



TOWARDS A SCOTTISH PRIMARY PREVENTION MODEL

Lessons from Planet
Youth Scotland's Pilot

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Preface

Scotland has taken a bold step in testing Planet Youth across six local authority areas and asking for an honest account of what it tells us. We commissioned this companion piece to sit alongside the independent evaluation: it answers the “so what?” and “what’s next?” questions, drawing out implications for policy and practice. The evaluation sets the evidence base, methods and limitations; this preface frames how we use that learning now and where we go next.

Thank you to the six pilot areas – Highland, Angus, Clackmannanshire, Argyll and Bute, Dundee and West Dunbartonshire – for your bravery and honesty: in doing the work and in sharing your experiences so others can learn. Thank you to the Scottish Government for your faith in testing upstream prevention at the national level. And thank you to all the parents, carers, schools, services and community groups whose day-to-day action turns data into change. Your courage, trust and graft are the reason this moves forward.

Scotland has talked about prevention for decades. What’s sometimes been missing is consistent implementation, especially once we meet the messy, human reality of complex systems.

This document is deliberately hopeful and practical. It focuses on closing the implementation gap: turning shared intent into shared routines, making data usable, clarifying roles, aligning light-touch governance and funding, and building the capability and relationships that sustain action. It is honest about constraints, but chiefly about momentum – how we move from good ideas to everyday practice in places, with and for the people who make systems work.





The big takeaway is clear. We don't need a lift-and-shift of an external model; we need a Scottish Prevention Approach that keeps Planet Youth's strengths and pairs them with our own assets in community planning, co-production and whole-system working.

What's next is a pragmatic route-map: consolidate what's working; expand where readiness is strong; strengthen national scaffolding around data, governance, capability and funding; and evolve towards a Scotland-owned, locally led prevention approach. This document highlights the next steps for turning our learning into action and provides a foundation for shaping a shared roadmap with partners.

Winning Scotland's role remains simple and values-led: to convene, steward and make evidence usable; to back coalitions to act; and to share learning openly so others can adopt and adapt what works. This is a call to action and an invitation to work together to make Scotland an even better place to grow up.



Zahra Hedges
CEO Winning Scotland



Introduction:

**SCOTLAND'S PREVENTION
CHALLENGE AND THE
PLANET YOUTH MODEL**

1.1. Why prevention matters in Scotland

Scotland faces a pressing prevention challenge. Despite long-standing policy commitments, health inequalities are among the widest in Europe¹. Rates of poor mental health among young people continue to rise, and Scotland has the highest levels of drug and alcohol-related deaths in Western Europe^{2,3}. The cost to society is immense: more than £1 billion is spent annually on mental health services⁴, while alcohol harms alone cost the economy £3.6 billion each year⁵. These pressures weigh heavily on public services and communities alike.

Evidence shows these outcomes are not inevitable. They are shaped by the environments in which young people grow up: family relationships, school experiences, peer networks, and access to fun and safe leisure opportunities. We know that strengthening protective factors across these domains reduces the likelihood of harmful behaviours and promotes wellbeing⁶.

Indeed, Scotland has shown before that prevention works. From the smoking ban to minimum alcohol pricing and the "Childsmile" oral health campaign, upstream action has delivered significant and lasting benefits. The challenge now is to apply this prevention mindset more consistently, at scale, and with a long-term horizon.



1.2. About Planet Youth

Planet Youth is one of the most successful, evidence-based prevention models in the world^{7,8}. Developed in Iceland, it applies an upstream, whole-system approach that focuses not on treating individual behaviours but on reshaping the environments in which young people live. In other words, Planet Youth treats “society as the patient.”

The model follows a ten-step process anchored in a biennial survey of young people’s lives. This survey generates high-quality, localised data on the factors influencing wellbeing, which coalitions of schools, families, services, and community partners use to design and deliver practical changes that strengthen protective factors and reduce risks.

Over two decades, this approach has delivered generational change in Iceland. For example, the proportion of 15-16 year-olds reporting being drunk in the past month fell from 42% in 1998 to 6% in 2018; while daily smoking dropped from 23% to 2%⁹. These gains have been sustained for more than ten years, alongside rises in family time, physical activity, and participation in sports and arts. It also ensured a swift response to new challenges with only 4% of teens vaping in Iceland compared to approximately 25% in Scotland^{10,11}.

Planet Youth has since spread to more than 30 countries worldwide¹². Its core strength is that it is not a short-term programme or intervention, but a methodology and process for long-term change that communities can adapt and own. It provides practical, evidence-based steps for turning prevention from principle into practice, through robust data, cross-sector collaboration, and sustained commitment over the long term.

