



YOUTH ACTION
PROJECT

ANNUAL REPORT



 wlyap.org.uk


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Introduction

Resilience, Adaptability, Achievement and Creativeness are the four words I am going to use to introduce our Annual Report for 2024-25. The initials of these words (RAAC) will be very familiar to our Council and Almond Housing Association colleagues, as well as creating West Lothian Youth Action Project Board of Directors and staff team a major headache. The problems with the Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) used in the construction of Riverside School and Community wing along with many other buildings resulted in the demolition of the premises, resulting in the Youth Action Project (YAP) being homeless with days notice. Nobody's fault we just had to respond to the problem, we had assistance quickly to move and store our equipment from West Lothian Council and Almond Housing Association very promptly offered us alternative accommodation for our office base, to whom we are exceptionally grateful. This base along with the small space in the old Child Disability Centre next to Spark in Craigshill provided somewhere to hold small groups. Not the same as the openly accessible space that we had previously had but prevented us from the possibility of closure.

It was due to our own RAAC that the staff team continued to provide an excellent service to the young people and communities of West Lothian. The content of this report will provide an insight in to the work we carry out, our Befriending Service for the vulnerable young people, we wish to thank funding from the Lottery, Awards for All Programme, which has assisted us to support volunteers to provide activities for the young people befriended. The workshops provided through groupwork activities and practical skills training provided in the workshop and community garden.

The partnership projects have, despite our challenges, continued to develop, such as Growing Together in collaboration with Almond Housing Association and Spark, the Assess and Connect team, a new initiative with WLC Social Policy, Wraparound alongside West Lothian Drug and Alcohol Service and Circle West Lothian, and the Roots Project, providing young people and families with a variety of supports to address poor mental health and relationships.

A significant change this year was the move to commissioning for the detached youth work service provided to the communities of West Lothian. YAP were successful in securing a tender for the delivery of this service initially just for a 9 month period from October 2024 until June 2025. This difference this has made to the service will be reference in a later section.

Finally, it goes without saying that I have tremendous admiration for my team, Board members and our young people who have had to endure the changes with us, for sticking together through this turbulent year and turning the crumbling concrete into a positive theme – Resilience, Adaptability, Achievement and Creativeness.

Helen Davis

Project Director

Partnerships



For over 30 years, Youth Action Project has been a driving force in West Lothian — a voluntary organisation rooted in supporting young people and the wider community. Through bold, collaborative partnership programmes, we connect local and national organisations with the region, sparking new opportunities and creating lasting positive change.



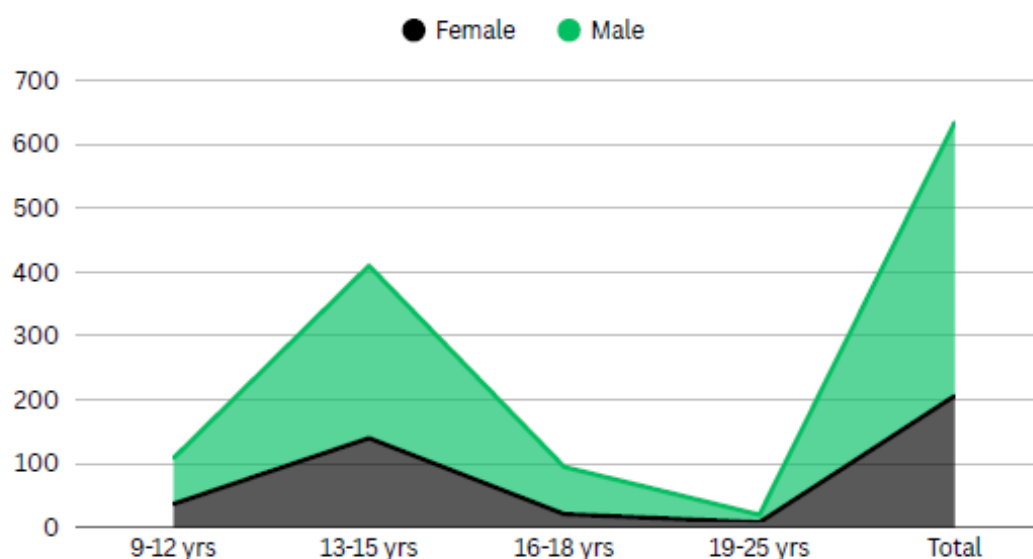
Groupwork and 1-1 Sessions

A total number of 634 individual young people attended the sessions in 2024-2025.

