



# Stepping Stones Year 5 Annual Impact Report



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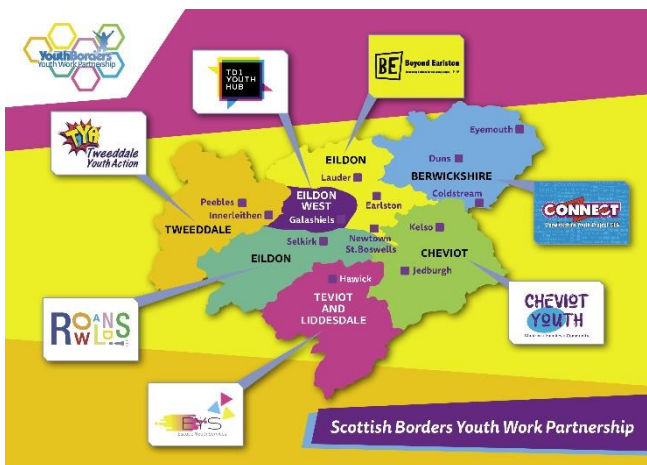
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## Background

### 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 outcomes:

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 Earliston, 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 six. **All names and identifiers have been changed in case-studies and quotes to anonymise the participants and beneficiaries.**

## Summary of Main Achievements from Year 5

No. of Supported Young People	No. of New Young People	No. of Young People Who Exited	No. of 1:1 Sessions	No. of Group Sessions	No. of Joint Activities	No. of Youth Awards
100	49	71	991	292	3	10

- In year 5, a total of **89%** of young people agreed that their emotional health and wellbeing has improved; **79%** agreed that they participate more and feel more engaged in their community; **85%** agreed that they are more aware of potential risks and **95%** of young people agreed that Stepping Stones has helped them.

### Governance

- Project Development Plan was created and shared with the Youth Work Partnership for comments on 3rd October 2022.
- Youth Work Managers revised their Stepping Stones Delivery Plans for year five 2022-2023 and discussed these as a group before submitting to TNLCF in January 2023.
- The Written Agreement was implemented from 1<sup>st</sup> 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.
- Youth Work Managers continue to meet fortnightly, creating a regular opportunity to share and discuss Stepping Stones delivery.
- YouthBorders recruited a new Chief Officer in May 2023.

### Project Team

- Stepping Stones Project Team have continued to meet up virtually every 8 weeks. Meetings were a mixture of online and face-to-face, allowing Project Workers to connect as a team, facilitate creative thinking and share relevant risks, learning, resources and common issues.
- Three Project Workers participated in the Place2Think cohort which provides members of the youth work community with a space to reflect on the challenges of their role. This has been valuable in terms of peer support and the opportunity to voice concerns and share with staff out with the organisation and project.

### Locality Update

- TD1 Youth Hub Project Worker continues to support young people with the transition from Primary to Secondary school within the community, schools and at TD1 Youth Hub. Moving into year 6, Project Worker will focus on a reduced number of young people to provide additional time to support young people who are presenting more complex issues.

- Rowlands Project Worker left post in July 2023 and this resulted in a gap in reporting. The staff team at Rowland's have been able to keep in contact with Stepping Stones young people through their summer programme, offering additional support if required. Rowlands successfully recruited a new Project Worker to start in October 2023.
- Cheviot Youth's Project Worker will move from the Mental Health Support Service (Insight Youth Counselling and Psychotherapy) to Youth Work Services in Cheviot Youth and will be renamed under 'Emotional Wellbeing Officer'. The Emotional Wellbeing Officer for Stepping Stones will start this post in October 2023.
- Despite Connect Berwickshire Youth Project having previously experienced some challenges in recruitment, their Project Worker has settled well in their new role. Connect are beginning to build positive working relationships with local partners, schools, the community and young people in Duns, Eyemouth and Coldstream and are working closing with the High Schools. Project Worker encouraged young people to participate in drop-in's and activities throughout the summer programme. Moving into year 6, Connect will utilise their underspend and recruit an additional Project Worker 15 hours/week to focus on supporting young people living in Duns.
- Escape Youth Services plan to look at the needs of their service users and conduct some baseline activities to assess what areas for development can be taken forward by their Project Worker in the last part of year 5, into year 6. Over the summer months, Escape Project Worker spent time meeting partners, networking and creating community links. Moving forward, the Project Worker will also support 1 drop-in session per week to build relationships and identify potential young people.
- From the start, Tweeddale Youth Action (TYA) has been involved with some of the hardest to reach young people in Tweeddale and had a challenging cohort who were too chaotic and not yet ready to access Stepping Stones support. Towards the end of year 5, Project Worker at TYA decided to step back from the Stepping Stones role and will return to supporting young people in drop-in's. From September 2023, Stepping Stones at TYA will be a shared position between two former youth workers.
- Beyond Earlston Project Worker continues to support young people in Earlston High School as well as home visits and within the community. Relationships with schools, partners, parents and of course young people continues to be strong.

## Who took part?

In total, **100 young people received support** in year five of Stepping Stones, a slight reduction from 109 young people in year four. There were **49 new young people** who joined Stepping Stones and **71 young people who completed** the project in year five. Moreover, **49 young people are expected to continue** into year six of the project (see table 1). Table 2 shows the breakdown for each quarter in year five.

Out of the 100 young people who were supported, **51 were male** and **49 were female**.

Alongside the 7 part-time Project Workers, **13 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 five and the number of young people expected to continue into year six.**

	TD1	Connect	Rowlands	Earlston	Escape	TYA	Cheviot	Total
<b>Joined</b>	10	7	4	7	8	12	1	<b>49</b>
<b>Supported</b>	20	7	7	23	19	16	8	<b>100</b>
<b>Completed</b>	19	0	6	13	11	15	7	<b>71</b>
<b>Continuing</b>	9	7	5	10	7	10	1	<b>49</b>

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

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
<b>Joined</b>	10	13	11	15	<b>49</b>
<b>Supported</b>	48	63	53	53	<b>100</b>
<b>Completed</b>	7	16	23	25	<b>71</b>

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.

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

Participation Reason	No. of young people
1. Lack Confidence	<b>75</b>
2. Additional Support or Behavioural Needs	<b>54</b>
3. Underachieving	<b>49</b>
4. Disengaged	<b>42</b>
5. Low or Non Attendance	<b>38</b>
6. Risk Taking Behaviour	<b>38</b>
7. Disability or Mental Health Issue	<b>36</b>
8. Deprived Area	<b>33</b>
9. Identity Issues	<b>9</b>

## How have we built on people's strengths?

### One-to-One Sessions

Throughout year five, Project Workers have provided **991 one-to-one sessions**, supporting Stepping Stones young people. 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 feel that you are the only one that really listens to me and hasn't given up on me.

Having had someone to encourage me and help motivate me, I'm now more confident and able to cope with things without anxiety overwhelming me.

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

I feel better than what I did... I know how to handle it more and can talk about stuff rather than bottling things up.

Talking weekly to [Project Worker] makes me feel better because I feel like I matter. I don't have to do anything to feel heard and liked. I can deal with some parts of my emotional health and understand better why I feel how I feel.

Someone outside my usual circle to talk to and reflect on issues and problem solve things that I might find tricky.

My confidence has improved - getting better in classes, talking to people more. Especially out with family. I'm socialising better with more people, settled more in school - which means less drama at home.

I feel calmer and try to solve difficult situations without lashing out. My relationship with 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.

It's given me the confidence to finally been able to talk about some deeper feelings and I know I will now get more help around this.

Being able to trust someone to talk about some of the more awkward stuff and feel like I'm listened to and respected.

I feel more confident in making decisions and built friendships because of this confidence, and just having someone real to talk to about things when I didn't have that adult in my life has meant a lot.

I've learned how to accept advice and feel like I've made a lot of positive changes in my life.

'Project Worker' offers me a safe place and I can talk and relax and play games.

Not many older people that sit and just talk to you. They explain things in a way that I understand and they want to listen to me.

## Group Work Sessions, Drop in's and Activities

Project Workers provided a total of **292 group sessions and drop-in's** for young people this year, compared to 157 in year four. 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 five:

### TD1 Youth Hub

- Support in classrooms
- Cinema trip & Pantomime
- Out for breakfast/lunch
- Hib hop dance class
- TD1 Easter Fun Day Event
- THRIVE project at school
- Baking
- Shopping trip to Edinburgh
- Fundraising appeal for a defibrillator
- Peer to peer support with transitions

### Escape Youth Services

- Make, Do and Mend Craft Group
- Christmas crafting and fayre
- Outdoor activity in country side
- Family tree project
- Shopping for ingredients to bake
- Job search, interview prep and CV
- Outdoor games
- Alchemy filming experience
- Swimming
- Crafts for Hawick Reivers festival

### Cheviot Youth

- Transition support
- Played games
- Coping strategies

### Beyond Earlston

- Youth learning
- Arts and crafts
- Exams and career choices
- Thursday Maker sessions
- Big community lunch Earlston
- Residential to Whitehaugh Park
- Played games
- Ancrum car boot sale

### Connect Berwickshire

- Recruited a new Project Worker in April 2023 and is currently building relationships with young people through drop-in's, summer programme and partners in their locality.

### Tweeddale Youth Action

- Trip to Hibs football match
- Christmas lunch
- Museum trip
- Football and putting sessions
- Gytes sports day
- Cooking and baking - FoodPunks
- Costa coffee shop
- BBQ day at Innerleithen
- Summer activity ideas and research
- Peebles community garden
- Trailer renovation

### Rowlands

- Walk and talk
- Support in classroom
- Radio and voice over group
- Beauty and nail art
- Girls group

## Joint Activity

In total, there were 3 joint activities that took place in year five that included those with two or more Stepping Stones localities joining together. This included a football match between TD1 Youth Hub and Tweeddale Youth Action, bubble football game between Rowlands and Beyond Earlston and summer trip to Rock UK with Escape Youth Services, Beyond Earlston, Connect Berwickshire and Rowlands. Unfortunately, Tweeddale Youth Action had to cancel last minute due to staff illness. These joint activities created a youth participation opportunity for young people to develop skills for engagement, participation, decision-making and social action.



**Case Study: Rock UK:** This young person was **withdrawn** from social circles and had become content with spending much of their time in their room **alone**. Mum had informed us that the young person had **not participated in any activities** during the summer and it was important that we helped this young person to reintegrate back into a social setting.

Although weary at first, the young person took part in all activities at Rock UK. They **participated as part of the wider group** in the **team building** games, putting their **trust** in their peers to help guide them through the blindfolded assault course. The young person enjoyed the kayaking activity as they had expressed a real interest in water and water sports. The young person felt a real **sense of achievement** after **facing their fear** of heights and discovering the **excitement** of ziplines. They

ended up **enjoying the experience** so much they had another go.

The young person displayed an observable **increase in confidence** when **speaking with other young people** outside of their friend group. By the end of the day, the young person was actively talking with others instead of their usual habit of sitting by themselves with headphones on. The day also gave the young person an opportunity to **build their resilience** and **face their fear of heights**. The young person's engagement during the day has helped them to **reach out to the new worker sooner** than they would have otherwise. They expressed how much they **enjoyed the day** and said they would like to do more adventure activities with Stepping Stones in the future.



Project Worker: "It was great seeing the young people enjoy themselves and for me, getting to know them better."

Young person A: "I really enjoyed kayaking; I find water really calming".

Young person B: "I wish we had more time for the activities, or a residential would be fun."



## Young People's Development

Throughout year five, 10 young people achieved Youth Awards (8 Dynamic Youth Awards and 2 Hi5 Awards). Below is a list of other volunteering and learning opportunities Stepping Stones young people participated in during year five:

Young People's Development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First Aid training</li> <li>• Camera &amp; Film training</li> <li>• Autism awareness training</li> <li>• Sewing and crocheting skills</li> <li>• IT skills creating Easter promotion posters</li> <li>• Cooking and baking</li> <li>• Food Foundation sessions</li> <li>• Job searching, CV writing, interview preparation, completing college applications with support from Skills Development Scotland</li> <li>• Football coaching certificate online</li> <li>• Coaching certificate with Live Borders</li> <li>• Writing a statement for LAC funding application</li> <li>• No One Left Behind</li> <li>• Outward-bound programme</li> </ul>	<p><b>Young people enjoyed volunteering opportunities with a variety of different groups and organisations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drop-in sessions and leading activities</li> <li>• Youth organisation's AGM</li> <li>• Dancing group</li> <li>• Girl Guiding</li> <li>• Make, Do &amp; Mend Group</li> <li>• Christmas Markets and Fayres</li> <li>• Kids Club</li> <li>• Army</li> <li>• Nursery</li> <li>• Abundant Borders</li> <li>• Almond Tree Cafe</li> <li>• FoodPunks catering</li> <li>• Stable Life</li> <li>• Hawick Men's Shed</li> </ul>

## Staff Development

Staff continue 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 five.

Staff Development / Training / CPD	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• YouthBorders Youth Work Learning Festival</li> <li>• Adult and Child Protection Awareness</li> <li>• First Aid at Work</li> <li>• Food Hygiene</li> <li>• Arts and Crafts for youth workers</li> <li>• Level 1 Netball Coaching</li> <li>• Trauma Informed Schools and Community Practitioner Diploma</li> <li>• Emotion coaching practitioner training</li> <li>• Conflict Resolution</li> <li>• Autism and CBT approach</li> <li>• Understanding Autism Part 1 &amp; 2</li> <li>• Drug Awareness E-Learning Module</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distressed not Difficult</li> <li>• Revenge Porn Awareness Session</li> <li>• Why is Gen Z more distressed?</li> <li>• Cedar training and practical sessions</li> <li>• ASIST Training (Suicide Prevention)</li> <li>• Alcohol and drug abuse in the Borders</li> <li>• PGCert Community Education</li> <li>• Essential oils for neurodivergent children</li> <li>• Place4you supervision</li> <li>• Place2Be Place2Talk sessions – peer to peer support</li> <li>• Seasons For Growth Parents training</li> </ul>

## 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, providing new opportunities of engagement for our young people. This year Stepping Stones worked with **at least 44 partners** across the region. These partners include: statutory services including primary and secondary schools, CAMHS, CLD, Live Borders 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. Project Workers have found that being proactive works brilliantly as it is great for forming new relationships with partners for example, exploring and going to visit the pastoral team within schools. Project Worker said: “ I recognise the strength and quality of relationships I have developed with agency partners and young people. The impact of the partnership working through the varied opportunities offered to the young people has not only impacted on their lives, but also others – and engagement with the local community has, on the whole, improved significantly.”

Below is the full list of partners we worked with during year five.

Partners	
1. Aberlour Sustain	24. Newbattle Abbey College
2. Abundant Borders	25. No One Left Behind Workers SBC
3. Action for children	26. Peebles CAN
4. Alchemy Film and Arts	27. Penumbra
5. At Birkhill House CIC	28. Police Scotland
6. Berwickshire Alliance	29. Quarriers Resilience for Wellbeing
7. Borders Additional Needs Group	30. Rape crisis
8. Borders Community Action	31. Relate
9. Born in Scotland	32. RUTS
10. Burnfoot Community Hub	33. School Nurse
11. CAMHS	34. Schools – primary and secondary
12. Children 1st	35. Scottish Borders CHIMES Service
13. Church of Earlston	36. Seasons for Growth
14. Community Councillor	37. Skills Development Scotland (SDS)
15. Community Fire Officers	38. Social work CHAD and C&F
16. Community Learning and Development	39. Spectrum - Outreach
17. Community Link Worker	40. Splash
18. Consultant sick kids	41. Stable Life
19. Developing the Young Workforce Borders	42. Transform Arts CIC
20. Eat, Sleep, Ride	43. Volunteer Centre Borders
21. Food Foundation	44. We are With You
22. Hibs Football Club	45. Youth Action Scotland – The Big 6
23. Live Borders Active Schools Coordinator	

## 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 average results from year five.

**Outcome 1:** In year 5, **89% of young people agreed that their emotional health and wellbeing has improved.**

- “I am a lot better with my emotions. I am able to control them a lot more... like when I feel anxious. I take a break and go outside and let my anger out. Before I wouldn't do that and just hide and cry. I go to school now every day except when I feel really ill. I am capable to go to school. I started to think differently in a more positive way. Before I met you I was more anxious about little things. Now I am able to think to myself if the worst happens I am going to be ok.”
- “In my personal experience Stepping Stones has helped me tremendously. Stepping Stones has given me a place where I feel comfortable expressing myself and has helped me build up confidence and self-respect. Stepping Stones has given me a variety of opportunities which I wouldn't have had without them.”
- “I could never have done what I have without the encouragement and advice. My mindset and attitude has changed and I am more hopeful about my future.”

**Outcome 2:** In year 5, **79% of young people agreed that they participate more, and feel more engaged in their community.**

- “I had no friends when I moved to the Borders and felt quite angry and lonely. Through Stepping Stones and youth club I was able to make friends and take part in different activities. I feel liked and look forward to seeing my worker once a week. I feel more confident about new situations and try different activities.”
- “I feel valued. Youth club gives me the opportunity to experience things I usually would take part in.”
- “I have attended activities where I can try new things and meet other people, so I feel more included and accepted.”

**Outcome 3:** In year 5, **85% of young people agreed that they are more aware of potential risks and think about the consequences before making decisions.**

- “I felt seen and heard. My Stepping Stones worker came once a week and provided me with mental and active support. I didn't go out or take part in any activities and used a lot of drugs and alcohol. My worker helped arrange different organisations to come together to help me out. I had some amazing opportunities like surfing, camping, graffiti and felt proud to turn up and take part. We practiced reflecting and problem-solving which helped me with my drug abuse and alcohol intake. I haven't stopped using but I try to use the

strategies we practiced and sometimes they help. I guess I must do some work on my own now and try to get better.”

- “I got into a lot of trouble with the school, community and the police and the social work had referred me to Stepping stones and I had never looked back. My Project Worker caught me at my lowest and worked with me for months until I found my confidence and helped me back into school and helped me find friends. They give me confidence to be back out in the community. They gave me lots of opportunities and I don't know what I would have done during that time without Stepping Stones.”

**Outcome 4:** In year 5, **95%** of young people agreed that **Stepping Stones has helped them.**

- “Stepping Stones helped me come out of my shell and experience new things. You encouraged me and help me change my mindset and I feel more hopeful.”
- “Since being involved in Stepping Stones I now know when I am feeling anxious and what to do to help reduce it. I can do the breathing exercises we did without my friends noticing, as well as the distraction games you taught me. I feel like I now know what to do and how to ask for help if I was bullied again. I know various tools and strategies to keep myself safe too.”
- “I don't get as distracted in class as I used to, and am able to get on with my work. Talking to you has helped me learn how to cope better when things don't work out the way I want them to. I know I can't change what has happened at home, but having someone to listen to me each week made it easier.”
- “Since being involved in Stepping Stones I feel better about myself. I know what to do if I am in a situation where I feel unsafe and who to ask for help. I know it is ok to be upset and angry when things like bullying happen to you. It wasn't easy as my Mum and Dad didn't understand how them getting involved made the situation worse. Speaking to you, and asking you to tell them how I felt made them understand and listen to me more. The bullies don't bother me anymore, but I still use the tools and strategies we worked on to keep myself safe.”

## 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, leading to greater resilience, increased confidence, higher levels of self-esteem and greater capacity to cope with life's challenges.**

**Case Study One:** Rachel was referred to Stepping Stones by their school. There were concerns from both the school and Rachel's parents that their levels of anxiety were beginning to impact on their school work and daily life. Rachel met with their Project Worker on a weekly basis. Initial sessions involved building a relationship where Rachel felt comfortable to discuss their anxieties. Expressive art was used to help Rachel work through their feelings of anxiety and understand where they came from. With the help of their Project Worker, Rachel wrote a list of activities they hoped to achieve:

- putting my hand up in class to answer a question,
- feeling confident to discuss my ideas/point of view in a small group and,
- reading out loud in class.

Over the next few weeks Rachel worked on building confidence by using new tools and strategies, as well as participating in role play to ensure Rachel felt confident in taking on each new task. Time was also taken to acknowledge the successes they had achieved and the thoughts and feeling this produced. Within six weeks, Rachel was able to raise their hand up in class and discussed their idea in a small group. They then moved on to reading out loud in class in front of peers. Rachel then felt confident enough to take part in a class role play. The following weekly sessions involved learning and reinforcing various tools and strategies to help Rachel control their anxieties and build their confidence.

Rachel successfully participated in the class play, with them saying they felt "brilliant" when discussing how their experience had been. Rachel's Mum was very grateful to Stepping Stones for supporting her child build their confidence and address their anxieties. School have also seen a positive change in Rachel, with them now being a regular contributor in class work.

**Outcome 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.**

**Case Study Two:** Matt was referred to me through his pastoral teacher at the High School around a year and a half ago. Matt came with pretty significant learning and support needs and very low confidence and self-esteem. He did not socialise at school. We first started to get to know each other through games and he got involved in cooking sessions. He was keen to learn new things and challenge himself. In the beginning he would always say "I can't", but as time went on he discovered he could. It took Matt a while to build confidence to have a proper conversation but over time he learned to trust me and we ended up having some great chats.

Our next goal was social inclusion and I worked with him to start accessing our Wednesday evening drop-in sessions, building up from an initial 30 minutes to attending for longer and longer. At the drop-in he was able to socialise with new people and build relationships which was an amazing outcome for Matt. He then started to attend regularly, and brought along his friend, making the youth club his own safe place.

Through working with him, I discovered he loves trains and buses and his dream was to work with Borders buses one day. So I encouraged him to give them a call and left them his details. He also contacted the Food Foundation who works regularly with people with similarities to him. Matt's CLD officer got in touch about a new opportunity for this young person here he could achieve a N2 health and wellbeing certificate with a group of new young people. Although it took a lot of convincing, he found the confidence to take another step out of his comfort zone and decided to participate. It amazes me how far he has come. I have received great feedback from parents and they recognise how valuable our work together through Stepping Stones has been.

**Outcome 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.**

**Case Study Three:** Marcus worked with me for a considerable time last year where he engaged in social activities, attended school and made new friends. He completed Stepping Stones in August last year but stayed on as a youth club member. The headteacher contacted me in November asking if I could find time for Marcus again. School and dad felt he lost interest in school, had no goals and his friendship circle wasn't a good match, and took part in risk taking behaviour.

We arranged one to one meetings and had some conversations over some games of UNO and Marcus seemed to be aware of his "bad" choices like hanging out with the wrong crowd, getting in trouble at school, skipping classes and losing his temper. "My anger just bubbles underneath and then suddenly just erupts like a volcano."