1.3. What makes Planet Youth different?

Planet Youth is distinctive in four ways that are especially relevant to Scotland's context:

1

UPSTREAM PRIMARY PREVENTION

It addresses root causes by strengthening environments, not targeting symptoms.



2

DATA-DRIVEN LOCAL DECISION-MAKING

It empowers communities to make timely, practical decisions using high-quality, accessible insights directly from young people.

3

COMMUNITY COALITIONS FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE

It builds multi-agency, cross-sector partnerships with communities as natural hubs of local action.



4

LONG-TERM COMMITMENT

It recognises that real prevention requires generational effort. In Iceland, results took 5-10 years to emerge, a reminder that Scotland's early steps today are investments in the wellbeing of young people who will be 15 in 2030 and beyond.



1.4. Testing Planet Youth across Scotland



In 2019, Winning Scotland partnered with five areas across Scotland to test the Planet Youth model. In 2023, the Scottish Government invested £1.5 million to expand the pilot. Today, Planet Youth operates across six local authority areas: Angus, Argyll and Bute, Clackmannanshire, Dundee, Highland and West Dunbartonshire. This national pilot phase is testing how the model can be adapted to Scottish systems and priorities, while building the evidence and experience needed for a future prevention approach.

Winning Scotland acts as the backbone organisation for Planet Youth in Scotland. It convenes partners globally, nationally and locally, stewards resources, and provides programme management and delivery support. Critically, it makes survey data accessible and usable, helping coalitions turn insights into action. Winning Scotland also facilitates peer learning across sites, supports capacity building, and works with government to embed Planet Youth within Scotland's wider prevention landscape.

Achieving generational change takes time. Prevention is, by definition, a long-term endeavour, and the Icelandic experience shows it can take a decade or more before changes in outcomes for young people are visible. What matters now is laying the groundwork and staying the course.

This report draws on an independent evaluation of Planet Youth's Scottish pilot¹³. It highlights progress across six areas, sharing key findings and lessons, and setting out a roadmap for how these insights can be translated into a Scottish Prevention Model – a nationally supported, locally owned approach with the potential to transform outcomes for Scotland's young people in the decades ahead.



**PROGRESS IN SCOTLAND:
WHERE WE ARE NOW**



2.1. Progress towards implementing Planet Youth in Scotland

Planet Youth has expanded in Scotland over the past two years. From a starting point of 13 schools in 2021, the programme grew to 24 schools in 2023 and now reaches 40 schools across six areas of Scotland. This growth has helped Planet Youth progress from a small pilot into a national pilot, laying the foundations for a future prevention model in Scotland.

i. Catalysing place-based prevention coalitions

Alongside this expansion, local structures have been established to coordinate Planet Youth. Each of the six areas has established a prevention coalition of local partners, supported by local implementation structures, with a shared focus on creating conditions that foster positive outcomes for young people and prevent harms. The form of coalitions and governance varies from place to place to reflect local contexts. In Angus and Clackmannanshire, multi-agency coalitions with broad participation bring together schools, health, and community partners with strong shared ownership. In Dundee and West Dunbartonshire, Planet Youth has been embedded into existing strategic or community planning structures, ensuring alignment with existing priorities such as child poverty and mental health. Finally, Argyll and Bute and Highland have established a set of local community coalitions, linked to schools, supported by an overarching strategic coalition. While the form varies, every area now has a structure in place to coordinate action, engage partners, and make Planet Youth a collective responsibility.

KEY LEARNING:

Coalitions can take different forms, from school-based groups to area-wide partnerships, but what matters is that they bring in a broad mix of partners, include people with the authority to act and are open, evolving and inclusive.



ii. Creating local capacity for prevention

The Scottish Government's £1.5 million investment was a turning point for local capacity. For the first time, each pilot area was able to employ dedicated prevention staff to coordinate Planet Youth, engage schools and communities, and drive implementation forward. These posts are central to convening coalitions, coordinating surveys, and supporting local planning and action. At the national level, Winning Scotland has expanded its team to provide programme management, delivery support, and strategic development. New support has also been introduced, including monthly learning forums for local leads, one-to-one advice, and senior-level coaching in public health and education. Together, these changes have transformed Planet Youth from a small-scale pilot with limited resources into a coordinated national pilot with the infrastructure to deliver at scale.

