



About YouthLink Scotland

YouthLink Scotland is the national agency for youth work. We are a membership organisation, representing over 100 regional and national youth organisations from both the voluntary and statutory sectors. We champion the role and value of youth work and represent the interests and aspirations of both the voluntary and statutory sector. Our vision is of a nation which values its young people and their contribution to society, where young people are supported to achieve their potential.

Scotland's youth work sector is as rich and diverse as the nation itself. Our sector has a workforce in excess of 75,000 – including over 70,000 adult volunteers. We reach in excess of 380,000 young people in youth work opportunities each week. Youth Work has three essential and definitive features:

- Young people choose to participate
- Youth work must build from where young people are
- Youth work recognises the young person and the youth worker as partners in a learning process

The activity, venue, and approaches utilised to deliver this are varied – and include youth clubs, youth projects, specialist or targeted provision, social activism, outdoor learning, awards programmes, uniformed organisations, and democratic participation.

As the national agency for youth work, and in our role as an intermediary we have endeavoured to respond to this response in the best interests of the youth work sector, however the views contained within this response may not be held by each of our individual members.

1. Do you agree with the Scottish Government including in statute an ambition to eradicate child poverty?

YouthLink Scotland welcomes this consultation on a Child Poverty Bill, in particular the multi-sector, multi-agency and intersectional approach taken. This is in line with the recent statements from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) committee regarding the concern about high rates of child poverty.

2. What are your views on making income targets statutory?

YouthLink Scotland welcomes the introduction of statutory income targets in accordance with the UNCRC committee's recommendations to re-establish concrete targets for the eradication of child poverty.¹

¹ UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding observations [CRC/C/GBR/CO/5]*, http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/SessionDetails1.aspx?SessionID=987&Lang=en

3. How do you think the role of the Ministerial Advisory Group on Child Poverty can be developed to ensure that they play a key role in developing the legislation?

The membership of the Advisory Group will almost certainly be different from its 2014 composition. YouthLink Scotland would encourage the Scottish Government to invite additional members to represent the youth work sector and young people with lived experiences. Youth workers are often the first to see signs of poverty in young people and are at the forefront of providing services that alleviate poverty, as such, their experiences would prove invaluable to the group. A key tenet of the *National Youth Work Strategy 2014-19* is that young people are at the heart of policy.² Representation from young people with lived experiences of poverty in contemporary Scotland would provide crucial insight about the impact of poverty alleviation measures in practice.

The Advisory Group should, in line with UNCRC committee recommendations, regularly conduct child rights impact assessments of economic decision-making processes and outcomes³ in order to develop the legislation.

4. How do you think links between the national strategy and local authorities could be improved? Do you think that local authorities themselves should be producing strategies or reporting on child poverty activity? Is there anyone else that should be measuring or reporting on child poverty?

YouthLink Scotland members were clear that child poverty should be a truly cross-cutting theme in all national strategies in order to create a focus on the underpinning reasons for child poverty. Members highlighted that the lack of power for local decision making hinders the ability to provide infrastructure to achieve the aims of the legislation. Furthermore, the impact of surrounding strategies on child poverty should also be measured nationally.

Our members also wanted any reporting to be linked to existing reporting structures (for example with Child's Rights reporting) and strategies to reduce the administrative burden.

5. What are your views on the income based measures of poverty proposed for Scottish child poverty targets? For example, are there any additional income-based measures you think we should also use (and if so, why)? Are there any alternative approaches to measuring income – for example, as used in other countries – that you think could apply in Scotland?

It is clear that no single indicator will be able to relay the full complexity of child poverty in Scotland, due in part to the sophisticated understanding of poverty as beyond purely economic measures. Conversely, household income does not capture a nuanced picture of poverty. It assumes that within a household, individuals experience poverty the same way. It does not account for the difference in experiences of men and women, estranged LGBT young people and of those with disabilities for example. In particular for those families experiencing domestic violence, of which economic violence can play a significant part,

² National Youth Work Strategy 2014-19, <http://www.youthlinkscotland.org/Index.asp?MainID=19180&UserID=1479>

³ UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Concluding observations [CRC/C/GBR/CO/5], http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/SessionDetails1.aspx?SessionID=987&Lang=en

household income measurements do not take into account who receives finances. An alternate measure, Individual Deprivation Measure (IDM), has been explored by a research group led by the Australian National University in Canberra to highlight gendered differences in poverty.⁴

Furthermore, household income does not account for those living in communal settings, for example looked after children and young people in residential care and young people in prison. YouthLink Scotland would encourage the Scottish Government to explore how the measures of poverty used could capture all of these groups of children and young people.

