

Access to Facilities – September 2020



Purpose and Reach of Survey

In August 2020, YouthLink Scotland asked organisations from across the youth work sector to participate in a survey that would provide a snapshot of current access to community facilities by youth work organisations across the country, and shed more light on the challenges and barriers faced by organisations in carrying out digital, detached and outdoor youth work and in preparation for safe indoor working.

It should be noted that the survey was done in advance of the opening of indoor youth work, which didn't occur until 31st August¹, with updated youth work guidance² issued on the 4th September after the survey closed. A further survey will take place in September to track change over time.

The survey opened on 11th August and closed on 3rd September 2020. Over that period, 65 organisations accessed the survey, and 46 provided responses. Of these:

- 9 represented Local Authority youth work / CLD teams
- 3 were Third Sector organisations with a national remit:
- The rest were local third sector organisations, including local branches of uniformed organisations
- All 32 Local Authorities were represented in terms of areas of operation. As might be expected, organisations in the cities of Edinburgh and Glasgow accounted for more than a third of all responses.

Details of the information gathered through survey are summarised below.

Where is outdoor youth work already taking place?

When asked what facilities and outdoor spaces are currently being used to provide outdoor youth work, responding organisations most commonly mentioned public parks, along with gardens, local countryside, sports fields and outdoor spaces adjacent to youth centres. High school grounds, woodland, playgrounds and beaches were also in the mix.

1:1 walk and talk sessions and small group work are up and running for a number of organisations. Detached youth work is also happening in some areas. However, 39% of respondents said they were not yet offering face-to-face youth work outdoors or indoors due to guidance from their national body, or due to local concerns about safety.

What barriers or challenges are youth workers facing as they undertake work outdoors?

Most commonly mentioned barriers:

- Lack of appropriate space
- Availability of safe space outdoors, especially at the moment, when multiple groups are trying to use the same areas
- Maintaining social distancing – with members of public as well as in the groups
- Lack of toilets and handwashing facilities

¹ Some youth work indoors that was part of regulated work, such as that within schools or with vulnerable groups in other settings had been occurring before the 31st August.

² A full list of the guidance is available at <https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/covid-19-guidance/youth-work-recovery-resources/> We are still awaiting Guidance relating to the use of Community Centres.

- Weather – and light in the evenings
- Keeping up with Government guidance and risk assessments
- Limiting numbers, staggering sessions and segmenting by age group with limited staff
- Anxiety
- Transport issues – anxiety about use of public transport; cost and logistics of transport
- ‘Screen fatigue’ or ongoing digital exclusion issues for online working

A number of respondents particularly highlighted the importance of a safe, nurturing space for more intensive kinds of youth work and the difficulties of undertaking this in public spaces:

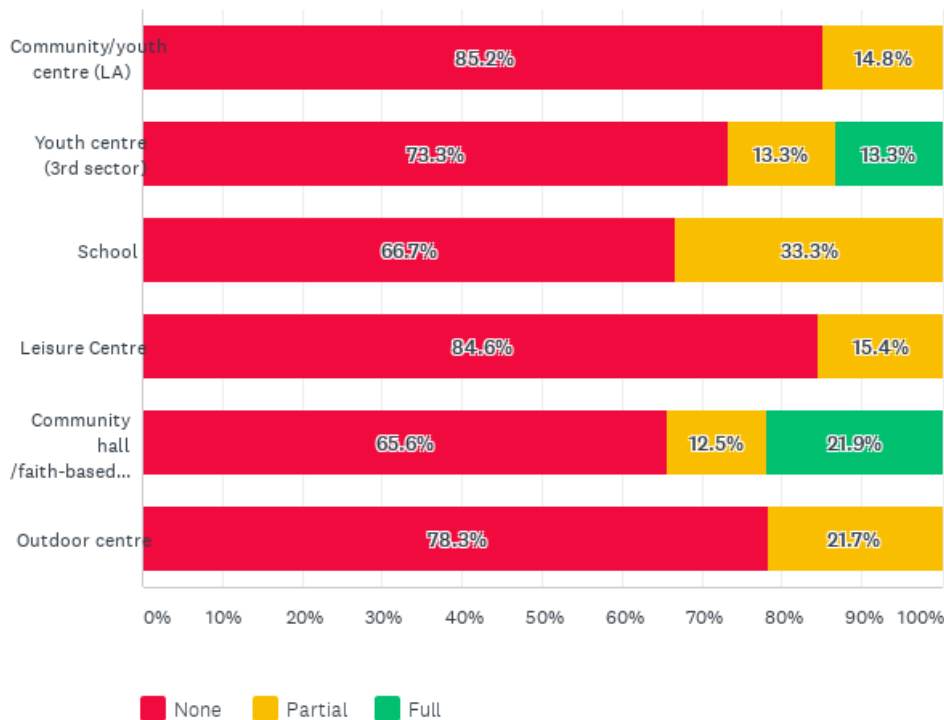
“Safe and supportive conversations with young people on their own who are grieving, and exploring coping strategies, needs to be carried out in a safe, nurturing space and not in the public domain of outdoor pitches or fast food eateries”

“Feels less cosy and less welcoming for young people. Less space = less interactions. Passers-by coming over to find out what we’re up to breaks up the atmosphere...”