KEY LEARNING:

Prevention needs dedicated, consistent staff capacity. Short-term posts cause gaps and loss of momentum, while sustained roles allow coalitions to build trust, keep partners engaged, and drive action forward.

iii. Building Scotland's prevention dataset

The expansion of Planet Youth also dramatically increased the scale and quality of data being collected on young people's lives. In 2021, 1,827 pupils took part in the first Planet Youth survey. By 2023, participation had risen to 4,305 pupils across 24 schools. In 2025, over 10,000 pupils will be eligible to take part, with around 8,000 responses anticipated based on past response rates. Importantly, participation rates have been exceptionally high, 84% in 2021 and 80% in 2023, ensuring the data is both robust and representative. As a result, Planet Youth is now one of the most comprehensive sources of evidence on young people's wellbeing, attitudes and behaviours anywhere in the UK, giving both local Planet Youth areas and Scotland a uniquely rich evidence base to inform prevention planning.

KEY LEARNING:

High participation rates are only sustained when schools, parents, and pupils see visible action in response to survey findings. Coalitions must also find ways to hear from young people who are not in school.

iv. Strengthening local ownership

Several pilot areas have already invested an estimated total of £500,000 of their own resources to sustain Planet Youth during and beyond the life of the national pilot. Four areas have committed local funding to maintain dedicated Planet Youth staff teams, with all 6 working creatively to utilise existing resources, signalling both confidence in the approach and recognition of its value. For example, in Angus partners created a £67,000 Planet Youth funding pot by pooling local and external resources, with young people directly involved in setting priorities and allocating funds to projects that build protective factors. Angus Council has since committed a further £100,000 to align its Holiday Food and Fun programme with Planet Youth principles, shifting the focus towards quality family time and community-based prevention. This confidence is reflected more widely: in survey responses, 75% of Planet Youth partners reported that they have commitment from leaders in key partner organisations, while 68% felt their coalition includes people with the authority to act.

KEY LEARNING:

Local ownership is strengthened when coalitions are able to move from commitment to action, such as investing local resources, empowering members with authority, and setting clear plans to embed Planet Youth. Where national government should invest in building capacity, local areas need to invest in actions driven by data insights.

2.2. Planet Youth in Scotland

6

Local
authority areas

40

School communities

£2.25M

Scottish Government
investment

LOCAL INVESTMENT IN PREVENTION

£500,000

of estimated additional funding has been committed for prevention

4 AREAS

funding Planet Youth staff teams locally

LOCAL COALITIONS FOR PREVENTION

265+ PEOPLE

involved across public sector agencies, schools, and communities.

Coalitions established in all six areas.

DEDICATED PREVENTION CAPACITY

25 ROLES

focused on prevention resourced during pilot, supported by Winning Scotland's expanded national team and regular learning opportunities.

ONE OF THE UK'S BIGGEST DATASETS ON YOUNG PEOPLE

2021

1,827

pupils

2023

4,305

pupils

2025

8,000

pupils (anticipated)

Response rate

80–84%

2.3. Early impacts

The independent evaluation found signs that, despite initial challenges, the model is beginning to influence practice, strengthen collaboration, and build momentum for prevention.

i. Using data to shape change

The Planet Youth survey has given areas a unique and robust evidence base on young people's lives. Insights are broken down at the national, local and school levels. Local teams have used these insights to shape action plans, prioritise risk and protective factors, and influence service development. In some cases, the data has been directly embedded into local strategies, helping align Planet Youth with broader priorities around health, education, and wellbeing. Partners report that this level of data (i.e. large-scale, high-quality, and community-specific) has been invaluable in shifting conversations towards prevention, particularly in areas that opted out of the National Health and Wellbeing Census.

TURNING DATA INTO ACTION IN SCHOOLS

Clackmannanshire has made strong use of Planet Youth survey insights to inform services and spark collaboration. Clackmannanshire prioritised sharing key insights from the survey and supported partners to use the data to shape support. For example, all three high schools have drawn on the data to identify issues facing pupils, adapt their PSE curriculum, and develop new initiatives informed by the survey data.

Third sector organisations have also used the findings to shape services and successfully leveraged funding for activities that build protective factors. As one coalition member explained:

“ The data has started conversations at the coalition and different organisations have developed actions. I'm much more connected to other services in the area. There is huge potential to start making more joined-up decisions. ”

ii. Forging stronger system partnerships

Planet Youth has acted as a catalyst for stronger joint working between schools, local authorities, health boards, and community organisations. In several areas, agencies that had not previously collaborated are now meeting regularly, sharing insights, and planning together. Schools, too, have become more engaged, with many recognising that Planet Youth helps connect their work with wider community priorities. This has led to a richer dialogue about how different parts of the system can play a role in prevention.

