

# The Impact of Community Based Universal Youth Work in Dumfries and Galloway

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THE UNIVERSITY  
of EDINBURGH



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## Young Person, aged 20 (Story 98)

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*“To answer simply, I am alive. When I first got involved with youth work in Dumfries and Galloway, I was suffering with quite extreme anxiety, that earlier in the year had caused a nervous breakdown. I couldn't sit my exams and for several weeks, was afraid to leave the house. I was self-harming regularly; sometimes not even aware I was doing it and was fighting off suicidal thoughts daily. The extent to which I felt a risk to myself was not something I ever spoke about and I kept my feelings tightly bottled up inside. That all changed when I started to access Youth Work Services through The Toon, run by the Youth Enquiry Service. Over the two-week production camp, I began to feel less alone, realising that what I was experiencing was not uncommon and that there were people out there who could help. The warmth I felt walking out of the YES on that first day is what gave me hope to keep on fighting.*

*Over the months that followed, I began receiving 1-2-1 support and this became a lifeline to me. I openly spoke about how I felt for the first time, disclosing information that I had never told anyone and began to see that I could continue to live. In my darkest moments, the staff were there, pulling me back from the brink. 3 years later, I am still alive and want to be here – a significant change from where I was. I owe my life to youth work and I endeavour to give back, so that other people in my situation can receive the same support I was fortunate enough too.”*

## Youth Worker's Commentary

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*“They first started accessing youth work services 3 years ago where they came in as a volunteer to help with the Toon and through that started accessing mainly YES drop in provision and receiving support through challenging times. Since starting to access they have went onto achieve amazing things such as being an ambassador for the Year of Young People, speaking up for young people voices in parliament, becoming a member of the Scottish Youth Parliament and going on international travels volunteering to help the world. They are a remarkable young person who has come on so much from where they first started accessing 3 years ago. They now hold down permanent hours within the youth work service which is a credit to the work they have done over the past 3 years.”*

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## **Foreword from Dumfries and Galloway Council's Young People's Champion, Councillor Adam Wilson.**

As Dumfries and Galloway Council's Young People's Champion, it gives me great pleasure to introduce the Dumfries & Galloway Council Youth Work Service Research Report on the impact of community-based universal youth work, that was carried out in partnership with YouthLink Scotland, the University of Edinburgh and Northern Star.

Dumfries and Galloway is the first local authority area in Scotland to carry out academic research specifically looking at youth work within our communities. This report now gives hard evidence of the impact and difference youth work in Dumfries and Galloway makes to young people's lives across our region from Stranraer to Langholm and this supports the stories we continually hear from young people on the difference our Youth Work Service makes on their lives. To have the data and evidence which is academically rigorous to support the personal stories is vital to ensuring there is universal support for Youth Work Services.

The stories that were found during the research process are demonstrative of the clear impact that universal youth work provision has on the lives of our young people, but it also highlights the clear quality of the youth work practice that effectively and efficiently contributes to these impacts.

I hope as you read through this research study you will see the fundamental role that youth work plays within our local communities and the significant and life changing impacts it has on our young people.

# Statement of Endorsement

The data and commentary presented in this report is a valuable addition to the growing canon of evidence that demonstrates the impact of universal youth work. In keeping with the long-standing underlying values of youth work practice in Scotland, the voices of young people are central to this study. The findings confirm the significant influence of local youth work services in supporting young people across the communities of Dumfries and Galloway to achieve their potential.

As an academic partner in this project I commend this work and welcome the publication of the findings of this important research. The study has been undertaken in line with the principles and practice of Transformative Evaluation as conceived by Dr Sue Cooper and complements other similar national and international studies adopting this method. The data has been collected by practitioner researchers who engaged directly with young people to gather firsthand stories and bring meaning to their reflective experiences of participating in universal youth work.

The investigation has been undertaken with appropriate consideration of ethical dimensions. The analysis and coding of the emergent data has been rigorous and objective representing the perspectives of all partners involved in the project. The examples of data presented in the report reflect the core themes and findings arising from the collated stories of 100 young people.

The important lessons learned from this investigation will undoubtedly help shape the future direction of community-based youth services in Dumfries and Galloway, across Scotland and further afield.

**Dr Ian Fyfe**

University of Edinburgh

## Executive Summary

This report details the findings of a research study in Dumfries and Galloway. The study explored the impact of community-based universal youth work on young people who participated in these services.

The study used the Dr Sue Cooper's Transformative Evaluation methodology. Local youth workers in Dumfries and Galloway were trained to become research practitioners and gather impact stories from 100 young people. Young people shared their reflections of significant changes they had experienced as a result of participating in universal youth work. The stories were then contextualised by the youth workers to generate rich, co-authored significant change stories.

Qualitative analysis of the stories revealed the importance of universal youth work to young people and its value in supporting young people to develop and grow in the following areas:

- Confidence and self esteem
- Skills development
- Equality and inclusion
- Realising potential
- Broadening horizons
- Improving health and wellbeing
- Becoming active citizens

As well as examining impact, the study also identified the key elements of youth work practice that enabled and supported young people to achieve these changes in their lives. The following aspects of youth work practice were identified as important through analysis of the significant change stories:

- Provision of opportunities and activities
- Offering qualifications
- Offering progression routes
- Effective communication
- Positive and supportive relationships
- Relevant and engaging ways of working
- Informal learning
- Relaxation and fun
- Creating a safe and secure environment
- Challenging discrimination
- Recognising the importance of first contact with young people
- Championing equality and inclusion
- Supporting participation
- Enabling and encouraging representation and youth voice

The significant change stories provided strong evidence of the positive difference participation in universal youth work services had on young people in Dumfries and Galloway supporting them to survive, grow and thrive.

# 1. Introduction: Youth Work and Dumfries and Galloway

## Dumfries and Galloway

Dumfries and Galloway is a mainly rural local authority area in south-west Scotland. It covers 6,426 square kilometres, with a population of approximately 148,790 people (as of June 2018). Dumfries and Galloway has 4 traditional localities: Annandale and Eskdale, Nithsdale, Stewartry and Wigtownshire.

The main towns are Dumfries and Lochaberbriggs which have a combined total of 39,000 residents, Stranraer (10,500), Annan (8,900), Lockerbie (4,300), Dalbeattie (4,300), Castle Douglas (4,100) and Newton Stewart (4,000).

Nearly half of all people in Dumfries and Galloway (45.9%) live in areas classified as rural. The only urban areas are the towns of Dumfries and Stranraer, although neither is classified as a large urban area. In terms of accessibility, just over a quarter (27.8%) of the population live in areas classified as remote, which is defined as living further than 30 minutes drive away from a large town. At the 2011 Census, around one third of people (30.9%) in Dumfries and Galloway were living in settlements with fewer than 500 people.

There are 24,167 young people aged 10-24 in Dumfries and Galloway accounting for 16.2% of the population. Dumfries and Galloway's Youth Work Service (the Service) predominantly works with young people aged 12-25.

# Youth Work

The Statement on the Nature and Purpose of Youth Work defines youth work as “an educational practice contributing to young people’s learning and development.

Youth Work engages with young people within their communities digitally and physically; it acknowledges the wider networks of peers, community and culture; it supports the young person to realise their potential and to address life’s challenges critically and creatively; it takes account of all strands of diversity.

Youth work takes place in a variety of settings including community venues, uniformed groups, schools, youth cafés and on the street, whilst using numerous approaches such as outdoor pursuits, drama workshops, health initiatives, peer education and single issue and single gender work to engage with young people.”

All youth work is underpinned by three key principles:

1. Young people choose to participate
2. The work must build from where young people are
3. Youth work recognises the young person and the youth worker as partners in a learning process

Youth work can be targeted or universal. Targeted youth work involves focussed and tailored interventions aimed at specific groups of young people to bring about often pre-agreed outcomes. Universal youth work can be defined as open access with an open purpose and curriculum however in reality universal youth work can also often have a specific focus responding to young people and community needs.

Youth work in Scotland has faced some significant challenges in recent years driven by increasing demand and decreasing budgets. In order to secure funding for youth works services, local authorities and voluntary organisations are required to demonstrate the impact of their practice. It is challenging to evaluate the impact of open-access universal youth work. This study and the Transformative Evaluation methodology used provides a structured and participative way of understanding the impact that youth work makes on young people in Dumfries and Galloway.

# Youth Work

The Service is part of Dumfries and Galloway Council's Communities Directorate. The Service works with young people aged 12-25 to provide a range of universal and targeted opportunities across Dumfries and Galloway. Youth Work in Dumfries and Galloway has 5 main priorities:

- Youth Work in Schools
- Youth Participation and Youth Democracy
- Wider Achievement inc Duke of Edinburgh's Award
- Collaboration with Third Sector Youth Work
- Community Based Youth Work Opportunities

## Youth Work in Schools

The Service provides both targeted and universal provision in schools, to ensure that learners are accredited for their development and gain national qualifications.

## Youth Participation and Democracy

Dumfries and Galloway Council's Youth Participation and Engagement strategy, 2018-2021, sets out the ways in which young people can get involved in decision making across Dumfries and Galloway including the establishment of a Regional Youth Council and membership of the Scottish Youth Parliament. The Regional Youth Council and Scottish Youth Parliament enable young people to have their voices heard and shape decision making at a regional and national level. The Service also delivers the Listen2Us project and Champion's Board where care-experienced young people in Dumfries and Galloway can be involved in improving services.

## Wider Achievement inc Duke of Edinburgh's Award

The Service offers a range of accreditation and opportunities for young people to gain and build on their skills and abilities. Some of the awards the service delivers include Duke of Edinburgh's Award, Dynamic Youth Award, Youth Achievement Awards, John Muir Award, Participative Democracy Certificate (PDC), Saltire Awards and SQA in Volunteering.

## Collaboration with Third Sector Youth Work

The Youth Work Service works in collaboration with Third Sector organisations from across Dumfries & Galloway in order to ensure that all Youth Work providers are working in partnership and avoiding duplication within their provision, and to maximise the impact of all of our work on young people in local communities.



## Community Based Youth Work Opportunities

The Service delivers a range of projects, programmes and services across Dumfries and Galloway including:

- Youth groups and clubs
- Drop-in sessions
- Holiday programmes
- One-to-one support
- Issue-based youth work
- C4U Youth information - Dumfries and Galloway's 'c' card scheme
- Youth Events including Youth Beatz the UK's largest free music event for young people
- Collaboration with the Third Sector
- Running youth work bases (5 in total across the region)
- Youth Enquiry Service (YES)
- My Pod, a mobile youth centre

The Service worked with a total footfall of 42,976 young people in the period 1st April 2018 – 31st March 2019. Of this:

- 5,734 attended targeted services
- 24,022 attended youth work events
- 13,220 attended universal provision

All youth work planning takes account of the National Youth Work Outcomes and a number of Dumfries and Galloway's strategies and policies, including: Youth Participation & Engagement Strategy, Anti-Poverty Strategy, Community Participation & Engagement Strategy, Dumfries and Galloway Council Equality Outcomes, Children's Services Plan, and Dumfries and Galloway Council priorities.

Currently, there are 439 active volunteers supporting youth work delivery alongside a team of 50 staff across the region. In the financial year 2018/19, the Service had a core budget of £1.12 million and received £426,000 of external funding. The external funding came from a variety of organisations including Cashback for Communities, Young People's Choices, YouthLink Scotland, Awards for All, Scottish Government, LEADER, Young Start, Magnox, Heritage Lottery Fund, The Robertson Trust and Creative Scotland.

The terms 'youth work' and 'the Service' are used interchangeably in the report and refer to universal youth work provided by Dumfries and Galloway's Youth Work Service.

## 2. Purpose of the Research

The Youth Work Service in Dumfries and Galloway were keen to develop evidence of their impact to support planning, improvement and budgeting decisions within the council and externally. To do this the Service wanted to particularly focus on universal youth work provision and understand the impact of this work across the local authority area as this is the services main area of work.

In universal youth work, the curriculum is not predetermined but is developed through the partnership between a young person and the youth worker. Due to the open and flexible nature of universal youth work, there are unique evaluation challenges that do not exist with targeted provision and for this reason the Service chose to focus the research on universal youth work.

Through the process of evaluation, the Service wanted to give youth workers the opportunity to reflect on their practice, understand what works and understand the difference their practice makes on young people.

With this in mind, the research set out to answer two main questions:

1. What is the impact of universal youth work on young people in Dumfries and Galloway?
2. How was that impact achieved?

The research partnership consisted of:

- Dumfries and Galloway Council Youth Work Service,
- YouthLink Scotland, the national agency for youth work
- Northern Star, independent research and evaluation agency
- University of Edinburgh.

## 3. Methodology

The Transformative Evaluation methodology used in this research was used in a previous study 'The Impact of Community-based Universal Youth Work in Scotland'. The methodology developed by Dr Sue Cooper (Cooper 2012) is based on a reflective conversation between a young person and the youth worker. The methodology enables wider stakeholder engagement through the analysis of stories and seeks to provide both evidence of impact and development of practice through the process of evaluation.

This methodology is consistent with the values and approach of youth work, as it provides an opportunity to listen to the stories of young people about what they think they have gained from taking part in youth work. It is a method which encourages practice development:

- Youth Workers receive authentic feedback from young people about how their practice has impacted on their lives;
- Both youth workers and stakeholders have an opportunity to reflect on 'what is working and therefore improve and develop practice accordingly';
- It facilitates wider development of organisational learning and knowledge creation in the longer term; and,
- It creates a culture of evaluation built on collaboration and trust between all stakeholders which supports organisational learning and sustainable practice.

### Study sites and data collection

This study focussed on four geographical localities in Dumfries and Galloway:

- Annandale and Eskdale
- Nithsdale
- Stewartry
- Wigtownshire

In May 2019, YouthLink Scotland provided training for youth workers from each locality who became practitioner researchers and collected stories from young people who had accessed universal youth work provision.

Following initial training, practitioner researchers identified young people to participate in the research. Young people were selected to participate based on the practitioner researcher's perception that the young person had experienced a change in their life as a result of their involvement in youth work. Between May and July 2019, a total of 17 practitioner researchers gathered 100 stories from young people from the four sites across Dumfries and Galloway. Practitioner researcher asked the same question to each young person during the data collection:

*Looking back, what do you think has been the most significant change that occurred for you as a result of coming here?*

Once the stories had been gathered, the practitioner researchers contextualised each story with their own commentary. The significant change stories consist of the young person's input and the practitioner researcher's commentary which the young person approved. Young people were also asked for their consent to share their stories in the final report. The stories were anonymised before analysis and young people were asked to choose a pseudonym to use in their story.

## **Coding and Analysis**

Analysis of the significant change stories initially involved reading each story and identifying key themes and trends known as codes. This process is called coding.

Coding generated two types of codes:

- Impact codes that described the difference universal youth work had on young people. There were 34 impact codes.
- Process codes that described what it is about the youth work process that generates the impact. There were 16 process codes.

There were four main phases of analysis. Phases 1, 2 and 3 took place in August 2019, whilst phase 4 took place in September and October 2019.

1. In phase 1, members of the research team read and reviewed 18 stories and identified the key codes emerging. The 18 stories were randomly selected and at this workshop, the research team identified an initial set of codes for impact and process.
2. In phase 2, practitioner researchers coded the remaining 82 stories using the codes identified in phase 1 plus noting any other codes that arose in these stories.

3. Phase 3 involved another workshop with members of the research team to:

a. Consolidate the initial codes into final, overall domains. This process involved organising the codes into groups and agreeing an overall name for that group. For example young people identified a wide range of skills that they had developed through youth work from skills for life to employability skills to creative and performance skills. All of these skills codes were combined together under the domain of Skills Development. A domain will have a number of codes attached to it. Domains help to summarise and describe the findings of the study.

b. Select stories that exemplify these final impact and process domains – 16 stories selected

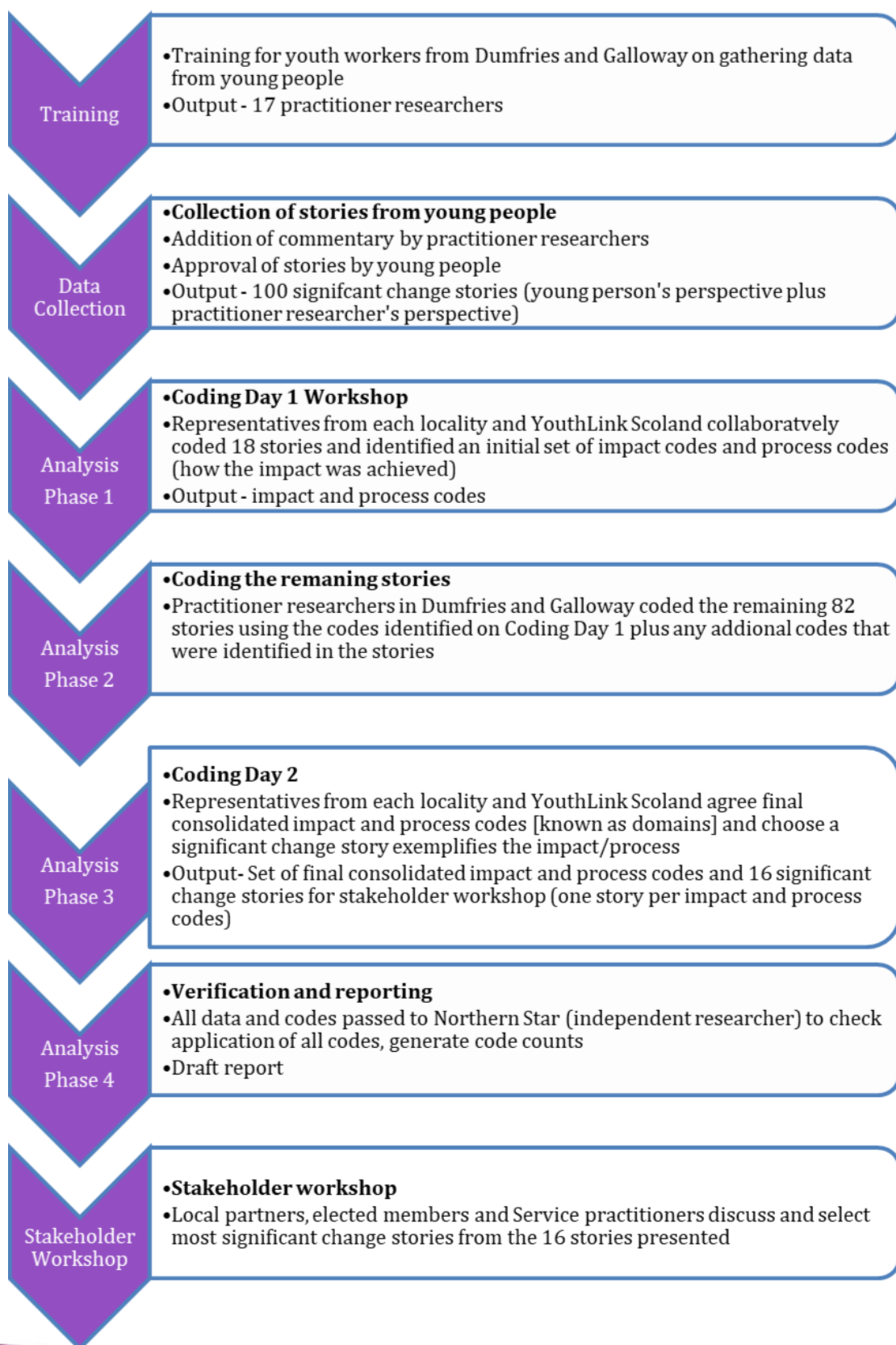
4. In phase 4, all of the data and codes were independently checked and verified by the independent researcher from Northern Star. This process ensured that the codes were applied consistently across stories, that there is enough evidence for application of codes and that the initial codes contribute to the relevant final domain.