We worked on goal setting as Marcus has a great interest in football and sports, he also likes children and can see himself coaching a team. We enrolled him in an online football coaching course and contacted Live Borders who tailored a practical learning pathway for Marcus to get involved in a coaching role. Due to his young age, he receives mentoring sessions and helps with tasks in the children's team until he is old enough to get his official coaching certification. We applied to the Outward project and he wrote an honest personal statement which earned him a funded place and Stepping Stones paid the £75 to secure his space. This will be a great opportunity for Marcus to focus on a positive destination and gain self-esteem away from his usual peer group.

Marcus started engaging with our youth club again. He is still struggling at school and is still part of the social group who bullies other pupils, but he reflects on situations and tries to make good choices. School isn't a good place for him but hopefully with the Stepping Stone support, and community projects like youth club, Live Borders and the Outward programme he will be able to finish his education and settle into college.

This case study demonstrates the value of the Stepping Stones project e.g no project time limit, constrains, easy referral and rereferring. Sometimes young people do well but encounter a difficult part in their lives and need someone who can relate and listen. We than can reflect and find a solution and set goals. He said: "I still hate school but I try to make it work."

**Outcome 4: To improve targeted services and activities through greater collaboration with new and existing partners.**

**Case Study Four:** This young person was adopted as a child and found transition to secondary school very challenging. They lacked confidence, was socially isolated and has been victim of bullying since primary school. They have begun self-harming again and their emotional wellbeing compromised. Mum suspects Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder but this has not been diagnosed. They have processing and memory difficulties, global developmental delay, speech and language issues, lack of confidence in self and lack of ability to socialise with relevant age and stage peers.

After an initial one to one session, we decided to work towards developing a wider social circle, learning new social skills and feeling more part of her year group and community - feeling less isolated. Confidence and sense of self has been impacted by their processing difficulties and difficult start in life, so being able to join in with others and feel equal and welcome were something that this young person desired.

They have attended regular one to one sessions both virtually and face to face over time, as well as joint crafting sessions, with both local and wider youth groups. They have increased confidence and social skills to the extent that they have made new friends, feeling less isolated and was able to show some sense of fun and voice own opinions. They participated in an intergenerational project during COVID-19 pandemic showing pride on what they had produced as individuals and a group and presenting these to the local Community Hospital in a visit, which gained some local publicity. During sessions we have discussed their feelings and fears, and worked on building resilience. This young person joined in the April and Summer holiday activity sessions and trips with the wider youth group, where they not only met and mingled with others, but had fun and really challenged themselves to try new things. They have started to attend drop-in sessions at the youth club and is nurturing the friendships established during Stepping Stones.

Support sessions continued by way of some group work, making and creating, which this young person engaged in very well, increasing confidence and belief in self. There had been several setbacks in their own emotional wellbeing, due to reported lack of support at school and family bereavement. This young person had further input from CAMHS alongside Stepping Stones support.



## What have we spent this year?

### Stepping Stones Project Funding (Localities)

PROJECT FUNDING	QTR 1	QTR 2	QTR 3	QTR 4	TOTAL YR 5		
<b>INCOME</b>	TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL	BUDGET	ACTUAL	PROJECTED OVER/UNDER SPEND
Carry Forward	<b>£4,649.76</b>				<i>£4,649.76</i>	£3,550.00	£1,099.76
National Lottery Up Lift	<b>£129,499.00</b>			<b>£7,775</b>	<i>£137,324.00</i>	£136,353.00	£971.00
<b>TOTAL</b>					<i>£141,973.76</i>	£139,903.00	£2,070.76
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>							
7 x Partner Payments for Project workers & Activities	£129,549.00			£6,804.00	<i>£137,324.00</i>	£136,353.00	£971.00
Project monitoring and evaluation database/app	£312.50	£312.50	£312.50	£312.50	<i>£1,250.00</i>	£1,250.00	£0
Project support and development				£250	<i>£2,599.76</i>	£250.00	£2,349.76
Social Action			108.00	627.80	<i>£750.00</i>	£735.80	14.20
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£115,434.50</b>	<b>£312.50</b>	<b>£540.50</b>	<b>£2,984.74</b>	<i>£141,923.76</i>	<b>£119,272.24</b>	<b>£3,334.96</b>

- Connect Berwickshire Youth Project have yet to claim Workforce Development Fund therefore this will carry forward into year 6.
- Underspend will be used to commission McGowan Marketing to plan and deliver a communications campaign to showcase the impacts and outcomes achieved by the Youth Work Partnership.