“PLANET YOUTH IS EVERYONE’S JOB”

Planet Youth in Angus has sparked genuine collaboration across schools, community organisations, and public services. A wide-ranging coalition has been established with groups focusing on leisure, schools, and community engagement. Planet Youth is being driven forward through a strong sense of shared ownership among coalition members. While a coordinator from Angus Council and NHS Tayside helps to facilitate and convene the coalition, responsibility for implementation rests firmly with partners themselves.

The coalition has three active sub-groups, each chaired by a member, with practitioners leading on actions such as parental engagement and raising awareness in community organisations. This approach has built a committed and informed group of practitioners who are applying Planet Youth insights within their own services. As a coalition member explained: “Planet Youth is everyone’s job.”

PUTTING PREVENTION AT THE HEART OF CITY STRATEGY

In Dundee, Planet Youth has been woven directly into the city’s strategic and community planning structures to ensure prevention is not an add-on but part of mainstream decision-making. Responsibility now sits within the Child Poverty and Inequalities Strategic Leadership Group, one of three leadership groups tasked with redesigning services and driving a shift to prevention across the city. A senior officer Delivery Group leads implementation, while community-level engagement has been integrated into Local Community Planning Partnerships. As one partner put it: “It’s about changing the way we work.”

iii. Strengthening prevention practice

Through Planet Youth, staff and partners are developing a clearer understanding of upstream prevention and the role of risk and protective factors in shaping young people's outcomes. Across local systems, partner engagement in prevention is increasing, alongside greater confidence in designing and delivering upstream interventions. These shifts suggest that prevention is beginning to be seen less as a discrete programme and more as a guiding principle for how local systems work. This cultural change represents a key step towards embedding prevention across Scotland.

INVESTING IN PREVENTION ON THE GROUND

In Highland, the Alcohol and Drugs Partnership (ADP) has played a central role in supporting Planet Youth. The ADP funded additional capacity for the implementation team and created a new Children's Health (Drugs and Alcohol) role within the Council to support engagement with schools and communities. In 2023, it also invested in two new Youth Sports Worker posts within Highlife Highland, providing young people and families with more opportunities for positive leisure activities. More recently, in 2025, they have dedicated match-funding to support additional key prevention roles.

Local partners report that Planet Youth has enabled them to expand services and raise awareness of support: "Planet Youth has been incredibly useful for my organisation to be able to expand our service in the coalition areas across Highland. It has helped us to raise awareness of our mental health supports within schools and other organisations and to reach far more young people than we would have been able to otherwise."

BUILDING CONNECTIONS THROUGH COMMUNITY EVENTS

In Argyll and Bute, a major milestone was the highly successful "Growing Up in Dunoon" event, drawing 43 stallholders and approximately 50 families. Although the aim was around engaging the community, an unexpected win was that this event strengthened local systems by connecting previously isolated stakeholders, allowing them to understand each other's roles and share resources more effectively.

Parents showed increased interest, with many committing to future involvement and joining their local coalition. The area has also made strides in building awareness of prevention and facilitating coalition building, even in geographically challenging areas, with tailored focuses like mobile phone use and alcohol issues that reflect local needs.



iv. Taking action at the local level

Early signs of change are visible in the way partners are beginning to translate Planet Youth data into concrete actions and embed Planet Youth principles into their wider work. Several areas have secured new funding for prevention activities, and there are examples of new services and initiatives shaped directly by Planet Youth findings. Angus has galvanised multi-agency work around youth vaping, Highland has embedded the survey results into children and young people's strategic planning, and Dundee has aligned Planet Youth with its Child Poverty and Inequalities structures. These steps may be modest, but they show how Planet Youth is already sparking preventative action on the ground in a sustainable way.

FROM DATA TO COMMUNITY ACTION

In West Dunbartonshire, Planet Youth has adopted a community-led model by commissioning a local third sector organisation to act as the lead. With two new posts in place, the organisation has drawn on its strong local connections to strengthen partnerships between schools, families, and communities.

Already embedded in local youth work, it has taken action to adapt its own services in line with Planet Youth principles and based on survey data. For example, they lowered the age threshold for youth groups to reach children earlier, expanded family activities to build protective factors, and used young people's feedback to shape their provision. While challenges remain in scaling this approach beyond the organisation's own services, it has proven a valuable way to strengthen local partnerships and place community voice at the heart of Planet Youth.