## Stakeholder Workshop

In addition to the four phases of analysis, the 16 stories selected by the research team as exemplifying the final impact and process domains were reviewed by a stakeholder group in September 2019. The stakeholder group was made up of youth work professionals, local partners and Elected Members who all had an interest in youth work but were not directly involved in delivery. Please see Appendix 1 for more detail on the stakeholder group.

The stakeholder group reviewed 16 stories and chose 9 stories that they considered to demonstrate the most significant change that universal youth work has delivered in Dumfries and Galloway.

# Summary of Transformative Evaluation Methodology in Dumfries and Galloway



## Limitations of Study

The four locality sites were selected to cover the range of geographical provision of universal youth work in Dumfries and Galloway. The findings in this report contribute to the body of evidence on the impact of youth work but cannot be generalised to other local authority areas.

The young people selected to participate in the research were those known to the practitioner researcher through their involvement in youth work and deemed to have experienced some kind of change as a result of their involvement.

The research did not set out to measure the proportion of young people that had experienced change as a result of youth work but rather to better understand the extent to which universal youth work impacts young people engaging with the service. The research therefore cannot be applied to all young people who engaged in the Service.

The research only focussed on young people who had engaged in universal youth work provided by Dumfries and Galloway Council's service and cannot be generalised to the whole of the youth work sector which includes third sector providers.

The conversation between young people and practitioner researchers focussed on the personal changes and development young people identified and did not focus on changes in the broader community. Where impact in the community was identified by young people it has been coded as so, but there is not an explicit focus on collective community action or change in the report.



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## Young Person, aged 22 (Story 17)

*“I first started accessing drop ins, I had many problems and a chaotic life. Attending drop ins became a very regular thing which led to other opportunities becoming available, such as attending groups that focussed on some of the issues I'd had to face. Some of these included mental health and bereavement. I also was given 1-2-1 support and endless opportunities to volunteer. Doing all of these things built my confidence, made me a better more tolerant person, and helped me decide that I too one day want to be a youth worker. The biggest and most significant change to me in my life is that I am no longer alone. I am still fighting a lot of demons, but I now face them head on, and with a whole army of people by my side. No matter what is going on in my life there is always someone willing to listen and help where they can, be it a youth worker or another young person. Over the years we've become somewhat of a dysfunctional family, that's always getting bigger and better. Accessing youth work services has been an incredible journey for me and I wouldn't change it one bit. It's been the best and biggest part of my life for almost 11 years, I would not be where I am and who I am without it. The amazing thing about this service is that the opportunities are endless, there is something for each and every type of young person that walks through the door. Becoming a part of this service changed my life, it gave me hope and strength and the will to keep living and keep fighting, and without that I absolutely would not be here today.”*

## Youth Worker's Commentary

*“They accessed our drop in sessions nearly 11 years ago with their friends for the first time and has never looked back. They gained confidence to look at other opportunities they could be involved in within our service and took part in various issue-based projects, life skills, health and wellbeing projects and community based programmes. They always have a willingness to learn, showing effort to try their hardest in any piece of work or project they are involved with and show courage to face personal challenges with the confidence to do their best and help others around them. They are a caring, reliable and respected young person who shows perseverance to deal with challenges around their physical and mental health, which at times they do struggle with but are determined to not let it overrule their life. They have become a well-valued young person who volunteer their time to support youth work staff to deliver activities in schools, being a peer educator and recently being a Year Of Young People champion planning, organising and developing opportunities for all young people across Dumfries and Galloway. They are part of the school uniform bank programme volunteering their time to organise and prepare school clothing and school essentials for local families to have access to come along and pick what items they need.”*

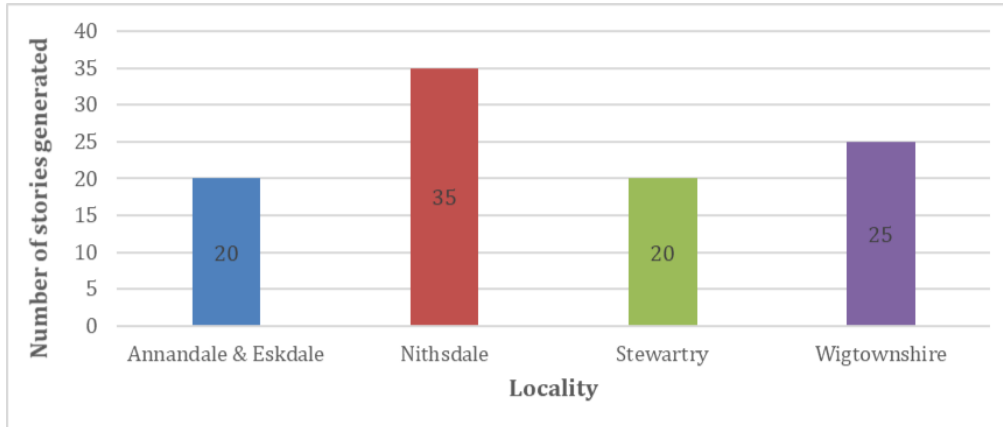
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# 4. Findings

## 4.1 Analysis of Stories

**Chart 1: Number of stories generated by locality**

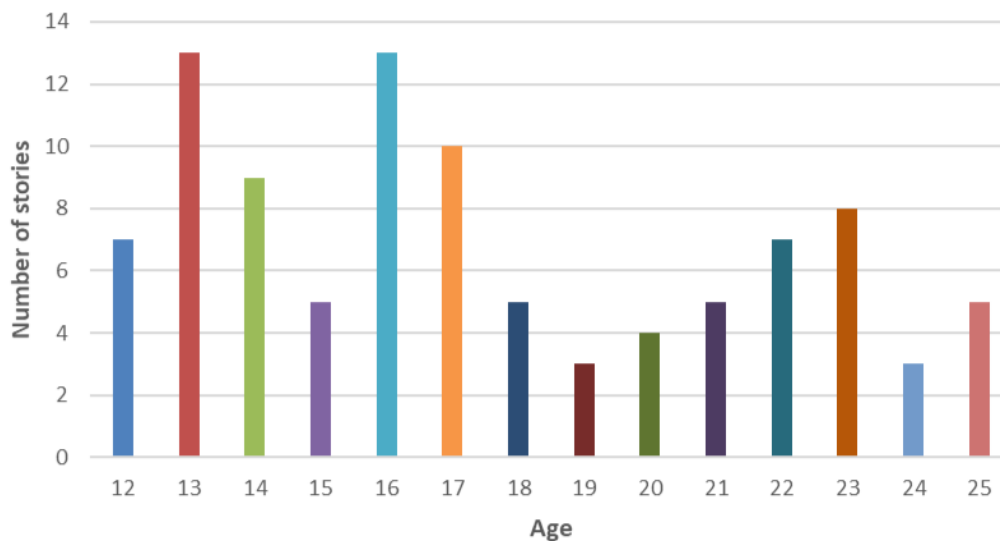


The number of stories collected by locality are proportionate to the population of young people in those localities.

### Age of participating young people

The significant change stories were generated by young people aged 12 to 25. Three young people participating in the study chose not to reveal their age.

