

PEN PICTURE: Duke of Edinburgh's Award

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) works in partnership with Sikh Sanjog Youth Service to deliver a flexible personal development programme that engages young women from ethnically and culturally diverse backgrounds who are at risk of leaving school with limited qualifications.

Youth workers at five Edinburgh schools offer participants the opportunity to complete DofE sectional certificates. This enables them to complete their Volunteering, Physical and Skill activities and have their achievements recognised and celebrated. Through engaging with DofE, participants reengage with education, overcome barriers and help their lives along a positive track.

The activities offered to participants are given careful consideration by the youth work team. Cultural practices are taken into account to maximise chances for the young women to participate. Peer mentoring is a key feature of the project and participants are encouraged to exchange cultural insights and become leaders in their own right.

For Physical activities, dance classes are female-only and for the Skills activities participants undertake a cultural project. By offering appropriate activities through a culturally sensitive approach, youth workers create a safe and secure environment in schools where participants can thrive and achieve their goals.

The success of the project in reengaging young women in education has resulted in The Royal High School offering the DofE Leadership programme as part of the curriculum in 2015-16.

The achievements of over 50 participants were celebrated in January 2015 at a parliamentary reception with Presiding Officer, the Rt Hon Tricia Marwick MSP and Minister for Children and Young People, Fiona McLeod MSP. The positive impact of achieving DofE certificates was evident to all on the night.

"I'm thrilled to see so many diverse young women taking part in achieving and standing up for what they believe in, making a difference for the invisible voices within society. The project has been an amazing journey, seeing confidence and self worth grow in each and every one of them."

Khaleda Noon, Youth Development Manager at Sikh Sanjog

To find out more about The Duke of Edinburgh's Award and its flexible approach to learning, please visit www.DofE.org