Access to facilities for indoor youth work

The chart below shows that, as expected, access to indoor facilities is very limited at this stage. Schools are currently the most accessible facilities, providing partial access to 33% of respondents. Community and leisure centres are the least accessible, providing only partial access to around 15% of the organisations who plan to use them. Outdoor centres are still inaccessible to nearly 80% of the organisations who would otherwise hope to use them (23 out of 46 respondents said they would use these if they could).

Fig 1: What facilities do you use or plan to use for indoor youth work and what are your current access levels?



Comparing the responses of local authority teams and third sector organisations also highlights some significant differences:

- The only indoor access that local authority teams have at the moment is through schools – and they are more likely to be in schools than their voluntary sector counterparts. More than half of the local authority teams who took part in the survey have some access to young people in school, compared to just 24% of the voluntary sector organisations who want to be delivering work during the school day.
- On the other hand, 44% of third sector organisations that usually use community / faith-based centre halls already have some access to these – compared to no access at all for local authority teams. In addition, 32% of third sector organisations have partial or full access to third sector youth centres.
- A minority of third sector organisations already report full access to youth centres and community halls and faith-based centres. Local Authority teams do not have full access to any of their usual facilities.

Most Common Barriers to Access

The following are the most commonly mentioned barriers to access to facilities (ordered by frequency of mention):

1. Guidance prohibits indoor working at the moment
2. Venues are closed
3. Use of schools is limited
4. Church of Scotland regulations / insurance don't allow for access
5. Council decisions
6. Venues are too small to allow for social distancing
7. Cleaning / the financial impacts of cleaning
8. Risk assessments
9. Staff capacity / volunteers to support ratios in smaller groups

Organisations are highlighting that getting guidance in place is only the first step:

“Many of the community venues we use are operated by GCC and they will not be opening to the public until the end of September. However, not all buildings will be opened that we usually access and it will be limited what we can do”

“We mostly use community centres and buildings – I don't see this being an option for a while”

“LA building is currently not open to public and when it does so, meeting rooms will be used for work stations to spread staff out for social distancing”

“Schools, community centres etc are telling us that we will not be allowed to access them. 50% of our groups across Scotland will have nowhere to meet”

“We have work to do before indoor youth work to increase hand sanitising stations, devise suitable signage, purchase additional furnishing/ equipment etc. An ongoing challenge will be poor air flow in a building largely without windows”

Access to church facilities is variable:

“Church has said no access until 23rd October earliest”

“Our churches have worked through all their protocols and risk assessments and have agreed to our use of the building when we are allowed.”

Essential indoor youth work support for very vulnerable young people and families is seen as a priority:

“...a request for the guidance to...recognise the professional CLD intervention (in parity with...social work and education) to provide support...to the most vulnerable young people and families in our most deprived communities”

Health and Safety Considerations

Almost all (21 of 23) responding organisations who already have access to buildings said a risk assessment had been undertaken prior to entry. All organisations now planning for indoor youth work say that a risk assessment is / will be in place before they start.

A wide range of measures are already being taken by organisations with access to indoor facilities – and similar arrangements are cited by organisations now planning for indoor your work. Most commonly mentioned are hand sanitisation, enhanced cleaning regimes, protective equipment and redesign of indoor spaces to allow for social distancing and limited sharing of desks, computers and equipment. Many are also limiting the number of contacts per day. Work in schools is aligned with school risk assessments. Test and protect measures have been set up by a number of organisations, with a monitoring system to gather details of staff and visitors in buildings day-by-day. Where relevant, organisations also mention restrictions on food preparation, food sharing and kitchen use. Measures are being taken on group transport, and attention is also being paid to pick-up arrangements to enable parents to drop off and collect children safely.

There is a cost associated with these extra precautions:

- 68% of 19 responding organisations already using facilities report that there is an extra cost to the facility owner. 53% report there is an additional cost to their organisations
- Looking forward 60% of 33 responding organisations anticipate that there will be an extra cost to the facility owner and 70% say there will be an added cost to their own organisations. Scouts Scotland say that they anticipate that there will be an additional cost in ‘each and every one’ of their facilities.