## Stepping Stones Project Funding (Central/YouthBorders)

YOUTH BORDERS FUNDING	QTR 1	QTR 2	QTR 3	QTR 4	TOTAL YR 5		
<b>INCOME</b>	ACTUAL	ACTUAL	ACTUAL	ACTUAL	<i>BUDGET</i>	ACTUAL	PROJECTED OVER/UNDER SPEND
Income from National Lottery	£31,968.00				<i>£31,968.00</i>	£31,968.00	£0.00
<b>TOTAL</b>					<i>£31,968.00</i>	£31,968.00	£0.00

<b>EXPENDITURE</b>							
1 x YouthBorders worker	£5,951.25	£6,102.42	£5,955.82	£5,882.52	<i>£25,550.00</i>	£23,892.01	£1,657.99
1 x YouthBorders worker supervision costs	£3,041.00				<i>£3,041.00</i>	£3,041.00	£0
Coordinator travel; home working allowance; IT replacement equipment	£370.00	£110.44	£228.95	£29.52	<i>£370.00</i>	£738.91	-£368.91
Central Administration @ YouthBorders	£2,157.00				<i>£2,157.00</i>	£2,157.00	£0
Other project related expenditure	£45.00	£45.00	£45.00	£45.00	<i>£180.00</i>	£180.00	£0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£12,473.60</b>	<b>£7,472.56</b>	<b>£7,771.11</b>	<b>£7,733.32</b>	<b>£31,298.00</b>	<b>£31,968.00</b>	<b>£1,289.08</b>

- Underspend on YouthBorders Coordinator will be used to extend staffing to evaluate the project at the end of year 6.

## Risks, Challenges and Learning

**Increased need of higher level specialist support:** Stepping Stones sits within tier 1 and 2 of the Scottish Borders Framework for Staged Intervention model and provides early intervention and prevention support to young people. Some young people are dealing with more serious issues and require a higher level of specialist support that is out with the scope of Stepping Stones. 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, CAMHS, the Community Supports and Mental Health and Wellbeing provisions. It is essential that Project Workers are clear to young people, parents/guardians and stakeholders of their Stepping Stones role and project aims. Project Workers will also collate and share appropriate signposting organisations in their quarterly update and at team meetings to offer the correct support to young people and support Stepping Stones Project Workers.

**Time Limit:** As Stepping Stones has no time limit, Project Workers must be mindful of the purpose of support, ensuring that there is still gain for young people by remaining involved rather than them becoming reliant on Project Workers. It is important Project Workers are having conversations with young people so they are continuing to set goals and see a purpose to support rather than just routine or a decision to end support, but leave 'the door open' should they need to seek assistance again in the future.

**Age Range:** Young people reaching 18 years of age and moving on to adult services have shown gaps in ongoing support and a need for Stepping Stones to continue to engage where appropriate until they are picked up with an adult service.

**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.

**Schools:** Relationships and levels of communication with schools varies throughout the seven localities. Project Workers continue to communicate with teachers and other school staff to share information and obtain referrals.

**Parent/guardian Engagement:** Relationships and levels of communication with parents/guardians also varies throughout the seven localities. In some cases this can make it more difficult to move forward referrals to have joint response to support and needs. However, some Project Workers have highlighted that parental engagement and communication has been invaluable and allows them to share information and tailor support to young people's needs. Several parents have also provided positive feedback on the impact on Stepping Stones.

**Database Recording:** Project Workers spend dedicated time via phone calls and emails to parents/guardian, as well as time spent networking with partners and communicating with school staff however, this time is not recorded in the calendar function on the database. It is important

all Project Workers keep a log of all networking and meetings by reporting this in quarterly progress update form.

**Drugs and Alcohol:** Some areas are becoming increasingly worried about young people's uptake of drugs and alcohol. Partners have discussed the best way to support young people by working with small groups to encourage them to participate more in group activities to support these young people to positive destinations.

**Programme Level Evaluation:** In 2020, we introduced programme level evaluation which was an opportunity for young people who have been involved in Stepping Stones since the project began in 2018 to share their reflections on the impact of Stepping Stones on their lives. Previously, the programme level evaluation was collected in an Annual Evaluation Survey however, in year five it we decided to collect programme level evaluation with young people using some aspects from Dr Sue Cooper's "Transformative Evaluation Methodology". Cooper's methodology is based on a reflective conversation between a young person and the youth worker using one specific question e.g "Looking back, what difference has being involved in Stepping Stones meant to you?". Despite some Project Workers collecting valuable stories, some organisations where the Project Worker has not been in post long found it challenging and/or inappropriate to contact former Stepping Stones young people without an existing relationship.

**Joint Activity:** Despite joint activities providing opportunities for young people to develop skills for engagement, participation, decision-making and social action, this model is not suitable for all young people. It is important Project Workers continue to make professional judgements on whether certain activities and opportunities will benefit young people on their Stepping Stones journey.

## Towards the Future

- Youth Work Partnership 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 meet as a Project Worker team each quarter 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.
- Youth Work Managers will revise and review their Stepping Stones delivery plans before the end of the year 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.
- In September 2023, YouthBorders consulted with the Scottish Borders Strategic Youth Work Partnership to gather their feedback and ideas about continuation planning beyond Stepping Stones Phase 2, and the ambitions and possibilities of continuation of Stepping Stones or an equivalent model.

- McGowan Marketing will plan and deliver a communications campaign to showcase the impacts and outcomes achieved by the Youth Work Partnership.

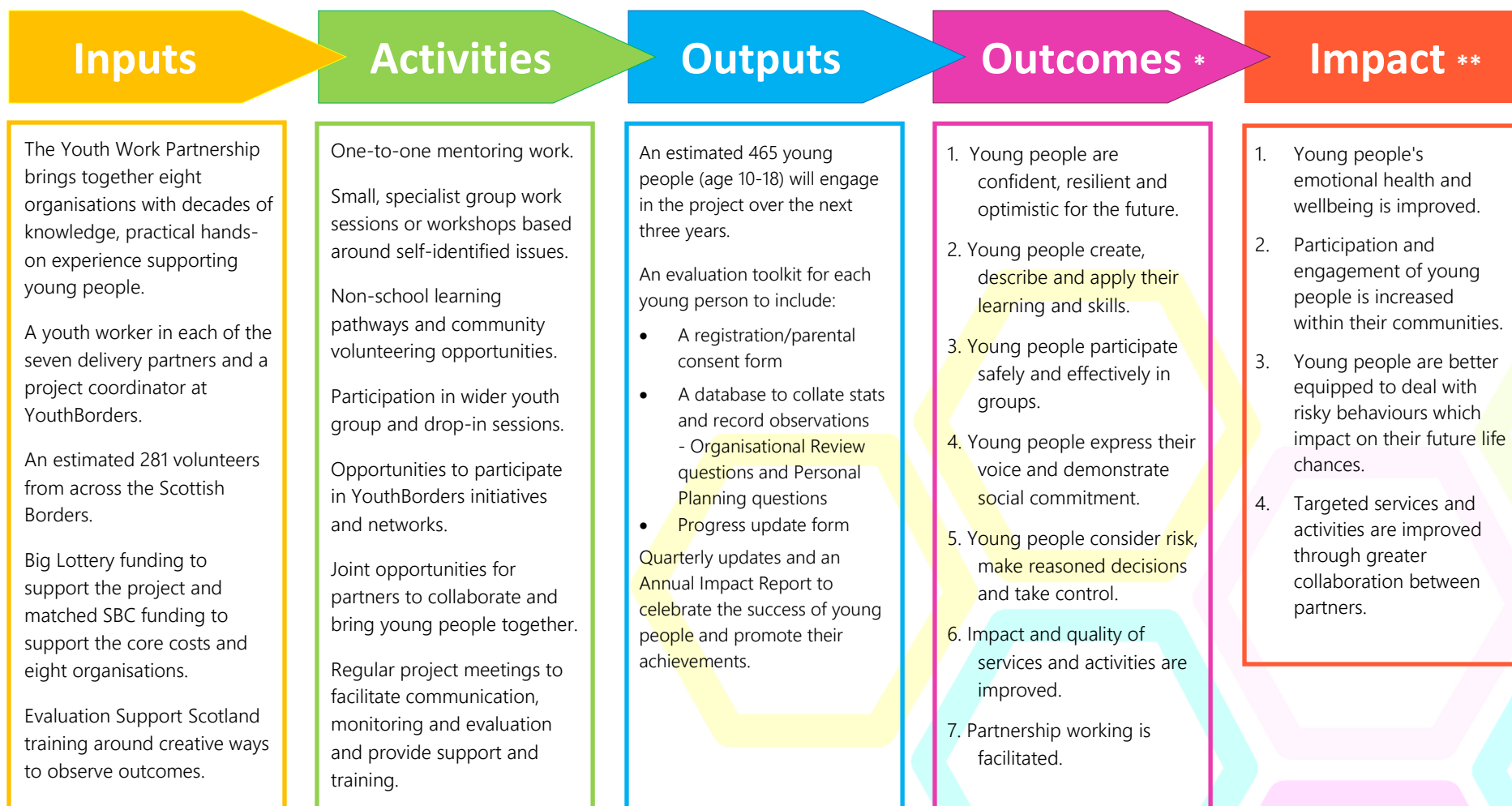
*For further information about Stepping Stones and the Scottish Borders Youth Work Partnership please contact Carly McAllan, Project and Partnership Coordinator at YouthBorders; [carly@youthborders.org.uk](mailto:carly@youthborders.org.uk)*

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## 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.

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## 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.

**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.