**Chart 2: Number of stories generated by age**



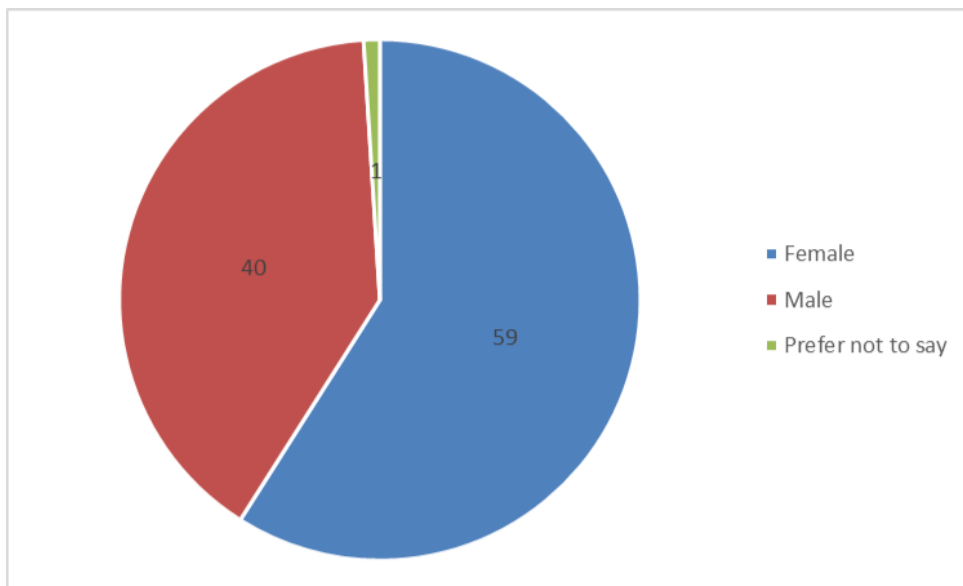
Just under two-thirds of stories were collected from young people of secondary school age 11-18 years old (n=62) with the remaining third coming from young people who were 19 -25 years old (n=35). Those aged 13, 16 and 17 provided the most stories. This age split is representative of the young people that engage with the Service.

## Gender of participating young people

During the collection of the significant change stories, young people were asked to self-identify their gender in whichever way they felt comfortable doing so.

Most young people identified as male or female whilst one young person preferred not to say. In line with Dumfries and Galloway Council's policy, direct quotations and stories are not attributed to gender and gender-specific pronouns in the youth workers commentary have been changed to 'they'.

**Chart 3: Number of stories generated by gender**



More stories were generated by females (n=59) than males (n=40).

**Table 1: Number of stories generated by gender and locality**

Locality	Female	Male
Annandale & Eskdale	12	8
Nithsdale	24	10
Stewartry	11	9
Wigtownshire	12	13

In three out of four locality areas, more stories were generated by females with Nithsdale in particular having a much higher number of stories from females (n=24) than males (n=11). Wigtownshire is the only area that collected more stories from males.

## Stories and codes

There were a total of 60 initial codes identified – 34 impact codes and 26 process codes. Each individual code can only be applied once to a story. Across all the localities, the average number of codes per story is 11.

**Table 2: Average number of codes per story**

Locality	Av no. of impact codes per story	Av no. of process codes per story	Av no. of total codes per story
Annandale & Eskdale	6.1	3.7	9.8
Nithsdale	8.9	5.5	14.4
Stewartry	4.5	2.8	7.3
Wigtownshire	6.2	4.1	10.4
Across all Localities	6.8	4.3	11.0

Across all localities, there were a higher average number of impact codes per story than process codes. This is to be expected given the focus of the significant change stories was on the impact of universal youth work on young people.



## 4.2 The impact of universal youth work on young people

During analysis there were 34 impact codes generated which were grouped together into 7 impact domains. Table 3 below shows both the impact codes and the impact domains. Please note that like the codes, each domain can only be applied to a story once. For example if a story has both the confidence and courage codes applied, this will only count as one application of the confidence and self-esteem code. For this reason the number of stories in which the impact domain is present (final column of the table) is lower than the total code count across stories (second column in the table).

**Table 3: Impact codes and domains**

Impact Codes	Code count across stories	Impact Domains	Number of stories in which impact domain
Confidence/Self-Esteem	80	<b>CONFIDENCE/ SELF-ESTEEM</b>	82
Courage	11		
<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b>		
Developing Social Skills (including communication)	41	<b>SKILLS DEVELOPMENT</b>	72
Life Skills	21		
Positive relationships with others	22		
Coping/Survival Skills	12		
Performance/Public Speaking skills	22		
<b>Total</b>	<b>118</b>		
Making Friends	47	<b>EQUALITY AND INCLUSION</b>	71
Reducing isolation and Loneliness	12		
Sense of Belonging to Youth Group	17		
Social Life (getting out of the house)	34		
<b>Total</b>	<b>110</b>		

Positive Destination	33	<b>REALISING POTENTIAL</b>	68
Progression Routes	47		
Realising Potential and Personal Achievement	32		
Gaining Qualifications	20		
Transformational	10		
<b>Total</b>	<b>142</b>		
Changing Attitudes	4	<b>BROADENING HORIZONS</b>	56
Independence	10		
Maturing	11		
New Experiences	42		
Cultural Awareness	18		
Seeing Bigger Picture	4		
<b>Total</b>	<b>89</b>		
Empathy	7	<b>IMPROVED HEALTH AND WELLBEING</b>	48
Hope	4		
Improved Mental Health	11		
Positive impact on other parts of their lives	12		
Resilience	14		
Overcoming Fear	7		
Reduction in Negative Behaviour	15		
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>		
Community Spirit & Civic Pride	8	<b>BECOMING ACTIVE CITIZENS</b>	43
Creating Change	6		
Leadership	28		
Role Model	7		
Sense of Responsibility	10		
<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>		

## 4.2 The impact of universal youth work on young people

Increases in confidence can be seen in **82%** of significant change stories. Skills development was identified as an impact in **72%** of stories whilst being equal and included was found in **71%** of stories. Young people identified that universal youth work had enabled them to realise their potential, broaden their horizons, improve their health and wellbeing and become active citizens.

This section provides more detail on each of the impact domains and illustrative quotes from young people and practitioner researchers. The quotes from young people and workers are not from the same story unless this is explicitly indicated. Any names used in the quotes are pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of the young people participating in the research.

When reading this section, it is important to remember that rarely do the codes or domains occur in isolation. The impact of universal youth work on young people is multi-faceted and multi-layered with many connections between codes and domains.



## Confidence

In 82% of stories, young people identified improvements in confidence/self-esteem as an impact of their involvement in universal youth work. An increase in confidence was often the first thing mentioned by young people. Improved confidence made a significant difference on young people in the short and long term.

Young people improved their confidence to speak to and socialise with other people, make friends, and speak in front of a group. Increased confidence helped young people to try new experiences, access progression routes such as other youth work opportunities, courses and qualifications, and employment.

Increased confidence was linked to young people volunteering and developing leadership skills. It is not possible to say whether increased confidence leads to increased social skills, progression routes, volunteering or leadership or vice versa. It is likely to be a complex interchange of these factors, however being able to access support, a safe space, and positive relationships with youth workers all play a role in developing confident young people.



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*“I definitely feel like I’m more who I want to be now than I was when I first started accessing. I definitely think I’m more open to like different, different ways of living, like different young people that live within one society, so more open minded. As much as people will tell you I was able to talk when I first started like, my confidence has gone through the roof. I was able to come out like and not feel ashamed of it, like who I am and things like that.”*

### **Q1, Young Person, 18**

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*“So, I can say its boosted my confidence about meeting new people. It helped me get out and interact with other people a lot more and stuff like that...Yeah because like before I came to group, I wasn’t interacting with anyone else. Like, I was at home all the time, like I never came out, never met anybody and shut myself in, after what happened to me. But like now, coming to group, its helped me, it’s boosted my self-esteem, so I can go out and do a lot more things. “*

### **Q2, Young Person, 23**

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*“When first meeting them, they were very shy and at that time were struggling with being undiagnosed on the autistic spectrum. This was a daily struggle for them and they found it difficult to fit in with their peer group. With support and encouragement they continued to come along which gave them the opportunity to talk through their anxieties and feelings.*

*Once they realised that their feelings were due to a condition it enabled them to grow in confidence while having an understanding of why they felt different and found friendships and groups difficult. This has allowed them to have the confidence and self-esteem to take part in different activities giving them a new outlook on life. They now believe they can do anything they put their mind to which has given them a positive outlook for their future.”*

### **Q3, Youth Worker**

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## Skills Development

Occurring in 72% of significant change stories, participation in youth work enables young people to develop skills that help them navigate their lives and the challenges they face.

Through youth work, young people were better able to meet new people. Their improved social skills and in particular improved communication skills helped young people to make new friends, maintain existing ones and cultivate positive relationships with other people in their lives.

Young people highlighted their ability to speak, present or perform in front of others as a direct result of their participation in youth work specifically the arts/music/events focussed work such as The Toon and Youth Beatz. They had also developed important life skills such as task and project management, teamwork, independent travel and event planning and delivery.

A number of young people participating in the research had faced real difficulty and challenging times in their lives for a variety of reasons including bereavement, bullying, substance abuse or a challenging home environment which had led to isolation, mental health issues and for some young people involvement with the police.

Data from the significant change stories highlighted the coping mechanisms and survival skills young people had learnt through youth work which had helped them through the challenges and problems they faced.