6. What are your views on the Scottish Government's proposals for the levels of child poverty that the targets will be set at?

7. What are your views on the Scottish Government's proposal to set targets on an after housing costs basis? For example, are there any disadvantages to this approach that we have not already considered?

YouthLink Scotland supports the view of the Scottish Government to set targets on an after housing costs basis. Housing costs must be met and therefore the money left over after paying housing costs is a truer reflection of poverty.

8. What are your views on the Scottish Government's proposal to set targets that are expected to be achieved by 2030?

The targets cited are ambitious but 2030 leaves an adequate timescale for large scale change to happen.

9. What are your views on the proposal that Scottish Ministers will be required by the Bill to produce a Child Poverty Delivery Plan every five years, and to report on this Plan annually?

Production of a Child Poverty Delivery Plan would be useful for analysing the broader picture of child poverty in Scotland. YouthLink Scotland encourages the Scottish Government to involve youth workers in the process of putting together the Delivery plan at a local and national level.

10. Do you have any suggestions for how the measurement framework could usefully be improved? For example, are there any influencing factors that are not covered by the measurement framework? Or are there any additional indicators that could be added?

The measurement framework was developed before the release of the *National Youth Work Strategy 2014-19* and as such it should be added to the refreshed version under PROSPECTS. Similarly, the new mental health strategy should work closely alongside this

⁴ International Women's Development Agency, <https://www.iwda.org.au/introducing-the-individual-deprivation-measure/>

legislation to address research that presents poverty as a cause and consequence of poor mental health.⁵

Under PLACES, it could be stated more explicitly that it is particularly important to have access to play spaces (natural and purpose-built) for children and young people from low income households. Currently, children from deprived areas have less ready access to different types of play space in their local area⁶ which in turn will impact their physical and mental wellbeing, social skill development and resilience.

It is positive to see the Scottish Government have pointed to the UNCRC within this draft strategy. It would be a positive development to see the UNCRC encompassed in the measurement framework. Reference should also be made to corresponding Sustainable Development Goals, namely end poverty in all its forms everywhere and reduce inequality within and among countries.⁷

11. Do you have any additional views on a Child Poverty Bill for Scotland?

Poverty is experienced differently throughout Scotland's communities. There are higher rates of poverty amongst women, disabled people and minority ethnic communities. These differences must be recognised within the Child Poverty Bill.

As mentioned above, youth workers are often the first ones to see signs of poverty amongst children and young people. With their services, youth work organisations are attempting to reduce and where necessary waiver fees for those who cannot pay, and also to feed children and young people where they are in need. Youth workers and youth work organisations do this in such a manner than reduces stigma for the young people experiencing poverty. Through engaging in youth work, young people are resilient, optimistic for the future, consider risk, make reasoned decisions and take control. Experiencing poverty may limit the likelihood of young people accessing these vital services and thus not gaining these outcomes.

The cost of the school day has a significant impact on children and young people's attainment. YouthLink Scotland supports the ongoing work of the Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland including the report and recommendations, *The Cost of the School Day*. The lack of support in some areas in Scotland during school holidays is also a particular pressure point for low income families. We would encourage the Scottish Government to take this into account for all forthcoming work to tackle child poverty.

For further information please contact Emily Beever, Senior Development Officer (Policy and Research) ebeever@youthlinkscotland.org or 0131 313 6815.

⁵ Mental Health Foundation, *Poverty and mental health: A review to inform the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's Anti-Poverty Strategy*, 2016

⁶ Child Poverty Action Group, *Poverty in Scotland 2016: Tools for Transformation*, 2016, p. 123

⁷ United Nations, *Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform*, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs>