

Progression route into Youth work 2024-25



Professional Development Award

The Professional Development Award in Youth Work (PDA) has been designed for those working with young people in a Community Learning and Development context.

It is suitable for people who have experience of youth work in a paid or volunteering capacity but who might not have formal qualifications in youth work.

The PDA in Youth Work offers a nationally recognised, SQA accredited qualification at SCQF Level 6.



Sam @ Edinburgh Childrens Hospital Charity

Motivation to do the PDA in Youth Work course

I chose to do the PDA to better support the growing number of young people I work with at the Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity. My previous youth work training was over a decade ago, and I wanted a refresher to ensure I could meet the needs of older young people as confidently as I do with younger children.

Impact on Practice

The course helped me update my knowledge and improve how I engage with young people. I now feel more confident in adapting my approach, recognising that sometimes silence and listening are powerful tools. Wellbeing activities have become a key part of my sessions, helping me connect with young people and understand their needs. Learning from others in different settings also gave me new ideas to apply in the hospital context.

Personal Growth and Professional Development

Completing the PDA was a fantastic experience. It gave me the confidence and tools I needed to better support young people in a hospital setting, where youth work is often limited. I wouldn't have been able to take on my current role or deliver new initiatives like the Scout sessions without it. While I may not have time for further study right now, I'm committed to applying what I've learned in my current role. The course boosted my confidence and continued passion for youth work.





Alison @ Corstorphine Corstorphine Community Centre

Motivation to do the PDA in Youth Work course

With a background in sociology and criminology and experience in sessional youth work roles and drama teaching, I pursued the PDA in Youth Work to gain a formal qualification. My goal was to bridge the gap between informal experience and structured youth work practice, ensuring I could more confidently support young people in a professional capacity.

Impact on Practice

The course changed how I approach youth work, now I understand more, I have the theory behind it and see the bigger social impact. Something simple like a drop-in or an activity group can support wellbeing or build confidence as well as give the young people something to do. It has given me loads of practical ideas, like using icebreakers and group games that can help ease into issue-based topics which I've tried and seen it work—even with the more disengaged young people.

Personal Growth and Professional Development

The PDA has increased my confidence and resilience. It encouraged me to embrace new challenges and fostered a mindset of continuous learning. I've come to value the importance of co-creating safe learning spaces with young people, where trust is built through shared experiences and mutual respect. Professionally, the PDA has provided reassurance and credibility, equipping me with the confidence and tools to pursue future roles in youth work and contribute meaningfully to the sector.

Grant @ Bridges Project

Motivation to do the PDA in Youth Work course

My academic background is in social sciences, which gave me a foundation in understanding social issues, but it didn't really prepare me for the on-the-ground work with young people. Later, I did a postgrad in HR, which led me into recruitment and training—again, working with younger adults but not necessarily teenagers. I relied a lot on transferable skills and instinct, but I wanted to make sure that what I was doing was actually grounded in good practice. The PDA felt like a chance to sense-check my approach, to see if I was on the right track and to build confidence in my role.



Impact on Practice

The PDA reminded me of the importance of structure in group work, the value in maintaining shared expectations, being intentional about group dynamics, and the helpful frameworks like the forming–storming–norming–performing model to support the group's development. It gave me the opportunity to reflect on the value of recognising where young people are in their journey. The young people I work with are often further along, but that doesn't mean they won't go backwards or need support. The PDA reinforced the importance of meeting young people where they are, even when progress feels slow. It reminded me to be patient and to recognise that everyone—including myself—has days when they're tired or stressed, and that's okay.

Personal Growth and Professional Development

Personally, the PDA helped me overcome self-doubt and feel more confident in my role. It reassured me that my instincts were mostly right, but now I have a stronger foundation to back them up. Professionally, it came at a time of transition—I moved from mental health support work into a new role focused on youth voice and participation while still at Bridges, the PDA gave me the confidence to take it on. Looking ahead, I've started the REACH level 7 course based on collective advocacy, I'm looking forward to continuing my learning and building on what I've gained through the PDA.



Vanda @ Connected Communities Service, East Lothian Council

Motivation to do the PDA in Youth Work course

I chose to do the PDA because I wanted to upskill, it wasn't about chasing qualifications but more about making sure I was doing the best I could. This was a way for me to check if there was anything I didn't know and to build on what I was already doing well.

Impact on Practice

Since starting the PDA, I've noticed a real difference in how I approach my work. I feel more confident and aware, especially around safeguarding and leadership. I feel empowered to speak up and protect the young people's space.

It has also helped consolidate what I was doing well and gave me a better understanding with the policies, procedures, and legislation behind my actions which has made me more assertive and proactive. I've taken the lead on new initiatives, involving transition workshops in schools.

Personal Growth and Professional Development

The PDA has given me a huge boost in self-confidence. I've become more forward-thinking and developed stronger leadership skills. I now feel able to step up and advocate for young people more. The PDA helped me see my strengths more clearly and gave me the confidence to act on them. It's opened up new possibilities and helped me grow both personally and professionally.

Rudi @ North Edinburgh Youth Work Collaborative Traineeship

Motivation to do the PDA

I was initially motivated to do the PDA because my manager suggested it, but I quickly realised it offered much more than I expected. The PDA helped me build on my confidence and gave me tools to better understand paperwork and formulate answers to questions. My journey into youth work stems from my own experience of youth work as many of my role models were youth workers, and I felt drawn to follow in their footsteps. The PDA felt like a natural next step after completing the RFW as part of my traineeship, helping me solidify my interest and commitment to youth work.



Impact on Practice

It helped me understand and maintain professional boundaries, which is crucial given how different each youth group can be. The PDA gave me a clearer sense of what's appropriate and what's not. It also improved how I plan and deliver activities—encouraging me to take my time, consider health and safety, and reflect on the needs and preferences of the young people I work with.

Personal Growth and Professional Development

Personally, the PDA helped me find my voice and I am more confident in speaking out. The course has helped me realise I was missing some school qualifications, which I'm now working to address as I am exploring further education, including a degree in Learning in Communities. In the meantime, I will continue to build on my youth work experience. Overall, the PDA has been a stepping stone, helping me grow both as a person and as a youth worker.



Impact...



**I'm have more knowledge re
structure and safe space**

**Greatly improved my
confidence and
engagement skills**



**I will feel much more confident
taking a planning and lead role at
my Youth Club.**

**I am more confident that I am
possessing the knowledge and
skills, which are needed to be
there for the children I work
with.**

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