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*“...being involved in like different groups have helped me to develop my skills when it comes to public speaking and also to like interact with people more and well and also build my effective communication and because I've been involved with different groups like The Toon, Global Education and Bouncin' Bairns”*

**Q4, Young Person, 18**

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*“I think another difference for me is before I started accessing I would never dream of standing up in front of a group, never dream of taking the lead on doing something, and I would never dream of running a project or anything myself, but now I can do that.*

*I've ran training for other young people, I'm currently running training with other young people doing events and production. Em, that's also a big change for me, when I first started accessing I didn't know what I wanted to do in life, I had no clue of what there was out there for me. So through attending universal youth work, I have developed skills on live events and production.”*

**Q5, Young Person, 21**

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*“At age 14, I attended Super Mondays, it's a drop in for people with special needs...I attended Youth Beatz as a volunteer and helped to do different stalls, money handling skills and other things too, and like going round and selling stuff to people. Then The Toon, it's an interactive drama, it's for issues that young people face. I attended Live n Learn programme which taught me life skills like budgeting, cooking.”*

**Q6, Young Person, 23**

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## Equality and Inclusion

Universal youth work in Dumfries and Galloway provides a welcoming and safe space for any and all young people to access regardless of background or personal circumstance.

The majority of stories (71%) from young people discussed how youth work has made them feel equal and included. Young people described their youth work provision as “family”. They felt a sense of belonging to their youth group whilst the drop-in sessions and youth clubs helped young people to “get out of the house” and have a social life. This is particularly important in rural local authority like Dumfries and Galloway where young people can feel isolated and lonely as a result of geography.

Youth workers provided a space for young people to make friends with friendships often continuing outside of the youth work space. The clear boundaries and positive role modelling provided by youth workers encourages the development of respectful, healthy relationships both within and out with youth groups.

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*“So, when I was growing up, em, I knew I was LGBT but I didn’t necessarily express it so when I was going through school, that’s where most of my bad behaviour came from because everyone was just taking the mick out of me and I just couldn’t deal with it, but after coming here it’s like I’ve got a safe place now and I was able to come out to my family as a result of coming here because they gave me the confidence and stuff like that, em, also now I’m starting to organise other LGBT events for young people in Dumfries and Galloway so they can express themselves without being judged or scared or bullied or stuff like that.”*

**Q7, Young Person, 20**

*“Youth work most definitely changed my life for the better and made me into the person I am today. After years of being a volunteer and spending endless number of hours within the service it was truly family and a home from home.”*

**Q8, Young Person, 23**

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## Realising Potential

The realising potential domain includes gaining qualifications, accessing progression routes, personal achievements and progress towards positive destinations such as education, training or employment.

In terms of the total number of initial codes, the realising potential domain had the most with 142 codes across the stories. This is an important finding given the study is an investigation of open access universal youth work and not targeted employability provision.

Many young people (68%) were able to clearly describe the progression routes open to them with one third of young people ending up in a positive destination such as employment, training, education or volunteering roles through their engagement with universal youth work. A number of young people directly credit youth work intervention for securing successful employment and finding their chosen career path. For some young people this was a career in youth work motivated by their positive experiences and the desire to give something back.

Through participation in youth work, young people were able to work towards and gain qualifications such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award that recognises skill development, volunteering and supports their personal development journey.

Young people reflected on how youth workers encouraged them to realise their potential through accessing new experiences and tailored support and this has been transformational for some young people. The Service provided a safe place and support for young people to turn their lives around and achieve what they didn't believe they were capable of. Instilling confidence and self-belief in young people and providing the progression routes for development has helped young people grow, achieve and realise their potential.



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*“I started accessing youth work opportunities when I was around 15 or 16, I started attending evening drop ins just for something to do, I was just sitting at home bored, on my Xbox. I took part in various young leader training programmes, and was able to take part in several accredited awards, including my Bronze Duke of Edinburgh and Dynamic Youth Award which I think helped my CV as I wasn't great at school. Now, I work at an outdoor education centre, which specialises in working with young people, I think that the stuff I got involved in through youth work without a doubt helped me to get into this job.”*

**Q9, Young Person, 22**

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*“The young person accessed our youth work services for the first time 9 years ago... Starting off as young person, to young leader volunteer role, modern apprentice, attended university, graduated with their community development degree, and now has a permanent job with our youth work service.”*

**Q10, Youth Worker**

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*“Youth workers are so much more than what you think, not only do they support you, but they champion you in a sense, just like empowering you to be everything you can be.”*

**Q11, Young Person, 21**

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## Broadening Horizons

Engaging in universal youth work in Dumfries and Galloway gave young people the opportunity to explore new experiences and activities. This included activities within youth clubs, learning new skills like music, performance or events management, new volunteering roles and international exchanges.

Young people spoke really positively of their participation in new experiences which has helped them to develop a mature outlook, increase their knowledge and understanding of other cultures and see the bigger picture.

For young people, taking part in these new experiences enabled them to be more independent and take responsibility for themselves within a safe environment and they gained enormously from this. In particular young people (56%) reported that the international exchanges they participated in made a lasting impact in terms of cultural awareness, confidence and leadership.



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*“I would say it's helped me with confidence growing and helping me move on, move forward from being a younger person into more of an adult person and transitioning into a older person that like to help out volunteering and like to get involved with staff and help them organise stuff for young people that go along to the group on a Monday night.”*

**Q12, Young Person, 25**

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*“[This young person] is 16 [and] first accessed youth work services in Annan, when they were 12 years old. They were really quiet and shy, they found it difficult to interact with lots of different young people, didn't leave their house that often.*

*Now they are a young leader with services in Annan and Oasis Youth Centre, They have accessed 4 different groups a week; through engaging with Youth Work Services, they have realised their own potential, they have grown in confidence, came out of their shell, they are a completely different young person, they mix well in front of others, they have gained wider accreditation and were successful in becoming a local Youth Councillor where they have talked in front of large audiences, something they thought they would never be able to achieve.”*

**Q13, Youth Worker**

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## Improved Health and Wellbeing

For lots of the young people in the research (48%), universal youth work provision in Dumfries and Galloway is a haven and respite from the challenges and problems they face in their lives. Young people reported an improvement in their mental health as a result of engaging in the Service. The significant change stories detailed the issues young people were dealing with including bullying, isolation, bereavement, self-harm, and substance abuse all of which had a negative impact on their mental health. Participation in youth work had helped young people to understand these issues better, develop coping and survival strategies and an ability to manage their emotions and communicate more effectively.

The data in the stories reveals a reduction in risk-taking, and harmful, negative behaviours whilst signposting by youth workers helps young people access appropriate support services.

Young people were clear about the importance of the Service as a place to escape from the pressures of home, school and peers without fear of judgement. Universal youth work provision was a place where they could be themselves and talk through their worries. For some young people this safe space gave them time to regroup and develop coping mechanisms.

Improvements in health and well-being led to a positive impact on other areas of young people's lives whether that be at school, their relationship with family and friends or interactions with services such as the Police.





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*“I have really struggled with my mental health, from self-harming to anxiety, I feel like I’ve been through it all, and at some points struggled to see the light at the end of the tunnel. Youth work has opened my eyes in so many ways, getting 1-2-1 support on a regular basis from people who were willing to listen to me and who genuinely cared was just incredible.*

*Taking part in group work and volunteering has really changed who I am as a person, my mental health is slowly improving, and I’m more confident, and have recently gotten into college to study health and social care, in the hope that one day I can either be a Youth Worker, or a mental health nurse. I really want to thank every youth worker, you are all just amazing.”*

**Q14, Young Person,19**

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*“When I was younger, I was in with a bad crowd and doing things I really shouldn’t be doing, like taking lines, MDMA and drinking. Through going to youth work, I have managed to stop this, as I have learnt more about the dangers and potential consequences of taking part in this. I have also become more confident to not do everything that everyone else encourages me to do.*

*I now volunteer at youth groups and help at fundraisers to raise money for our groups. Youth work keeps me busy, out of trouble, and gets me out of the house.”*

**Q15, Young Person,16**

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## Becoming Active Citizens

The significant change stories provided evidence that participation in universal youth work in Dumfries and Galloway leads to young people becoming responsible and active citizens.

This was most frequently realised by young people taking on leadership roles within their youth group or representing young people in decision making structures. Young people described being motivated by a sense of responsibility and “wanting to give something back” by helping other young people as they had themselves being helped.

Many young people became young volunteers in their youth group which involved planning activities and opportunities and providing support for other young people. Youth workers highlighted that these young volunteers were positive role models for other young people in the Service.

Some young people were involved in the Champions Board helping to shape services for care experienced young people, whilst others were involved in structures such as the Youth Council and the Scottish Youth Parliament.