2.4. Key lessons: conditions for success

i. Dedicated implementation capacity

Dedicated staff capacity, especially a lead prevention officer, is key. Relying on goodwill or overstretched staff is not sustainable, especially when coalitions are expected to coordinate across agencies and drive cultural change. This was a notable challenge in Phase 1, where a lack of funding and recruitment delays left many areas underpowered. The evaluation found that progress accelerated once Scottish Government investment enabled dedicated coordinators and support roles to be recruited. For example, in Clackmannanshire, two dedicated posts were recruited. This allowed the coalition to accelerate its development, embed Planet Youth into the Family Wellbeing Partnership, and support all schools to use survey data to shape curricula and targeted initiatives.

ii. Strong multi-agency collaboration and shared ownership

One of the most important conditions for success is a strong existing culture of partnership working. Relationships across agencies create fertile ground for coalitions to take root, ensuring that responsibility for prevention is genuinely shared. This facilitated the trust that allowed partners to bring their resources and authority to the table and created accountability for collective action. Where there was a lack of partnership infrastructure, some coalitions struggled with patchy engagement or limited buy-in. Angus demonstrates the benefits of a culture of collaboration. Although joining in 2023, they were able to hit the ground running by building on existing relationships.

iii. Stable, long-term funding

Prevention requires long-term investment. Short-term, insecure funding was one of the biggest challenges identified in the evaluation, making it difficult for coalitions to plan beyond the immediate pilot period. Dedicated posts and prevention capacity can have a transformative effect. But we also saw how, when funding is uncertain, these gains are easily lost. In Clackmannanshire, the end of short-term funding meant that the two key Planet Youth posts were lost, making it harder to sustain the momentum gained through having this dedicated resource. This underscores the importance of taking a long-term, sustained approach supported by the certainty of adequate levels of funding with sufficient commitment of at least three years.