67.5% Male and 32.5% Female.

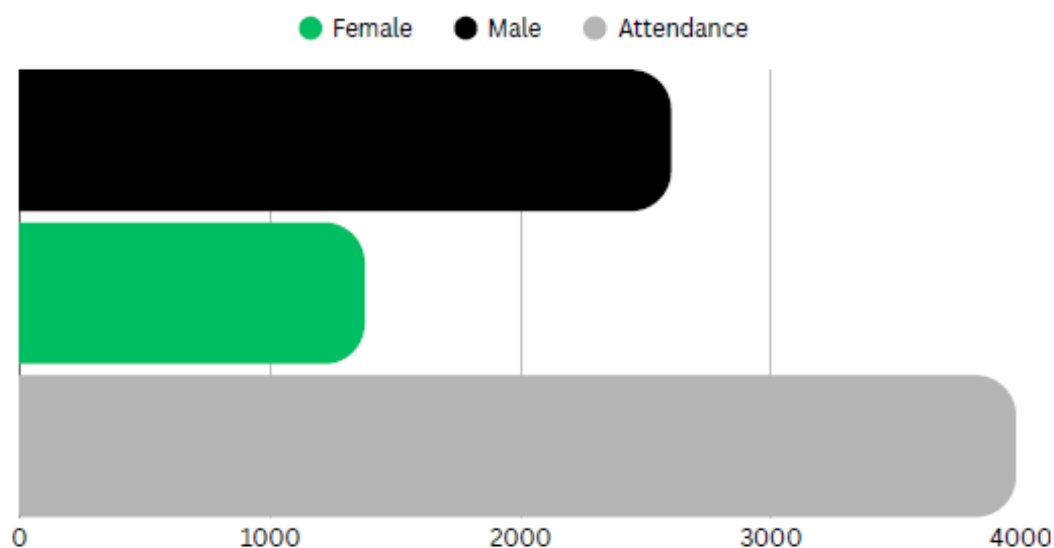
Sessions Attendance

Gender Breakdown



Total Attendees

Including number of sessions provided



Our Tooled Up, practical training skills programme, remains one of our most popular programmes, which we have the continued pleasure of working in Partnership with Whitburn Academy this year and in addition the Larder as part of the Cashback Community Connections Project. We have a number of requests to run more of these programmes. Evidencing the need for more hands-on training for young people who find learning in a classroom setting difficult.



Many of the young people attending our group excel in practical settings and find the e. Learning modules less threatening as a method for gaining qualifications.

Funding to run these programmes and paying for workshop premises is a challenge and we are grateful for the financial support from schools and organisations who are able to assist with this as our core funding cannot cover the operational costs. Many avenues are currently being explored to secure future funding for this very successful project which produces excellent outcomes as comments below evidence.

The Early Intervention 1-1 support service has been delivered for many years by the Youth Action Project in conjunction with WLC Youth Justice Services and Early and Effective Intervention group only provides a part time post offering 1-1 intervention reducing young people's involvement in crime and to help improve positive choices and decision making. We continue to source funding to extend this work, the current post holder compliments the work of our colleagues as part of the newly formed Assess and Connect team. This partnership offers a voluntary service to young people offending at a low level and those at risk of exploitation.



Comments below provide feedback on the services.

Groupwork

“I have really changed since going to Tooled up, I was always in trouble and messed about at school, I didn't see the point as I was never any good at lessons. I have learned to listen more, Joe and Carrie, explain to us how to do things and the risks if we don't listen in the workshop. I guess this also made me think before I say or do things in school and in the community”

“I've been told I am good at things for the first time, it gives you confidence when this happens. I've shown teachers the things I've made and they said I've done well, that never happened before this group. I wish it was full time but I know now that I need to go to school to do subjects like English and Maths. I have got a place in West Lothian College to start after the summer – this definitely wouldn't have happened without being a part of YAP – Cheers to everyone”

1-1 Support - Parent of Young man age 14

**“Before working with YAP his attendance at school had dropped to less than 50%.
My son and I definitely agree that the 1-1 input has been very helpful.**

He has now become more aware of his own actions and the mannerism in how he comes across He has been taking that extra time to think before he reacts in school and social settings. He really enjoyed have the time and understanding given to him over the last year and knowing he can be himself during the sessions has been a big help.

