

Youth work: Supporting young people through and out of lockdown

A statement on behalf of
the youth work sector in Scotland
June 2020

The Scottish Government route-map for easing lockdown acknowledges youth work as a priority service, alongside provision of school-based education.

Youth work organisations are undertaking significant work to prepare for gradual phased re-introduction of face-to-face delivery of youth work, in line with the Scottish Government Framework. At each phase, our priority is to safeguard the health and wellbeing of our children, young people and practitioners and, as such, timescales and approaches will be determined by public health advice and guidance.

Throughout lockdown, and where possible, youth work has continued to support and engage children and young people. This has included:

- Prioritising crisis support for the most vulnerable families
- Using digital technology and other resources to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on young people's mental health, learning and development and
- Continuing to promote young people's voice, rights, volunteering opportunities and social action.

This approach has maintained important relationships, helped to mitigate the impact of isolation and anxiety

on mental health and ensured continued opportunities for wider learning and achievement.

As a youth-led practice, youth work continues to be informed by young people. Young people told us in **#LockdownLowdown** about the issues that concern them the most. Locally, and within organisations, youth workers are undertaking similar consultations with young people, to shape and inform their response.

To support children and young people through and out of lockdown, youth work will continue to provide opportunities to:

Improve health and wellbeing

This may include:

- Where positioned to, supporting children and young people to manage the transition to a blended model of education, including support for those at key transition points
- Addressing the impact of COVID-19 on young people's health and wellbeing, including developing resilience and remaining positive about the future
- Helping children and young people to improve and manage their physical and mental wellbeing
- Providing opportunities to connect with friends and youth workers to form supportive, positive relationships
- Helping young people stay connected, stay safe and stay healthy.



Help children and young people to thrive and fulfil their potential

- Providing opportunities to learn and achieve, with a focus on mitigating the negative impact of COVID-19 on education and continuing to deliver equity and excellence
- Where positioned, continue developing the young workforce, with advice and support for school leavers and young people affected by the impact of C-19 on the job market
- Providing opportunities to develop skills to live, learn and work
- Supporting children and young people to express their right to be heard and be part of decisions that affect them.

Uphold children and young people's rights, and advocate on their behalf

As a rights-based practice, youth work will continue to advocate for young people, including addressing issues of data poverty/digital exclusion and ensuring that fiscal policies and allocation of resources do not disproportionately affect children in disadvantaged situations. This is pertinent as Scottish Government intends to fully incorporate UNCRC into Scots Law in this Parliamentary Term. The youth work sector can help deliver this aim.

Work collaboratively

We will work collectively and collaboratively to best meet the needs of young people and mitigate the long-term impact of COVID-19. This includes close collaboration with schools, to support young people's transition; and in longer term planning around closing the attainment gap activities and sustaining a blended approach to learning that includes both school and youth work.

What might this look like at each phase?

Children and young people are likely to experience youth work through a blended model of delivery. Where possible, this will include continued use of digital technology and other approaches to support youth work learning at home. Youth work organisations are undertaking significant work to prepare for gradual phased re-introduction of face-to-face delivery of youth work, in line with the Scottish Government Framework. The timing and nature of this will be determined by public health advice and guidance. It will

also be dependent on the capacity of each youth work organisation. It is likely to include the use of a range of approaches such as detached work and learning in outdoor spaces.

Phase 2

Youth work may include:

- Continued delivery of crisis support to young people and families who will be more affected than others by the impact of COVID-19
- Where positioned, continued youth work support within critical childcare provision including community hubs
- Some face-to-face provision of key closing the gap, transition and food insecurity activities with at-risk children and young people, on a small group or one-to-one basis. In line with Scottish Government plans for Phase 2, this may involve working with young people in outdoor settings, through approaches such as detached/streetwork, or working with outdoor learning colleagues, to reconnect and engage with young people. Any delivery is dependent on appropriate risk assessment, physical distancing and other public health protections and procedures being in place
- Continued use of digital technology, where possible, to provide support and resources to learn through youth work at home and address health and wellbeing concerns. This may also involve transition support, including a focus on key the transition points of P7/S1 and school leaver, and continued delivery of closing the attainment gap activities.

Phase 3

In line with Scottish Government guidelines for Phase 3, some youth work organisations and services may be in a position to increase face-to-face delivery, with some youth spaces beginning a gradual re-opening. The timing and nature of this will be determined by public health advice and guidance. It will also be dependent on the capacity of each youth work organisation, appropriate risk assessments and public health protections and measures being in place. A blended approach will continue, with online/digital learning and engagement sustained where possible.

Youth work may include:

- Gradual, safely scaled up face-to-face delivery of closing the attainment gap activities
 - Ongoing support for disadvantaged learners and those at key transition points
 - Gradual, safely scaled up face-to-face youth work delivery. This is likely to involve small groups of young people at any one time. Each youth work setting will determine the number of children or young people
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who can be safely accommodated at any one time

- Collaboration with schools to support delivery of learning across school, home and community
- Use of a range of youth work approaches such as outreach and detached work, and opportunities for outdoor learning
- Ongoing planning with schools and other partners to identify newly vulnerable young people, with a focus on wellbeing, impact on learning and school leavers; and
- Continued opportunities for youth voice, including specialist advice on approaches such as participative budgeting.

Phase 4

In line with guidance for education settings and other public services, youth work organisations may be operating with any necessary precautions, modifications and changes to service design, including continued use of digital services. This may continue to include meeting in smaller groups, and the use of different settings and approaches.

Our priority will continue to be responding to the emerging needs of young people and mitigating the long-term impact of COVID-19.

YouthLink Scotland

YouthLink Scotland will continue to review and update this information in line with the **Scottish Government framework for decision making** and in light of Scottish Government CLD Guidelines, which will be included when published. We are continuing to work closely with the youth work sector, Scottish Government and Education Scotland to support the recovery planning process.

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