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*“It’s probably been getting involved in things in my town like with the old folk and all. After I did the Secret Saints activism residential and the roots day I felt inspired to get more involved in things like that and I think it has helped me to understand how important young folk are for a community and how we have the power to make things happen.*

*I feel like the things we do is important to our community and we get respected for it. I did the transition project too helping the new P7’s come up to high school and sharing my experiences with them and helping them made me feel good. I suppose I feel like doing stuff like this is a good use of my time and I am giving something back.”*

**Q16, Young Person, 14 [linked to Q17]**

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*“They have been accessing our services since they themselves came through the social transition programme in P7. Since then, they have been involved in a lot of our groups and projects. The significance here is the impact they, and others in their group, have had, not only in themselves, but the wider community.*

*We have observed them becoming more independent and empowered, taking the lead on intergenerational, social transition and community projects. They have been part of the group who have secured funding to tackle poverty and create new opportunities for other young people. We have seen them grow in confidence, demonstrate leadership qualities and inspire others to take part.”*

**Q17, Youth Worker [linked to Q16]**

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## Young Person, aged 23 (Story 16)

*“So when I first started accessing I wasn't very confident I had a small friendship group, and I had other interests such as like football, so I just done a lot of football, and for me, when I was growing up a lot of stuff was that I got told what to do, rather than actually being asked what I wanted to do. So when I started coming to my local youth group they then asked me what I wanted to do and I was kind of shocked by it as I didn't know how to answer it. But then through that I started coming to more drop ins and coming to different groups and meeting new people. Then I ended up...meeting a new group of friends from the other side of town and then started becoming more pally with them and became best friends with that group which then allowed me to become more confident and getting involved in a whole load of other stuff with Oasis.*

*I would say the biggest change is becoming more confident, in different things, just talking to different people in general, standing up for myself, not being afraid to try new things. Through that from becoming more involved with youth work and being involved in different services and accessing different ones I then knew that Youth work was what I wanted to do as a job. Then through that so I, cos I knew that's what I wanted to do I then started to think how am I going to get there. So I then done more training so I went by myself and done PDA in Youth Work when I was a young person and I was like surrounded by all these Youth Workers that were twice my age, sometimes three times my age, it was kind of scary but I knew that that's what I wanted to do. I also then became a young leader through youth work, meaning that I got to work with young people voluntarily, helping people, helping the staff out and learning new stuff through that and then coming on to better things. I then went and done an international trip to Australia, and we had to fundraise money to go there, and the group of us raised £48,000 pounds to go and travel and do different voluntary opportunities across in Australia, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore.*

*Probably, before I couldn't see myself in this position where now, I'm now living on my own, I've got my own house, I've got a child, and I'm doing it all myself. So I guess I didn't really see myself being here then.*

*What I've been involved in? Loads, lots of different things, loads of voluntary opportunities. I've now been able to apply for a job and I then became a modern apprenticeship in Youth Work so I did that for three years and I got the chance to plan and organise and deliver different projects and groups to young people and then I then went on to get myself a permanent post in youth work which is what I'm doing now and hopefully I keep going.”*

## Youth Worker's Commentary

*“They came to youth groups initially because their friends were accessing. From there, they then became involved participating in different groups and additional support. They attended training opportunities and became a young leader leading on sessions and peer educating other young people. As their confidence grew, they then applied to go on an international volunteering trip and were successful. They were supported to complete their C.V and applied for a job – they are now in full time work. They have grown so much in the time that they have accessed services and are now pursuing a career they have always wanted to do.”*



### 4.3 How was the impact on young people achieved?

This section of the report looks at the elements of the youth work process that were identified as supporting delivery of impact with young people. As described above, any themes that emerged during the analysis process that were concerned with the nature, purpose and practice of youth work were recorded as process codes. Process codes describe what it is about the youth work process that generates impact. There were originally 26 process codes identified which were then grouped together into 16 process codes and 3 process domains.

**Table 4: Youth work process codes and domains**

Process Codes	Counts	Process Domain	Number of stories in which Process Domain is present
Providing Opportunities and Activities	23	WHAT WE DO	72
Skills Development Opportunities	12		
Volunteer Opportunities	34		
Offering Qualifications	17		
Providing Progression Routes	40		
Positive Relationships with others	126		
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>		
Effective Communication	15	HOW WE DO IT	86
Positive and Supportive Relationships	114		
Ways of Working	33		
Informal Learning	9		
Relaxation and Fun	17		
Safety and Security	33		
<b>Total</b>	<b>221</b>		

Process Codes	Counts	Process Domain	Number of stories in which Process Domain is present
Challenging Discrimination	5	<b>ETHOS AND VALUES</b>	<b>51</b>
Importance of first contact	4		
Equality and Inclusion	28		
Participation	25		
Representation and Youth Voice	16		
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>		

The following section provides more detail on each of the process domains as well as illustrative quotes from young people and practitioner researchers. The quotes from young people and workers are not from the same story unless this is explicitly indicated.

The impact that universal youth work has on a young person is often achieved over a long period of time using a variety of tools, methods and approaches. There is no one-size-fits-all in youth work and support is tailored to a young person's needs.

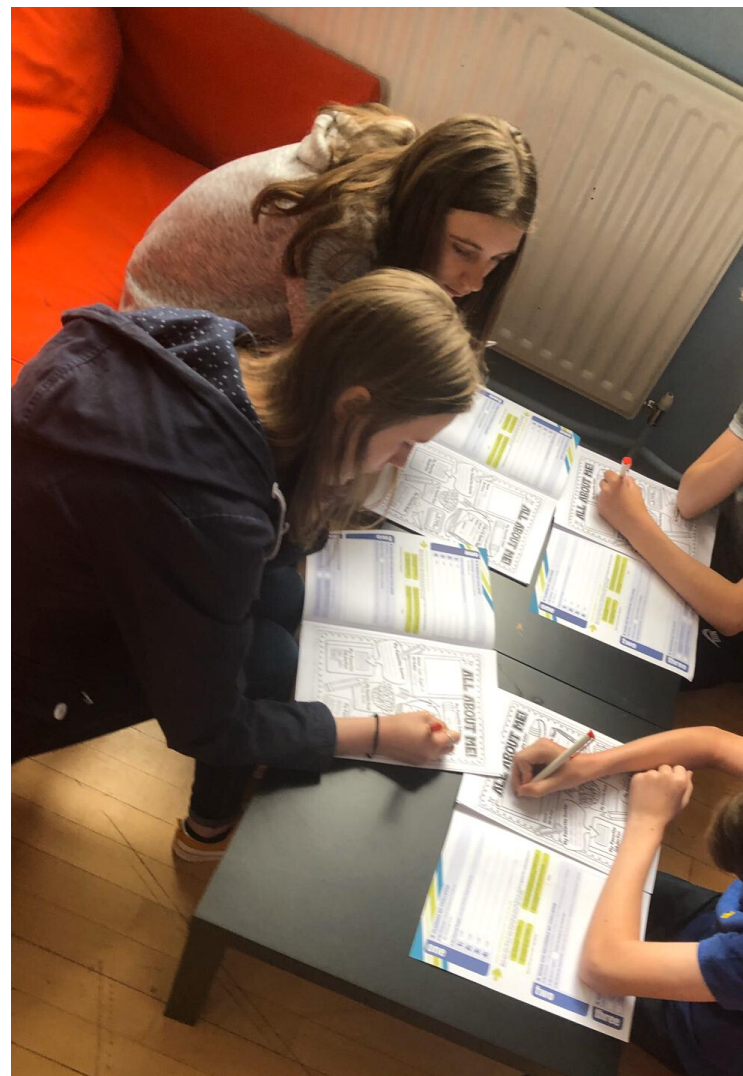


## What Dumfries and Galloway Does

Providing opportunities for young people is a core part of universal youth work. The Service in Dumfries and Galloway provides space, time, activities and opportunities for young people which helps to deliver the impact described in the previous section.

Engaging in opportunities supported young people to develop their skills and confidence and in particular the music/arts activities and events gave young people the opportunity to develop technical skills.

Engagement in universal youth work opportunities often led to other youth work provision or accessing training or education or employment. These progression routes enabled young people to develop at their own pace and contributed to them realising their potential.



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*“Youth work changed my life because it gave me access to opportunities I wouldn’t have had otherwise. I got the chance to take part in different volunteering with young people who have additional support needs and disabilities. I thoroughly enjoyed taking part in the international trips which allowed me to expand my knowledge of different cultures.”*

**Q18, Young Person, 23**

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*“In around 2nd year they started getting involved with a group of older people and drinking quite a lot, getting highlighted to the police regularly for being involved in anti-social behaviour. We managed to get them into a young citizens programme, where they could work alongside youth workers, police and fire services in a fun, informal environment and through this we started to notice an improvement in their attitude, behaviour and they were drinking less. Within a few months they were back regularly accessing provisions and signed up for the DofE award.”*

**Q19, Youth Worker**

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*“it gives us something to do so instead of like getting in trouble with police and all that, I can come to youth work and if anything does happen I can say that I was here instead of outside getting in to trouble and all that.”*

**Q20, Young Person, 15**

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## How Dumfries and Galloway Does It

A strong theme in the significant change stories was the importance of youth workers in young people's lives. Young people spoke very highly of their youth workers and valued their relationship and the support and encouragement they provided.

The stories highlighted the wide range of skills, knowledge of local context and issues affecting young people that youth workers called on to practice effectively. The local networks both of young people and local partners that youth workers had developed were really important in identifying and approaching young people and especially those in crisis.

### Positive and supportive relationships

Young people talked extensively and passionately about the difference youth workers had made to their lives and attributed this in part to the strong relationships they had developed.

The relationships between young people and youth workers were positive, encouraging and supportive, modelling the kind of healthy respectful relationships that youth workers encouraged young people to have with others.

Young people who were facing difficulties in their lives were offered 1-2-1 support and young people really valued the safe space and time to talk through problems. Youth workers took the time to get to know young people. They were concerned with young people's wellbeing, checking in on them to make sure they were ok, signposting them to services and supporting them to access additional support where appropriate. Actions and ways forward were negotiated with young people and not done to them.