He is now back in school full time, not getting into trouble in the community and the phone calls to me reporting issues about my son are a thing of the past. We really appreciate the effort you as a team have put into him, helping him, and me, get through a difficult spell. You all have been great. Thanks so much!”



Streetwork Service



The detached youth work service went through a significant change in the autumn of 2024, having successfully secured a contract from West Lothian Council to deliver the service throughout West Lothian we now divide the work into 4 geographical areas these being:-

Ward 1 . Blackridge/ Armadale/ Bathgate

Ward 2. Fauldhouse/ Whitburn/ Blackburn and the Breich valley

Ward 3. Livingston and East Calder

Ward 4. Linlithgow/ Winchburgh and Broxburn

Streetwork Engagement



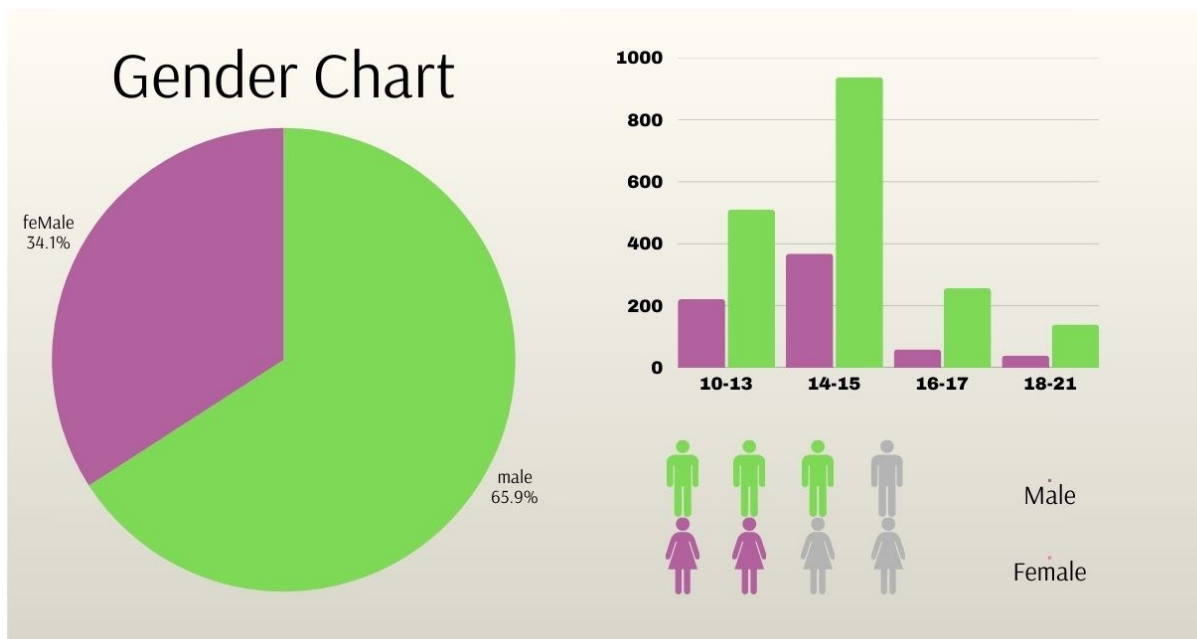
65%
MALE

FEMALE
35%



The number of team has increased but delivery still primarily operates on a Thursday, Friday and Saturday evening and Friday Saturday afternoons.

Streetwork Service continued



The service still responds to the needs identified by the Community Safety group but also allows us the opportunity to link with community groups and local businesses more effectively.

The Statistics are provided but initial figures evidence the increase in numbers of young people engaged following the change in structure

April – Sept 2024 – 774

October 2024 – March 2025 – 1755

(Period within the new contract)



INtegr8



Befriending Is.... making connections.

A longstanding and essential aspect of our work within the organisation, our volunteer befrienders are well trained and highly dedicated, led by a very experienced coordinator, Angie Gourdie-Dean, her input below focuses on a newer addition to our service, Remote Befriending, an area in which we are considering potential growth.

“Times continue to be challenging due to funding uncertainty and having no permanent premises, however our small, dedicated team of befrienders continue to provide support, intensive at times, for our young people. Some volunteers support one young person, some two, and on the odd occasion even three, ensuring our befriendees received the support they needed.

We continue to be grateful to The National Lottery Awards For All grant which provides our funding for volunteers’ expenses and essential activity costs for young people.

Our face-to-face sessions have taken place in either 1-1 or small group settings, we have also had two very successful remote matches. In this year’s annual report, we will highlight one of those.

The young person was referred to us on the lead up to him leaving secondary school. He has disabilities which our volunteers are not trained to support or equipped to deal with in terms of travel and needs while out in the community. Leaving school left the young person extremely isolated.

Having a remote befriender and weekly online video calls helped boost the young man’s confidence and social skills for making and sustaining the transition to college.”

Sessions included long chats, card games, quizzes, and other puzzles. Occasionally, the befriender had a home visit to drop off resources for their next session and have a chat with her young person and his mum. The befriending coordinator also visited the family home for befriending reviews and feedback.





Young person:

"I was really shy to start. I was very lonely with no-one to talk to. My befriender helps me with my confidence. We do quizzes and games, and chat about our week with lots of laughs. I feel a lot better and can chat more. I've really become more confident. I didn't have any confidence, and this has helped me so much. My befriender is amazing and thinks of different things to help make the calls fun."

Befriender:

"I started volunteering with the service to gain experience, give something back to the community and help make a difference.

The match with my young person is great, the process of matching up is done very well to ensure everyone involved is happy. My young person and I get on great. Some sessions with my young person are just a catch up and a chat and some sessions we have a focus for example we organise a game to play. This creates a good balance between sessions. There are many memorable moments in my experience of remote befriending. Seeing my young person happy, smiling, and laughing brings me so much joy. It is also amazing to see the progress of my young person and to hear and see how much of a positive impact remote befriending has had on him. There has been a great positive impact on me personally too. Volunteering with the service has helped me gain lots of experience, in turn, helping make a positive difference to young people. This brings me happiness. Seeing young people getting the support they deserve and being happy is what it is all about. Remote befriending is a great opportunity for those that can't access face to face sessions, it allows the young people to still be included in the service. I have witnessed first-hand how amazing remote befriending can be for both a young person and the befriender."

Mum:

"My son's befriender is absolutely brilliant – just the perfect match. I've noticed great changes in my son. He does so much now. His befriending sessions have helped him greatly. His befriender is always thinking of different things to make sessions fun and focused on his likes. She encouraged my son to chat. He's now moved on and helps to raise money for charities; something he would never have had the confidence to do before."

Growing Together



In 2024-25 the youth Action Project continue to have a strong working partnership with Almond Housing Association and Spark.

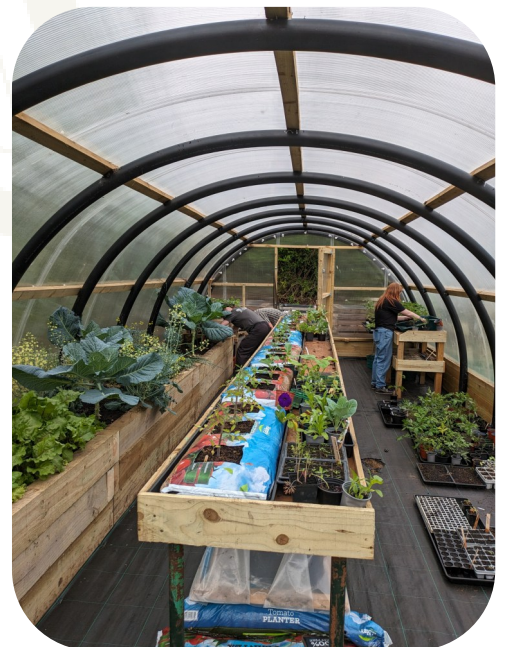
The following points describe some of the outcomes and achievements throughout the year, our Community Champion, gardeners and great team of volunteers have with our partners have delivered.



51 workshops and events with **797 participants**. The events have included school biodiversity sessions, a science festival, bug and bird box making sessions and exploring the often-unknown breadth of wildlife in and around Craigshill.

45 local young people engaged in combined **6750 hours** of skills training in woodwork, basic construction and horticulture. They also developed communication and teamwork skills essential for the move into employment or further education.

More than **200 local people** of all age groups have improved knowledge of growing edible crops, had the opportunity to use healthy food to make nutritious meals. The crops have provided the wider community using our community fridge to have access to locally grown fruit and vegetables.



We aim to continue working with a wide network of agencies in the coming year to improve the environment of Craigshill, encourage people to improve their mental health and wellbeing through social activities, events and volunteering.

Growing Together Volunteering

Volunteering and the Community Fridge – Lived Experience

David started attending the Craigshill Community fridge a little over two years ago. He was in a low place at that time, things had got on top of him a little, he is a single man, unemployed and was trying to manage his finances.

“The rising price of food, utility bills and general cost of living increases meant I couldn’t make ends meet.”

I went along to the Community fridge, initially a bit embarrassed about my situation, but the people were really helpful and friendly, I paid £ 3 at the time, it’s £4 now, but for that I was able to get cheese, meat, bread, milk, tinned items and fresh fruit and veg, it was great.”

The Community Fridge has been supported by the Youth Action Project for a number of years. After COVID it had been hoped that the need for the organisation to provide food for the Craigshill community and others referred to us due to economic hardship would end. Sadly, we have experienced an increasing demand.

David found the facility to be welcoming, and the staff were helpful and friendly. There is no stigma as people can feel embarrassed to admit they are struggling. It is a safe space, and he found it was actually a place for people to socialise and meet new people.



He reflected “Craigshill has a good community spirit, and this is evident at the Community Fridge, you can get a cup of tea and a laugh, it brightens your day. On a more serious note, knowing that you can get good quality food produce for only £4, reduces people’s worries and stress levels which improves their mental health.

Through attending the Community Fridge, David found out about the Craigshill Community Garden, run by West Lothian Youth Action Project (YAP), and developed as part of the Growing Together Project in Partnership with Almond Housing Association and Spark. He realised that some of the fresh vegetables appearing at the Community Fridge were freshly picked from the garden, his natural curiosity and encouragement from staff led to David volunteering in the garden.

One of the things exciting me now is my passion for working with wood, I have been collecting logs from fallen trees and working to produce bespoke signs for people and now wooden furniture, stools and tables. I am now self-employed with a new business called "Food for Wood", and also planning to develop a woodwork project with the Growing Together and Youth Action Projects, all really exciting, I've never felt so good. I feel really positive for the first time in many years, thanks to all the connections I have made through the community garden I have been able to start my own business. My life has improved so much by having these opportunities, all starting by going along to the Craigshill Community Fridge."



David has become one of the team of trusted volunteers, without which the Growing Together project and Community Garden would struggle to survive.

"I have learned so much in the garden, I love the place, I have built my own herb garden, attended a pruning class with the Woodland Trust, been on birdwatching walks, assisted staff with a workshop at Spark, built planters and very recently helped redevelop the planters in Victoria Street, which was a real community project. I was also lucky enough to help teach a group of school kids from Beattie School in the garden, they said it made their day, they were so excited, I'll always remember that session"



David stated, "I try to be healthy these days, it's great to get some fresh fruit and veg from the garden and I've tried all sorts of things, I even tried rhubarb in my curry, it was great, added sweetness". I use oils a lot and natural products to improve my health, as at 45 years old, I'm not getting any younger and need to look after myself better.

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Wraparound

A partnership project with West Lothian Drug and Alcohol Service and Circle, West Lothian.



As part of my role as a youth worker for Wraparound, supporting young people who are impacted by substance use, I join our streetwork team for a session per week. During these sessions in Whitburn in the autumn of 2024, we kept hearing about the same group of young people. These young people were involved in setting fires, stealing alcohol and general anti-social behaviour. One of these young people had been referred to our organisation by Whitburn Academy, but he wasn't very keen to engage on a 1-1 basis. After a team discussion we agreed, we should try to engage these young people together as a group and do some diversional work with them.

We contacted one of the parents of these young people and asked him to try to get them to agree to this, he did and we arranged to pick them up from this young person's house and meet with them at a facility in Stoneyburn. Six young people all turned up on the first night which was excellent. The group had good attendance every week and we managed to get them to think about their offending and anti-social behaviour, the effects it had on them and their futures, as well as the impact on the local community.

The group chose activities collectively, one of these being cooking, as some of them were hoping to go to college to study catering. The young people chose to make home-made burgers and pizza, French toast and omelettes with a variety of fillings, they enjoyed the activities, and during this time we as workers were able to discuss issues affecting them. It became apparent that they all had a number of difficult factors within their lives, some quite complex.

One of the group also participated well in our Tooled Up practical skills group as a part of his curriculum activities- at which he excelled.



Wraparound Groupwork Programme – Summary Report

1. Overview

This report provides a concise summary of the progress and outcomes achieved by the young people who participated in the groupwork programme.

2. Key Achievements

Behaviour and Substance Use

All participants reduced their offending behaviour, with some stopping entirely. Alcohol and cannabis use also decreased across the group.

Education

Three young people significantly improved their school attendance, enabling them to sit exams and apply for college.

3. Opportunities and Activities

Glencoe Residential

Due to strong engagement, several participants were offered a place on a summer residential in Glencoe. Three attended and took part in climbing, abseiling, canyoning, and coasteering. They built new friendships, developed teamwork skills, and overcame personal challenges.

Reward Activity

As a celebration of their progress, the group chose a swimming trip to Burntisland followed by a chippy. Their enthusiasm highlighted how valuable simple, positive experiences can be for young people with limited opportunities.

4. Follow-Up Support

College Progression

Three participants successfully secured full-time college places in catering and are attending regularly, marking a significant improvement from their previous school engagement.

Ongoing 1:1 Work

All requested continued 1:1 support for family issues and substance use. This support remains in place through the Wraparound service. One young person has chosen to stop using cannabis and is receiving targeted support.

5. Young People's Feedback

- “The group helped us stop hanging about the streets drunk and getting into trouble.”
- “The residential was great fun and let us try new activities.”
- “My 1:1s help me open up about things I worry about and give me someone to talk to.”

6. Conclusion

The programme has had a clear positive impact on behaviour, wellbeing, and future opportunities. Continued engagement through college and 1:1 support suggests strong potential for sustained progress.

WESTLOTHIAN YOUTH ACTION PROJECT

Staff Team

Helen Davis † Project Director

Margaret Douglas † Finance Administrator

Lesley Brogan † Drug & Alcohol Youth Worker

Dominic Kane † Drug & Alcohol Youth Worker

Hilda Dolan † Senior Project Worker

Angie Gourdie † Befriending Coordinator

Barry Walker † Workshop Coordinator

Alex Hughes † Activity and 1-1 Coordinator

Gordon Balfour † Music Coordinator

Andrew Gosland † Gardener (Growing Together)

Colin Gilmour † Gardener (Growing Together)

David Tatton † Community Champion (Growing Together)

Kirsty Calderwood † Mental Health Youth Worker

Niketa Pandya † Project Worker

Joe Cassidy † Project Worker

Kathleen Ward † Project Worker

Stephen Logue † Project Worker

Carrie Reid † Project Worker

Lisa Greenan † Project Worker

Antonia Mason † Project Worker

Ella Harrison † Project Worker

Michelle Black † Project Worker

Kevin Campbell † Project Worker

Sophie Carty † Project Worker

Alan Halliday † Janitorial Staff

Jim Sanderson † Janitorial Staff

Many Thanks to Our Sponsors



Board of Directors

Janice Turner
Ian Colquhoun
Michele Doull

Ryan Addison
Lynne Waddell
Fiona Rendall
Mark Weigt

In addition, the following individuals acted as advisors on the Board and provided support to the organisation

Cllr. Peter Heggie

Cllr Danny Logue

Douglas Grierson

WESTLOTHIAN YOUTH ACTION PROJECT

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