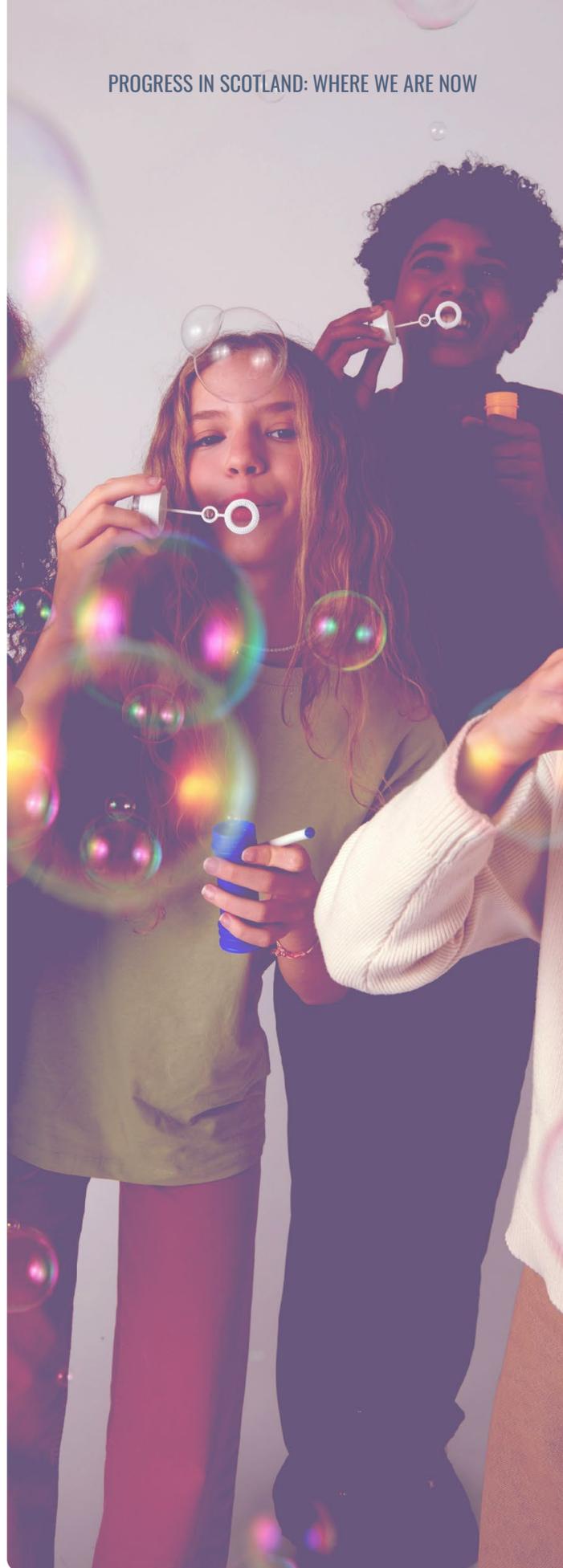


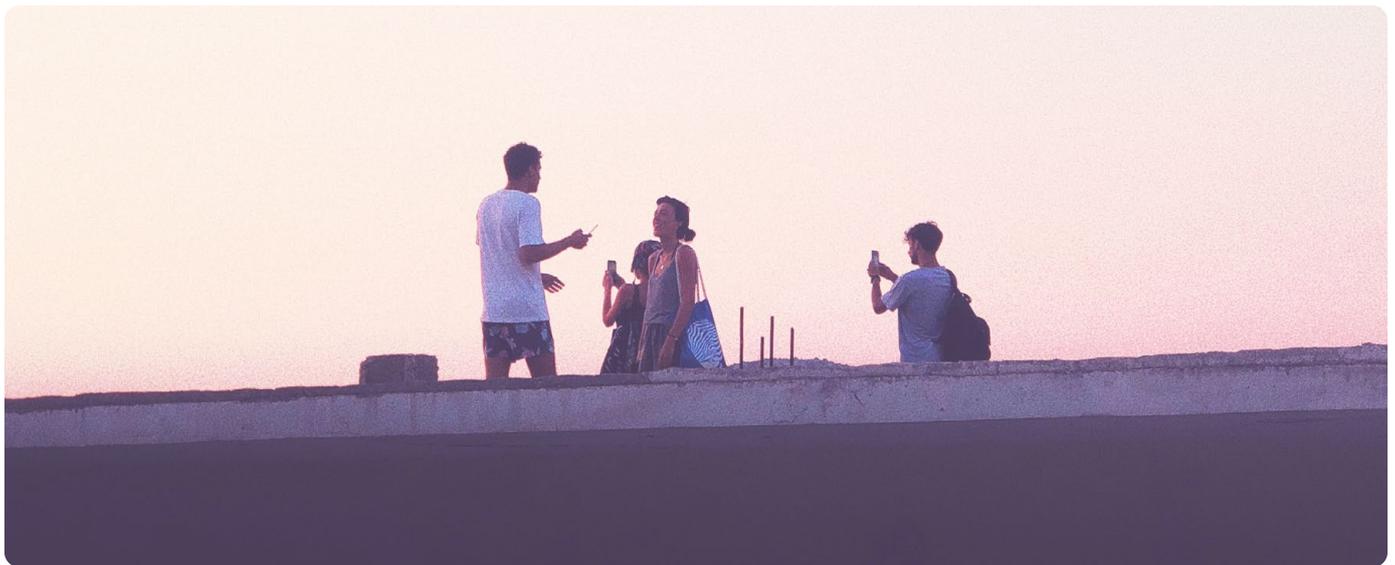
iv. **Visible strategic leadership and strong governance**

Strong leadership is essential for Planet Youth to move from the margins into the mainstream. When senior figures championed the approach and coalitions were embedded in recognised governance structures, local teams had the authority and accountability to drive change. But the evaluation found that this was not always the case: in some areas, responsibility sat too low in the system, with officers lacking the mandate to make key decisions and limiting coalitions' ability to influence wider priorities. Highland provides a strong example of how senior commitment can make a difference. The Director of Public Health, supported by the ADP coordinator, played a visible leadership role, raising awareness, building relationships and developing allies across agencies. This senior-level backing gave Planet Youth legitimacy and helped mobilise wider support and drive action.

v. **Meaningful parent and community involvement**

Prevention is most effective when families and communities feel part of shaping the response. Engaging parents not only builds trust and creates buy-in, but is a key protective factor itself. Yet, parent and community engagement was one of the most consistent challenges identified in the evaluation. In most areas, early resource constraints meant little was invested in communication or outreach, limiting participation. Where investment was made, however, it demonstrated the value of this principle. For example, Highland developed a dedicated parents' hub for feedback, ran parent cafés, launched a newsletter, and built an active Facebook group to create multiple ways for families to be informed and involved.





vi. Effective use of data for planning and action

The Planet Youth survey provides some of the richest and most representative data on young people's lives available in the UK. But its value lies not just in its collection but in how it is used to drive planning and action. Schools are central to making this possible. But for this to work, schools need to see clear benefits from participation, both for themselves and for their pupils. Survey participation dropped in some areas for the second round of surveys, leading to clear learning about the importance of ensuring that schools, parents and pupils see positive action being taken as a result of taking part. The evaluation also found that while some areas struggled with data dissemination or confidence in interpretation, others made the findings a central tool for collaboration. Argyll and Bute is a good example. As the only comprehensive dataset available on young people in the area, Planet Youth findings were used directly in the Integrated Children's Services Plan and in a local policing plan. This demonstrated how the data could fill critical gaps and inform decisions across different sectors.