Young people were supported, cared for and encouraged by their youth workers. They felt welcomed, wanted and talked about how youth workers were always there for them. Youth workers listened and did not judge which made young people feel they could speak freely and openly with a sense of trust.

Many of the young people highlighted the importance of the support that youth workers provide for young people in securing employment. In particular their positive experiences of youth work encouraged a number of young people to pursue a career in youth work.

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*“Throughout my youth work journey, I was challenging but youth work and the staff were always there for me and never gave up on me.”*

**Q21, Young Person, 23**

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*“Through the support of the service and staff I have managed to reach my potential even when at times I had no self-belief that I would get there, youth work always believed in me and always challenged me to put myself out my comfort zone.”*

**Q22, Young Person, 23**

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*“My story is about my experience getting bullied and the help that I got from youth workers to get through it. It all started online and everyone at school knew about it and then it started to get worse in person. To start with I never told anybody and found it easier to just not come out. The workers must have heard about it and met me one day in the school and we talked about it. From then on they were a huge support. We did stuff in the group about bullying and things got easier.”*

**Q23, Young Person, 17**

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## Effective Communication

Part of building the positive and supportive relationships described on the previous page was a commitment by youth workers to engage in effective conversation.

Youth Workers highlighted the important of active listening and encouraging a dialogue and partnership with young people.

*"I think having somebody that's always there to listen and doesn't judge you, you kinda get used to telling youth workers things and ye ken that they understand where you're coming from and don't yap like maybe yer Ma or Da does. You can actually talk about things and then take their advice cos they help you see sense."*

**Q24, Young Person, 16**



## Safety and Security

Youth workers (and young people) were able to create a safe space for youth work to take place in. This was really important to the young people in this research especially those facing problems in their lives. Young people felt they could be themselves and share personal information about themselves in a warm, supportive and caring environment. Youth workers provided a refuge for young people from the challenges they faced within their lives.

Young people valued the space (both physical and social) to come and express themselves, meet others and socialise in an environment based on respect and clear boundaries.

Young people and youth workers noted the importance of the provision of food and other practical support such as support for housing and financial support.



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*“I wasn’t in my best stride and I was going through a rough patch at home and more recently found myself homeless. I spoke to my youth workers and they helped me into homeless accommodation.”*

**Q25, Young Person, 21**

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*“Youth workers made me feel really welcome, and gave me a toastie for my lunch and a cup of tea. It’s given me a bit of courage to actually stand up for myself, and although the bullying hasn’t stopped, it certainly isn’t as bad as what it was. Accessing the lunch time drop in gave me a sense of confidence, and made me realise that I’m not “weird” or a “freak” or whatever they would call me. It made me happy, feel safe and supported.”*

**Q26, Young Person,16**

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*“I think coming to the youth group has helped me because when arguments were happening at home I could use it [the youth group] as an escape and get, like, to socialise with friends and talk to them. Now me and my Mum don’t fall out as much and things are better there.”*

**Q27, Young Person,12**

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## Informal Learning and Ways of Working

Youth workers employ an array of tools, methods and approaches when working with young people. Young people talked about the benefits of learning and developing in an informal setting where they were able to access opportunities relevant to their interests and needs.

The significant change stories also highlighted the importance of structure, routine and clear boundaries which help young people feel safe and secure knowing youth work is always there for them. Participation in universal youth work enabled young people to access other services through signposting by youth workers.

By far the most frequently discussed 'way of working' was group work. Working with other young people in a group setting helped them to develop the confidence to voice their opinions in front of others, improve their team working skills and work towards a common goal. Participating in group work helped to strengthen the bonds between young people through shared experiences.



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*“I decided that I would go along with my friend to my local youth group, it was a Girls Group that ran in my town, and was about building self esteem and confidence. We did a lot of group work, and one thing I loved was we did a story called the Witches of Glum I think? It was basically about how we shouldn't stereotype people based on what we know about their labels they have.”*

**Q29, Young Person, 14**

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*“[They] have been moved around foster homes across the region several times, however, the consistent part of their life is, no matter where they are in the region, they are able to access support from the youth work team. They identify this as a really important part of their life and youth work is the place, they feel safe and included. Having a place to meet friends is really important to them, along with receiving the same level of consistent support from the team regardless of where they access groups and activities. “*

**Q28, Youth Worker**

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## Relaxation and Fun

A really important part of the universal youth work in Dumfries and Galloway was the creation of a space where young people can relax, socialise and have fun.



*"I really enjoy it, meeting everyone and coming to the peer project as well. I love it."*

**Q30, Young Person, Age not given**

*"I think we've done like a lot of fun things, like one time we went to Dumfries to that park or whatever and we got to feed reindeer. I loved that, it was a lot of fun going there and I enjoyed that... Everyone is just so welcoming and you're allowed to enjoy yourself, and there's a lot of stuff to do as well."*

**Q31, Young Person, 14**



## Ethos and Values

This process domain is concerned with the ethos and values of youth work. The significant change stories identified a number of guiding principles underpinning the Service including open and inclusive practice, challenging discrimination wherever it arose, active participation where young people are viewed as equal partners and the importance of youth voice and representation.

Equality and inclusion was a really strong theme in the significant change stories. There were a number of examples of young people who faced barriers to participation such as a disability or personal circumstances such as bereavement or being care experienced. They were encouraged and supported to participate through practical support and sensitively planned provision.

Young people felt they could be themselves in the universal youth work setting, that they were valued as equals and were part of the youth group. Through specific interventions young people were equipped to deal with and challenge discrimination outside of the youth work setting.

Young people were encouraged to play an active role in the planning and delivery of universal youth work. Their active participation was fostered through volunteering and leadership opportunities with a number of young people taking on the role of young leader within the Service.

There was evidence in the stories of young people speaking up and using their voice to improve policy and services for young people. Some young people had been part of the Champions Board that focussed on young people working with decision makers to improve services for care experienced young people.



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*“[They] are a vulnerable young person with additional support needs and have accessed our service for 8 years. They reported that the group they attend is where they meet their friends, but they now feel able to arrange to meet friends outside the group and have a much better social life and better life in general since coming to our services.”*

**Q32, Youth Worker**

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*“I’m happy with the services and how much they’ve helped me through life and I wouldn’t change it for the world. They have been there since day one since my mum passed away and I wouldn’t change it for the world. I’m happy with what we’ve got here, and we need to keep keeping this alive for young people to access more and more.”*

**Q33, Young Person, 23**

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*[They have] “engaged with Champions Board service for over 8+ years and has been actively involved with the Youth Work service through Toon, YES and drop ins for the last 2+ years too... They are an active advocate for care experienced young people.”*

**Q34, Youth Worker**

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# 1. Conclusion

This research study set out to try to answer two key questions:

## 1. What is the impact of universal youth work on young people in Dumfries and Galloway?

## 2. How was that impact achieved?

The 100 significant change stories gathered by practitioner researchers evidence a range of outcomes for young people and the youth work practice that underpins these outcomes.

For the young people involved in the research the impact of engagement in universal youth work on their lives was substantial. They grew in confidence, made new friends, were able to better deal with problems and challenges and developed new skills that led them to positive destinations like a new jobs, training or education. For some young people participation in youth work has had a transformational effect and they credit youth work for the support it gave them to realise their potential.

The universal youth work provision in Dumfries and Galloway provided a safe and inclusive space where everyone was welcome. Young people began their youth work journey through accessing universal youth work before accessing other services and provision. Youth workers tailored their support to young people's needs, provided opportunities and activities in partnership with young people and offered routes for development and progression.

The Transformative Evaluation methodology used in the study enabled youth workers in Dumfries and Galloway to reflect on and better understand the impact of their practice as they gathered and coded data. The research team learnt a huge amount about how the methodology can be used within youth work in Scotland and its potential to assess the impact of universal youth work which has proved challenging to evaluate in the past.



## Young Person, aged 17 (Story 1)

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*“At the age of 14, I started to access Youth Work Services, after a few years I stopped accessing, for reasons that I can’t really remember. I was making a lot of bad decisions and my mental health was really bad, and I was in a dark and horrible place, there seemed to be no way out for me. I came across Youth Workers at an event in the town centre, when I was approached by a worker and asked how things were, and it was obvious that I wasn’t coping with life. After having a good chat with her, I was given details of the drop ins that I could attend for some extra support.*

*I wasn’t sure about going, but I knew something had to change. And I couldn’t do it by myself, after a few months of going to the drop ins regularly, I began to pull myself together, and started to push myself into projects and volunteering opportunities. I started to gain confidence in myself and realised that I could do anything that I put my mind too. I came out of my comfort zone by performing in front of groups of people, and even just talking to new people doesn’t give me as much anxiety as what it may have done 3 years ago, without the ongoing help and support of Youth Workers, I definitely wouldn’t be here today”*

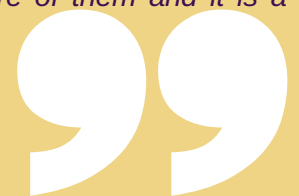
## Youth Worker’s Commentary

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*“They have accessed varied projects and services within Youth Work Dumfries and Galloway for almost 10 years. Engaging in-group work activities, being a peer educator & taking part in young leader programmes. This has given them the doorway to gain positive structure within their life and build on their confidence, self-esteem and self-worth, whilst also helping to build positive relationship with their peers and youth work staff. They have daily struggles within their personal life around their mental health, which at times have experienced suicidal thoughts and feelings.*

*Even though they have their own personal circumstances to deal with, they are always willing to help others and are a great role model to other young people. They have recently secured a 3 month fulltime volunteer role at our local youth centre which they are doing great at and the role has the potential to be extended after their review.*

*They are thriving within this role and youth work staff can see they are really achieving personal goals. I think I can speak on behalf of the majority of the Youth Work team about how proud we are of them and it is a pleasure to watch them flourish into a confident young adult.”*



# Appendix 1

## **The Research Team**

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Dr Ian Fyfe, University of Edinburgh

Kelly McInnes, Director, Northern Star

## **Practitioner Researchers**

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## **Stakeholder Group**

Councillor Ros Surtees, Elected Member, Dumfries and Galloway Council

Councillor Adam Wilson, Elected Member, Dumfries & Galloway Council

Councillor Tracey Little, Elected Member, Dumfries & Galloway Council

Jacqui Davies, Service Manager, Alcohol & Drugs Partnership

Kerry Riddell, Locality Manager, LGBT Youth Scotland

Claire Walker, Chief Inspector, Police Scotland

Sean O'Toole, Ward Officer, Dumfries & Galloway Council

Mark Molloy, Service Manager, Young People, Dumfries & Galloway Council

Sophie Blair, Young Person

Conor Johnstone, Young Person

Nicola Todd, Adult Volunteer



## Young Person, aged 23 (Story 7)

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*“At age 14, I attended Super Mondays, it’s a drop in for people with special needs, and then I took part in the Commonwealth Youth Summit with lots of people from different countries as well, I explored different things that other countries face. I went to watch the Paralympics in London with the youth group and my carer, we camped over the weekend. I attended Youth Beatz as a volunteer and helped to do different stalls, money handling skills and other things too, and like going round and selling stuff to people. Then The Toon, it’s an interactive drama, it’s for issues that young people face.*

*I attended Live n Learn programme which taught me life skills like budgeting, cooking. I was part of Creative conscience project , I learned about anxiety and other health and wellbeing stuff. Being part of the youth groups gave me confidence to meet new friends and I now have my own flat.”*

## Youth Worker’s Commentary

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*“They have been accessing our youth work services for 9 years, during this time they have grown in confidence, met new friends and felt included and respected within the projects and drop ins they attends. They attend Super Mondays regularly, which is a service for young people with additional support needs and varied disabilities. They have also accessed projects to support them to develop life skills such as cooking, budgeting, preparing them to live on their own and hold down a tenancy, which they now do with some support from their key worker.*

*They had the opportunity to take part in a Youth Exchange project to Germany Gifhorn in October 2015. This was a great personal achievement for them and showed courage to come out of their comfort zone and face new positive experiences. Whilst on the trip they visited cultural places, took part in workshops with other young people from different countries, working together to present their work to their peers. They gained independence and self-awareness by being part of the trip, and not having their key worker or family member with them was a massive step for them. This was their first time on a plane and abroad and an experience that was fantastic for them to be a part of.*

*They have grown into a caring, responsible young adult and have a positive outlook of their life despite facing personal challenges.”*



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## Young Person, aged 20 (Story 32)

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*“So, when I was growing up, I knew I was LGBT but I didn’t necessarily express it so when I was going through school, that’s where most of my bad behaviour came from because everyone was just taking the mick out of me and I just couldn’t deal with it. But after coming here it’s like I’ve got a safe place now and I was able to come out to my family as a result of coming here because they gave me the confidence and stuff like that. Also now I’m starting to organise other LGBT events for young people in Dumfries and Galloway so they can express themselves without being judged or scared or bullied or stuff like that.*

*It’s just given me something to do as well like being able to volunteer and get used to different people and the way different people work”*

## Youth Worker’s Commentary

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*“They started accessing services a number of years ago and at times presented with some challenging behaviours. Through attending both universal and targeted youth work, their behaviour improved and they have grown to be confident, caring and respectful of others.*

*They became more involved in sessions, taking part in activities and meeting new people which gave them a sense of belonging and acceptance. This allowed them to become comfortable with who they are.*

*Through attending services, they have gained a good understanding of youth work and have gone on to become an active volunteer. They have been part of a small group that have been organising a regional LGBT event as well as being a peer mentor at various groups and events.”*

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## Young Person, aged 21 (Story 33)

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*“I started attending when I was thirteen and I came to music night, my big sister accessed and told me about services and at music night there was open mic which I would take part in singing, which helped my confidence at this so I got to talk to youth workers and find out about the youth work services. I started going to more, to other services, to other drop ins sessions. There was lots of different activities to take part in, including computers, pool and a tuck shop. At this time, I had been told I had autism, which youth work supported me with, that if I felt like I was going to kick off, the youth workers would let me go into the sensory room to cool down.*

*I started accessing Super Mondays, that is a drop in for young people with a disability support need. When I was sixteen, I took part in, a young leaders training, and I volunteered in drop ins, tuckshop, and the MyPod. I went different places in the MyPod, since started coming to services I wasn't in my best stride and I was going through a rough patch at home and more recently found myself homeless. I spoke to my youth workers and they helped me into homeless accommodation.*

*Youth Work Services has boosted my confidence in interacting with people, my communicating skills – I can talk to youth workers about my problems and getting support with whatever, I am needing to talk about.”*

## Youth Worker's Commentary

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*“They started accessing services after being told about them by their older sister. They found the services a safe space to meet and interact with their peers where they could take part in activities or get support from youth workers. They struggled after being diagnosed with autism and gained extra support through youth work to how they could manage their anger and emotions as well as accessing youth work services tailored specifically to the needs of young people with additional support needs.*

*They have grown into a confident person and has been working a part time job over the last year. They still seek support when they feel they need it however this has become less and less as they have gotten older.”*

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## Young Person, aged 18 (Story 38)

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*“Well, services have definitely made me like a more open person, like a place that I can open....I definitely think the biggest change has been that it's given me purpose in life. That sounds really big but like, I don't know when I first started coming it like gave me a purpose to like represent young people within [youth democracy] and things like that but more recently it's given me a purpose in the way of, I've been able to work as a Youth Worker and things like that. But I definitely feel like when like, things were bad at home, things like that it gave me like an escape, from things.*

*I definitely think I was never, like I was always one that always tried my best in school but it was never like, the right environment, for me to like learn in and things like that so I didn't feel like the more informal route that like youth work takes has given me like a more practical way to find like what I wanted to do, and like, when like maybe I was being bullied and things like that, being able to go back and go well actually I'm representing you nationally and things like that as something that like, not would shock people but like would show them that I at least I'm standing up and doing something.*

*I definitely feel like I'm more who I want to be now than I was when I first started accessing. I definitely think I'm more open to like different, different ways of living, like different young people that live within one society, so more open minded. As much as people will tell you I was able to talk when I first started like, my confidence has gone through the roof. I was able to come out like and not feel ashamed of it, like who I am and things like that. So, and the biggest thing probably for me is that not only was I able to access as a young person but now with a career path in like understanding what I actually enjoy doing, like and that it doesn't feel like a job when In actual fact I've found, found something I want to do in life.”*

## Youth Worker's Commentary

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*“They engaged through Youth Participation structures and wider Youth Work Services consistently for 4+ years. They originally became involved through Youth Democracy, before gaining employment within the Youth Work Service as part of Year of Young People. Over the years, they have experienced a number of personal challenges that have at points knocked their confidence. They consider the Youth Work Service to be a safe space in which they can be themselves fully.”*

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## Young Person, aged 18 (Story 49)

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*“So attending youth work, the impact it's had, well it's helped me through some personal experiences, being able to chat to youth workers, like they're there just to talk to. Also, I've developed my own confidence as well, and being involved in various projects regionally as well. I've been able to do a variety of different projects as well, working with various young people, and different youth workers, just being able to kind of experience new things. As a result I really enjoyed youth work, so I decided to move onto college and study youth work and community development, it has changed my outlook on what I wanted to do as a career, and hopefully I'll be able to continue that at university.*”

*So three or four years ago, I had no involvement at all in youth work, and it wasn't until I was approached by one of the youth workers to see if I wanted to get involved, then all of a sudden I was kind of really into it and really enjoyed it, and I met a lot of really inspiring young people through youth work as well. It has really boosted my confidence meeting those people and just being able to gain new life experiences. Now I'm a lot more confident, I'm able to stand kind of like on my own two feet.”*

## Youth Worker's Commentary

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*“3 years ago, they responded to a poster recruiting young people to take part in a regional youth work project. After a bit of encouragement from youth work staff, they joined the group. Since then, their journey has been a rollercoaster. In the beginning they were enthusiastic, but had low self-belief and low ambition. They didn't access any groups or youth work activities in their own time as they felt pressured by school and home to study 24/7. They had a small circle of friends within school but spent most of their time in school or home. Youth work helped them to access new opportunities, try new things and meet new people that in turn improved their confidence, self-value and aspirations.*”

*Since then, they went on to participate in regional and national opportunities and chose to study community development at college as they had been so inspired by the youth workers who they claims have “changed their life”. They have had to deal with difficult personal experiences and have received the support they needed from youth work services throughout.”*

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**1 January 2020**



**THE UNIVERSITY  
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