



YOUTH WORKERS SAY COMMUNITY RELATIONS NEGATIVELY IMPACTED SINCE EU REFERENDUM

NEWS RELEASE –Embargoed until 00:01 7th March 2019

A report released today by two leading youth work sector organisations shows youth workers have witnessed a negative impact on community relations since the EU Referendum in June 2016.

Over 50% of those who responded to the survey reported a variety of impact including: young people feeling excluded from democracy, emboldened intolerance on social media, divided communities, and a loss of public trust in information.

YouthLink Scotland and Youth Scotland have collaborated to explore the impact of Brexit on the youth work sector in Scotland and to support youth workers in their work with young people on Brexit. This project and this report is called Hear.EU.

The findings also show that youth work practitioners did not feel informed about Brexit, and the majority of respondents were unsure of the financial impact on the sector, although their perception of future funding was broadly understood to be negative.

Key findings

- Youth workers did not feel informed about Brexit, with 18% feeling 'very uninformed'
- Half of respondents had observed that community relations had been negatively impacted since the EU referendum
- The majority of respondents were unsure of the financial impact of Brexit on youth work
- Respondents were divided between those who had (42%) and those who had not (42%) provided information at any time during the EU referendum and negotiation period
- Lack of confidence was a reason many youth workers in our research did not discuss Brexit with young people

Commenting on the findings of the report, Tim Frew, Chief Executive of YouthLink Scotland said:

"It is clear that as we approach the final deadline for Brexit, there is considerable unease across society about the impact of leaving the EU, and that includes Scotland's youth work

sector. We know that many Scottish young people have felt disenfranchised through the process of the EU referendum and in the events that have followed. At the very heart of youth work is the voice of young people, it is essential to ensure that young people can realise their rights, be able to participate fully in our democracy and have a voice in the decisions that may affect their future. We will be working alongside the sector to secure sustainable investment in youth work and to explore the place of youth voice and political literacy within the next National Youth Work Strategy.”

Ian McLaughlan, Chief Executive of Youth Scotland said:

“We know through our members that young people and youth workers are passionate about living in a positive, caring and fair country. Our work across the 5 nations with the British Irish Parliamentary Assembly and wider projects have consistently shown this. At its heart, youth work is about empowering young people in our communities and enabling them to form and express views on their democratic rights and participate as active citizens. However, through this research it is clear that youth workers are seeing the impact which Brexit is having on many young people in their communities, with a lack of engagement in the process and lack of information leading to feelings of disempowerment. As we move forward, it is vital that youth workers across Scotland are well equipped and resourced to engage young people and make a positive difference in the communities that they are an integral part of—now and in the future.”

Constitutional Relations Secretary Michael Russell said:

“It’s been really important throughout this divisive and disruptive Brexit process for people across Scotland to have their voices heard. The workshops have engaged youth workers, children and young people across the country and their work has helped to inform my ongoing discussions with the UK Government and other devolved administrations. The Scottish Government is committed to proactively publishing information on the potential impacts of Brexit on youth work, and will continue to listen to young people about the UK leaving the EU.”

Following publication of this report, YouthLink Scotland and Youth Scotland will take the following steps to support the sector:

- Work with the sector for sustainable investment in youth work
- Develop and deliver high quality training to the youth work sector
- Advocate for the inclusion of political literacy within a future National Youth Work Strategy
- Work in partnership to support young people to challenge racism and xenophobia

Responding to the findings of the report, Dave Beck, Lecturer in Community Development, University of Glasgow commented:

"Youth Work has never been more needed than it is now. Brexit highlights a society which is polarised, politics which is reduced to slogans and sound bites and a citizenry which stands by bewildered and disconnected. Youth Work is needed to help rebuild a vibrant, participatory democracy where there are spaces to think, challenge and hold all accountable for shaping our collective future."

"I think young people are disillusioned by Brexit; the constant, and conflicting, media coverage and the fact that it's still ongoing... I'm not sure if Brexit is a good example of democracy - young people were not able to vote in the EU referendum and so I'm not surprised that they feel frustrated and/or disengaged from it all." (Youth Worker, Survey)

"European communities perhaps feeling more ostracised. Relationships between Scotland and the rest of UK have been more strained." (Youth Worker, Workshop)

"I don't think in my area there has been an increase in racism...I think young people are at risk or being apathetic and disillusioned by the process." (Youth Worker, Workshop)

Youth work in Scotland reaches 380,000 young people each week. The youth work sector workforce is comprised of 80,000 practitioners, of whom 70,000 are volunteers.

168 youth work practitioners working and volunteering across Scotland were asked about their views through a combination of workshops and an online survey between December 2018 and January 2019.

YouthLink Scotland, the national agency for youth work, and Youth Scotland, the network for community based youth work, were funded by the Scottish Government Brexit Stakeholder Engagement Fund to conduct research on Brexit with the youth work sector in Scotland.

Ends

Notes to editors

The full Hear EU report can be downloaded at:

https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/media/3346/hear_eu_report.pdf

For media enquiries and further information please contact Sarah Paterson, Communications and Public Affairs Manager at YouthLink Scotland on 07804 603762 or 0131 313 2488 and at spaterson@youthlinkscotland.org

YouthLink Scotland

- YouthLink Scotland is the national agency for youth work. It is the voice of the youth work sector in Scotland.

- It is a membership organisation and is in the unique position of representing the interests and aspirations of the whole of the sector both voluntary and statutory.
- YouthLink Scotland champions the role and value of the youth work sector, challenging government at national and local levels to invest in the development of the sector.
- YouthLink Scotland represents over 100 organisations, including the 32 Local Authority Youth Work Services and all major national voluntary youth work organisations, which support over 300,000 young people in achieving their potential.
- YouthLink Scotland promotes a positive image of Scotland's young people and seeks to promote their value to communities and society.

Youth Scotland

Youth Scotland is the largest national youth work organisation in Scotland, supporting 1,300 youth groups and over 7,700 youth workers which work with 61,000 young people. Youth Scotland has been around since the early 20th century and has a diverse membership network – from small rural youth groups to large urban projects. The common goal that we all share is better outcomes for young people.

Our membership network is made up of local youth groups of all sizes, Area Associations and Youth Scotland staff who can provide support and training on a range of youth work topics. We are proud of the varied, universal youth work our network delivers and the innovative solutions our members create in an ever-changing youth work landscape.