



SCOTCH WHISKY  
ACTION FUND

MANAGED BY



Eildon West Youth Hub  
(TD1 Youth Hub)



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Organisation: **Fast Forward  
(Positive Lifestyles)**

Date of Award: **2020, 2022**

Amount Awarded: **£30,286**

Project Name: **Own It!**



Fast Forward exists to improve the health and wellbeing of children and young people across Scotland aged 12-25. Through a range of preventative education and direct support, they address a wide range of issues including alcohol and drug misuse, tobacco, gambling, violence, and sexual health.

## 'Own It': Pilot Phase

In 2020, Fast Forward received a grant of £9,985 from SWAF to develop a digital resource, called Own It!, for interactive, non-linear, digital stories to allow young people to navigate the impact of alcohol related harm in a safe and supportive environment. The aim of the resource is to teach young people they have the power and autonomy to make good decisions around the use of alcohol. The programme is based on the use of free digital story telling software to allow young people to choose and shape their own adventures, similar to the dungeons and dragon's format. The grant contributed to the cost of a project officer; staff travel and subsistence; travel and subsistence for young people; social media campaign and IT costs; stationery and resources, and a management fee, administration, and overhead costs.

However, when the grant was awarded in March 2020 the country went into lockdown and disrupted the timescales for the project and how it would be delivered. Once restrictions were lifted and they could continue with the project in 2021, they developed seven Own It! resources with thirty-seven potential stories exploring the effects of alcohol, drink driving, substance misuse, sexual consent, healthy relationships, performance, and image enhancing drugs and tobacco. There are over 150 different endings and around 2,400 different potential decisions a player could make. The storylines, themes and content were developed by working directly with 139 young people from across Scotland from Lockerbie (Dumfries and Galloway) to Portree (Isle of Skye).



As part of the process and prior to developing the storylines and games, Fast Forward provided customised upskilling and training workshops for the young participants on a range of risk-taking issues. This ensured the young people had accurate, factual, information to support game development. Key myths were dispelled, and young people reported an increase in their own confidence and understanding of staying safe.

The Own It! resources are held on the [Peer Inspiration Projects Scotland website](#), and have been viewed and played over 2,500 times by young people, and the adults in their lives.

Fast Forward staff have presented on the Own It programme at several local, regional, and national events, including the Children in Scotland Conference 2021, and Youth Link's recent Digital Safety conference in February 2022.

## **The young participants provided the following feedback to survey questions: :**

1. What difference has being involved with the Own It project made to you?

- 'I now feel much more comfortable talking about subjects and situations that I found tricky in the past.'
- 'I understand more about the potential consequences of my actions. I think more about the decisions that I make when it comes to risky behaviours.'
- 'I'm much more aware of what certain substances can do to me.'
- 'I recognise the importance of taking responsibility for my choices and my actions.'

2. What did you particularly like about the project?

- 'Normally, when I've done stuff on alcohol and drugs before, you kinda get lectured. "Don't do this, don't do that." But it wasn't like that here. In a non-judgemental way, we talked and thought about the choices we might make, and how those could impact others.'

3. What do you feel you have achieved?

- 'It feels nice to know that, by telling our own stories, and creating our 'Own It!'s, we'll make a difference to some of the choices that other young people will make, just like us.'
- 'Feeling comfortable with openly sharing my thoughts on what have sometimes been some emotional subjects. This has been a big thing for me. Before the first session, I was really scared and nervous about coming. Now I really look forward to the sessions. I really enjoy them.'
- 'Showing other people what could potentially happen, based on their choices.'
- 'I would absolutely show my 'Own It!' to my family and my friends. I'm proud of it. I want them to see it.'

*"I've been a youth worker for 25 years. In that period, I have not seen risk-taking behaviour issues addressed with young people in such an innovative and effective way. It's the first project I've seen that improves young people's understanding of risk-taking behaviour in the context of their own life and the choices that they make themselves. The young people have loved being involved with the project because it focuses on them, positively influencing other young people through their own experiences."*

**- Heather Thomson, Senior Community Education Worker, West Lothian Council CLD**

## 'Own It': Year Two

Following the success of the pilot there was significant interest in, and increased demand for, the Own It approach due to the impact on young peoples' ability to make informed decisions towards more positive life opportunities. However, without additional funding they were unable to meet the demand. SWAF therefore invested a larger grant of £20,301 for the second year of funding in June 2022 to help Fast Forward build the resource further and keep the momentum going.