vii. Shared understanding of prevention and system change

Building a common understanding of prevention and what it means to design upstream interventions focused on risk and protective factors is crucial for embedding Planet Youth. Without this, we saw how some coalitions, understandably, defaulted to short-term activities rather than long-term system change. The evaluation found that many partners were still developing this understanding, which limited the ambition of some action plans. Furthermore, across the system, the evaluation found a limited understanding of the challenges faced by others. There was a tendency to point out the perceived lack of action on the part of others without an appreciation of the challenges they faced. The following quote from a local coalition member highlights this mentality: "the whole premise is that it is owned by and developed by the parents. [But] *they* are not engaging in the way required". However, where partners engaged with the learning, it created a shift in perspective and allowed genuine relational empathy and collaboration. In Highland, for example, coalition members described how involvement in Planet Youth had deepened their understanding of prevention and influenced the way they approached their own services, reinforcing the model's potential for cultural change.



**WHY PLANET YOUTH IS
A PROMISING MODEL
FOR SCOTLAND**

3.1. Five principles for a Scottish prevention approach

1

Apply a primary prevention approach to change environments, not just behaviours

Planet Youth focuses on strengthening the protective factors in young people's lives, family support, school connectedness, positive peer relationships, and meaningful leisure opportunities. This upstream emphasis resonates strongly with Scotland's own commitment to tackling the root causes of inequality and improving long-term wellbeing.

2

Use rich, population-level data as the driver for change

The most distinctive feature of Planet Youth is the comprehensive survey of young people's lives. By asking young people directly about their experiences, it provides one of the richest and most representative datasets of its kind in the UK. Crucially, it produces data at a local level, giving communities insight into the realities of young people's lives in their area. This makes it uniquely powerful in Scotland and provides a local and national evidence base, acting as a lodestar for decision-making, action planning, and tracking progress over time.

3

Build coalitions for upstream prevention and system change

Planet Youth creates multi-agency coalitions involving schools, local authorities, health services, police, voluntary organisations, and community representatives. These coalitions bring together practitioners, commissioners, policymakers, schools, communities and researchers into a local engine for prevention. They are mechanisms for systems change, aligning different parts of the system around shared priorities and creating accountability for prevention. By acting on the data collectively, coalitions ensure that prevention is not left to one service but becomes a coordinated, whole-system effort to shift resources upstream.

4

Drive local, community-based change

Planet Youth emphasises action rooted communities, engaging young people, families and schools. This means that solutions and prevention strategies, because they are locally-owned, are grounded in the environments where young people grow and will take account of the demographics, socio-economics, geography and history of that community.

5

Take a generational view with long-term investment

The scope of the solution must match the scale of the problem. Prevention requires long-term commitment and adequate resourcing to effect the change we need. Planet Youth takes a generational view, recognising that sustainable change comes from investing in prevention over time, not through short-term projects. It is important to remember that Planet Youth Scotland has been developing for only four years, while in Iceland it took a decade before population-level changes became visible. A prevention-first approach in Scotland will only succeed if it is backed by long-term funding and vision.



3.2. Alignment and adaptation to the Scottish context

The good news is that Planet Youth’s principles resonate strongly with Scotland’s prevention priorities, from the Population Health Framework to national strategies on child poverty, mental health, substance use, public service reform, justice and education. The model’s emphasis on risk and protective factors also aligns with Scotland’s public health priorities and the wider shift towards addressing the social determinants of health. By helping families, schools, and communities to build protective factors, Planet Youth provides a practical way to operationalise Scotland’s long-held ambition to invest in prevention.

KEY LEARNING:

Planet Youth is most effective when integrated within a wider strategic commitment to prevention. Areas that have positioned the approach within existing prevention agendas, and where partners understand and actively commit to prevention, have seen greater traction and success.

