular support and supervision meetings with their manager and utilise team meetings as a safe space to talk through any thoughts or problems and to gain valuable advice and support from the team.

Towards the Future

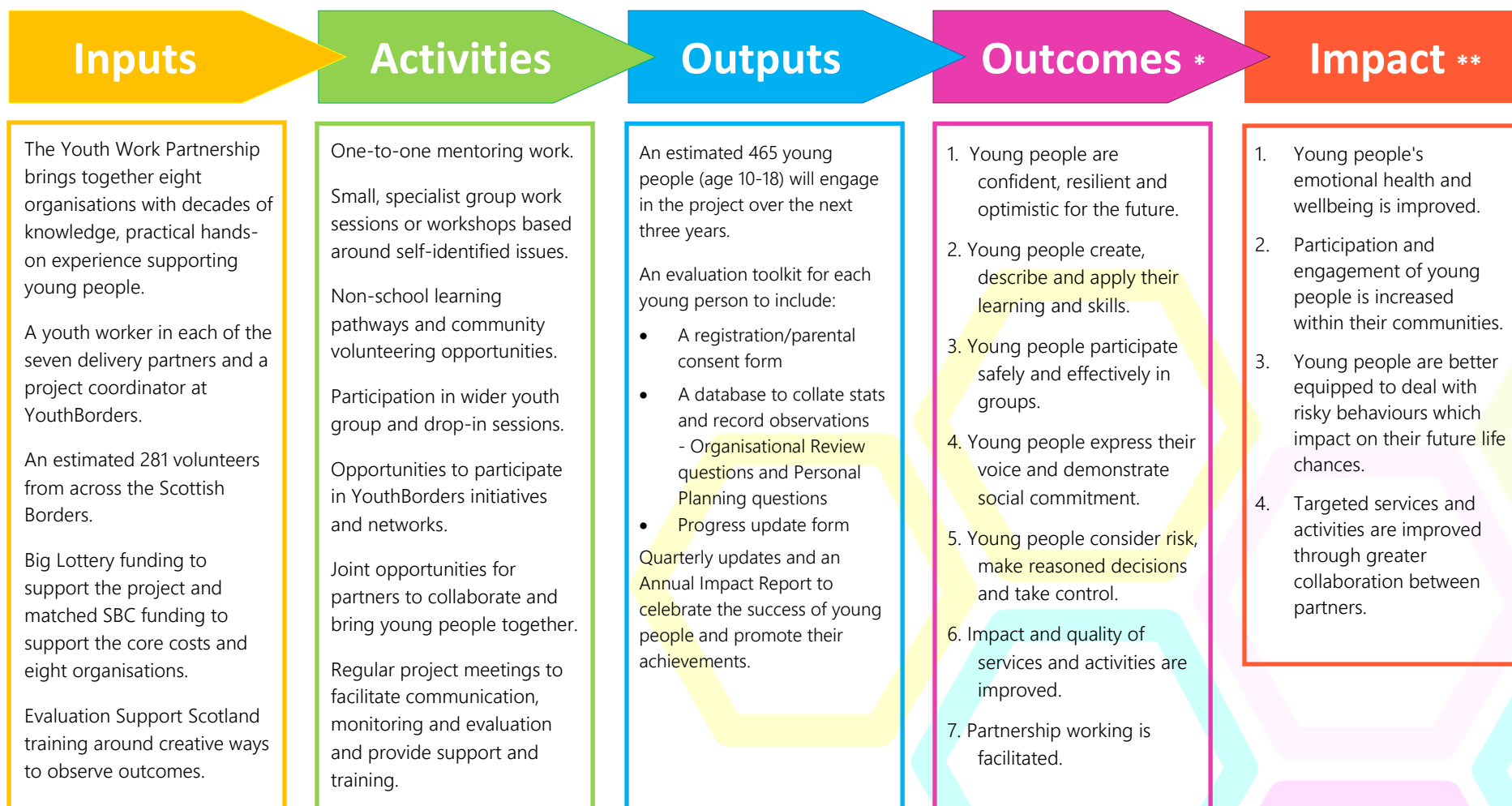
- Youth Work Managers will revise and review their Stepping Stones delivery plans annually so they can tailor this to the needs of their young people. Each delivery plan will be peer reviewed and collectively supported by all Youth Work Managers during an annual meeting.
- We will continue in our commitment to develop and improve the project with the shared intention of achieving impact.
- We will continue to review and appraise the learning needs and youth work delivery of our Project Workers as a routine aspect of support and supervision.
- We will continue to support joint activity or co-delivery opportunities within youth work by encouraging Project Workers to communicate with each other.
- We will continue to meet as a Project Worker team every 8 weeks to retain and support each other in a group setting. The Youth Work Managers group will continue to meet fortnightly on Zoom, as a positive peer support space.
- We will focus on increasing the profile of Stepping Stones and positioning it within the wider landscape of emotional health and wellbeing activity in the Scottish Borders as part of a whole systems approach.
- Connect Berwickshire Project Worker left post in December 2021 and Rowlands Project Worker left in August 2022. YouthBorders will support both partners in recruiting new workers in year 5.
- Year 5 will focus on project consolidation. It will be necessary for the Partnership to give due consideration to the future of Stepping Stones beyond Year 6, and action to facilitate discussion should commence in the later part of Year 5.

For further information about Stepping Stones and the Scottish Borders Youth Work Partnership please contact Carly McAllan, Project and Partnership Coordinator at YouthBorders; carly@youthborders.org.uk



Appendix 1: Stepping Stones Logic Model

Stepping Stones is a three-year project developed by the Scottish Borders' Youth Work Partnership and funded by the National Lottery Community Fund. A unique approach to collaborative working across the youth sector, the project is designed to change the way opportunities and support are offered to young people, allowing for greater added value through the sharing of ideas and best practice as well as budgets, resources, expertise and knowledge.



IMPACT ONE: To improve young people's emotional health and wellbeing leading to greater resilience, confidence, self-esteem and capacity to cope with life's challenges.		IMPACT TWO: To increase participation and engagement of young people in their communities where they live, learn and play.		IMPACT THREE: To better equip young people to deal with risky behaviours which impact on their future life chances.		IMPACT FOUR: To improve targeted services and activities through greater collaboration with new and existing partners.	
OUTCOME	INDICATOR	OUTCOME	INDICATOR	OUTCOME	INDICATOR	OUTCOME	INDICATOR
1. Young people are confident, resilient and optimistic for the future.	1.1. Young people participate in youth work when it is difficult for them to do so.	3. Young people participate safely and effectively in groups.	3.1. Young people recognise the policies and practice which keep them safe.	5. Young people consider risk, make reasoned decisions and take control.	5.1. Young people can explain the consequences of harmful behaviour on themselves and on others.	6. We secure improvement of quality and impact of services.	6.1. We effectively gather feedback from young people, partners and other stakeholders.
	1.2. Young people report an increase in confidence.		3.2. Young people resolve conflict peacefully within relationships.		5.2. Young people often make informed choices.		6.2. We evaluate and plan for improvement.
	1.3. When faced with a problem, young people come up with a solution.		3.3. Young people work with others on group tasks.				6.3. We report progress to stakeholders.
2. Young people create, describe and apply their learning and skills.	2.1. Young people plan their own learning outcomes.	4. Young people express their voice and demonstrate social commitment.	4.1. Young people express their point of view and are listened to.	5.3. Young people take responsibility for their actions.		7. We facilitate partnership working.	7.1. We have clear aims, roles and responsibilities within the partnership.
	2.2. Young people gain accreditation or recognition of their achievements.		4.2. Young people volunteer.				7.2. We share skills, knowledge and experience across partners to improve outcomes.
	2.3. Young people use their learning and skills in different settings.		4.3. Young people feel part of their community.				7.3. We plan and evaluate jointly to add value.

Glossary

Case Studies – A short story which outlines a young person’s journey on the Stepping Stones project.

Group Work Sessions – Work/activities done by a group of people, involving Stepping Stones young people.

Joint Activity - Work/activities done by a group of people in collaboration with one or more youth organisations within the Stepping Stones project.

Organisational Reviews – A set of scale questions which reflect the outcomes and impacts of the Stepping Stones Logic Model.

Personal Planning – A set of text questions which reflect the outcomes and impacts of the Stepping Stones Logic Model.

Stepping Stones Toolkit – Stepping Stones Pathway, Evaluation Framework and Logic Model which was informed by the National Youth Work Outcomes and ‘How Good is Out Third Sector Organisation’.

The Scottish Borders Youth Work Partnership - The Partnership is made up of seven lead locality based generic youth groups (Beyond Earlston, Cheviot Youth, Rowland’s (Selkirk), Escape Youth Services, Connect Berwickshire Youth Project, TD1 Youth Hub and Tweeddale Youth Action) and YouthBorders.