In the year 2022/23 Fast Forward worked with ten groups of children and young people aged between 10-20 years old across the Lothians, working with 162 participants in total during that time: an increase of 23 from the pilot phase.

Participants came from mainstream primary and secondary schools, and an Additional Support Needs (ASN) secondary school, youth groups, employability programmes and further education institutions. They delivered eight sessions to each group, with sessions lasting 1.5-2 hours long, depending on the needs of the group.

Input from Napier University placement students gave Fast Forward the opportunity to offer the participants the opportunity to develop different types of creative resources, as an alternative to the Choose Your Own Adventure digital game option. This resulted in:

### [Rigo's Big Night Out](#)



A platform game, developed with young people from West Lothian Skills Training Programme, with the support of the intern Rodrigo, a software engineering student at Napier University, exploring the impact on alcohol on the character's ability to negotiate barriers as they become increasingly drunk while on a night out with friends.

Rodrigo's feedback:

"Not only have I have gained important technical and lived experience related to my degree. Beyond that, I've also contributed to making a difference by creating a video game that raises awareness of what influences the choices that young people make about risk-behaviours. It feels good to know that I have made a positive impact on the young people that helped create the game, and the other young people that will go on to play it."

### [Why not? What...](#)

A short film developed with P7 pupils from Prestonfield Primary School, exploring why young people may choose to drink, the possible consequences, and how they would like the adults in their lives to talk to them about alcohol and other risk-taking behaviours.



Participant feedback:

"I feel more confident around alcohol because if I see someone doing it. I can give them lots of ways on how to keep safe".

Teacher feedback:

"The video is really good, it was great to see what the children have produced. The rest of my class really enjoyed watching it together – gave it a big thumb's up."

### [Think before you drink](#)

A short film developed with pupils from Stenhouse Primary School, focusing on why young people may choose to drink, and the possible consequences.

Participant feedback:

"I loved my role in the short film but I also loved the education I got from doing it, like the consequences of smoking tobacco and drink".

"The thing I enjoyed the most was making the film and talking about what we wanted to be it in... I was the judge".

"I am more confident around the topics of alcohol, drugs tobacco/vaping like I know more about it and how to be safe".

"I feel more confident and I now know lots of things that would keep you safe if you were to drink".

### **Think Before You Drink – Team Stenhouse**



## Teacher feedback:

"I think it's had a valuable impact on the pupils who have taken part, the whole class benefited from the sessions which were delivered so they feel better informed about some of the dangers about risk taking behaviours like vaping, cigarettes and alcohol. I think they will be better informed to make the right choices if they were to find themselves in that sort of situation with their friends. So yeah, it's been really positive."

"It's been a big boost to the self-esteem of a lot of the kids who were involved in the focus group of creating the OWN IT Film, I have seen their confidence really grow, it's been a really positive thing for them to be involved in this especially seeing their work come together at the end. It means an awful lot to them, and I can tell this from their reaction from seeing it. It's been great!"

## Own It!: Additional Outcomes

In addition to the benefits of the resources created during this process, teachers and participants reported the following:

- 22% of participants are more engaged and comfortable in school and at youth groups because of taking part in the creation of the Own It! resources.
- 70% have been more engaged in the Own It! sessions than they generally would be in classroom.
- 80% of children and young people have reported they are more confident and resilient in making informed decisions about alcohol.
- 90% of children and young people reported having a better understanding of the harms, risks and dangers of excessive and underage alcohol consumption.

## Own It!: Next Steps

Fast Forward have received final grant of £24,787 from SWAF in June 2023 to continue the programme for a further year until the summer of 2024, enabling a third year to further develop the Own It! model.

Fast Forward plan to work with more groups of young people and develop new partnerships with individuals and organisations with the creative skills needed to develop a more diverse range of resources, and to enable on-going partnership working with these organisations as the programme continues to develop and grow.

They will build on the simple digital games introduced in year one of the programme to include other gaming formats and short films, which were developed in year two. They are also interested in the opportunity to work with groups to develop resources through other media outlets for example music, photography, dance, etc.

Fast Forward plan to evaluate the feedback gathered over the 3-years of the SWAF funding, to inform future funding applications to enable them to continue the Own It! programme beyond the SWAF investment.

*"We would like to thank the Scotch Whisky Action Fund for their confidence in our project to pilot the Own It! approach with young people across Scotland, with a focus on raising awareness of alcohol related harm."*

**- Allie Cherry-Byrnes, CEO, Fast Forward.**