At the same time, Scotland’s system conditions will shape whether Planet Youth can flourish. The evaluation also underscored the importance of tailoring the model to local contexts and system conditions. It identified several national-level challenges that mirror wider barriers to prevention in Scotland:

- ✘ Short-term funding, which undermines stability and makes it difficult for areas to plan for long-term prevention, with losses in key staff due to uncertain funding.
- ✘ Pressure for quick results, which creates tension with the longer time horizons needed to see population-level change.
- ✘ Capacity pressures and weakened community infrastructure, which limits the capacity of schools to engage and the ability to engage parents and communities.
- ✘ Siloed funding systems focused on acute problems, which tie up resources in crisis services, preventing investment from shifting upstream.
- ✘ A lack of shared understanding and national leadership on prevention, which leaves local partners without a clear framework or mandate.

KEY LEARNING:

Visible senior leaders strengthen Planet Youth by convening broad-based coalitions and embedding the approach in local planning. Champions with the authority to bring together schools, health services, and community organisations raise the profile of the approach and build confidence and commitment across the system.

3.3. A foundation for a Scottish Prevention Model

These challenges are not unique to Planet Youth. They reflect wider structural barriers that have hindered prevention in Scotland for decades. But they all point to Planet Youth's core thesis: prevention is a generational endeavour that requires long-term commitment and national support, alongside strong local leadership and community ownership.

This is also where the opportunity lies. The evidence suggests that while Planet Youth is not a ready-made solution for Scotland, it does provide a promising foundation. Instead of a 'lift and shift' approach, we need an 'adapt and adopt' approach for Scotland: applying the core principles of Planet Youth while shaping them to Scotland's policy landscape, priorities, and ways of working. Planet Youth brings distinctive tools and a proven framework that can be adapted to Scottish circumstances, while aligning well with national priorities and values.

The challenge, and the opportunity, is to put in place the national conditions, long-term investment, strong system leadership, and alignment with Scotland's priorities, that will enable Planet Youth to catalyse a broader, home-grown Scottish Prevention Model. The next section sets out a practical roadmap for achieving this and creating transformational change for the next generation.



TOWARDS A SCOTTISH PREVENTION MODEL

The pilot has shown what is possible: that Scotland can build broad coalitions for prevention, generate some of the richest evidence on young people's lives anywhere in the UK, and begin to shift local systems towards upstream, long-term change. But pilots alone will not deliver the generational shift Scotland needs.

Planet Youth offers a blueprint that Scotland can adapt and grow into a national Primary Prevention Model. The task now is to move from pilots to a coherent, long-term approach: one that is nationally supported, locally owned, and capable of driving sustained improvements in outcomes for young people over the next decade and beyond.

This roadmap sets out the next steps on Scotland's prevention journey: moving from pilot to national approach, establishing the structures for upstream primary prevention, and embedding a Scottish Prevention Model for the long term.

4.1. The Journey Ahead: Towards a Scottish Prevention Model

1

BUILD READINESS TO MOVE FROM PILOT TO NATIONAL APPROACH

- Commit to a five-year runway for developing a Scottish Prevention Model, building on the Planet Youth pilot.
- Strengthen local coalitions to ensure ownership, accountability, readiness, and active engagement of schools, professionals, families, and communities.
- Continue embedding Planet Youth in local strategies and plans, aligning with wider prevention agendas (Population Health Framework, Tackling Child Poverty, GIRFEC, Mental Health Strategy).
- Secure sustainable infrastructure for biennial surveys in schools and capacity for robust data analysis and insights at the school, local, and national levels to establish the Planet Youth dataset as a national prevention asset.



2

ESTABLISH A NATIONAL APPROACH TO UPSTREAM PRIMARY PREVENTION

- Develop and communicate a clear, Scottish vision of prevention, rooted in home-grown priorities rather than external models.
- Invest in a national body to lead the implementation of the Scottish Prevention Model, setting ambitions and expectations for scaling.
- Establish a dedicated cross-departmental Cabinet sub-committee on Preventative Health (or combine with Community Wealth Building) to provide visible national leadership and align budgets.
- Invest in national dissemination and community engagement to raise awareness of risk and protective factors, supporting local communication with parents and communities.

3

EMBED AND DELIVER A SCOTTISH PREVENTION APPROACH

- Embed prevention principles in mainstream funding, planning, and accountability structures.
- Realign budgets to increase protective factors for young people, repurposing spending based on data from young people and evidence of what works.
- Secure a long-term, sustainable funding model to ensure stable investment in prevention and resilience against short-term funding cycles.

CONCLUSION

Planet Youth has shown that prevention is possible, scalable, and already beginning to reshape local systems in Scotland.

By consolidating progress, committing to long-term investment, and embedding prevention nationally, Scotland now has the chance to build on Planet Youth's foundations and create a Scottish Prevention Model that can transform outcomes for young people for generations to come

Endnotes

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