

Youth work: Supporting young people through and out of the pandemic

A statement on behalf of
the youth work sector in Scotland

Updated March 2021

Youth work's journey through the Coronavirus pandemic

The youth work sector has endeavoured to continue to engage and support children and young people throughout the coronavirus pandemic.

[Learning through Lockdown](#) summarises youth work during the summer period in 2020 and illustrates the creative, blended approaches youth workers used to provide resources, activities and support. In the following months, Scottish Government and Public Health advice allowed some further easing of youth work restrictions, before the second national lockdown restrictions from 4 January 2021. The youth work sector continued to adapt and deliver risk-informed approaches to working with young people during this changing landscape.

Where possible, this has included:

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

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 continue to respond to young people's expressed and emerging needs.

Once again, as we strive to help young people navigate out of this lockdown period, youth work organisations are undertaking significant work to prepare for gradual phased re-introduction of face-to-face delivery of youth work in 2021, in line with the Scottish Government Strategic Framework. At all times, our priority is to safeguard the health and wellbeing of our children, young people and practitioners.



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 back to school, 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.
- Facilitating youth support and issue-based youth work, creating opportunities for collective peer support and learning

Help children and young people to thrive and fulfill 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, including supporting young people affected by the impact of COVID-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 Scotland prepares to incorporate UNCRC into Scots Law. 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 education recovery and as part of a whole system response to accelerating progress towards closing the poverty related attainment gap.

Youth work plays an important role in mitigating the impact of the crisis on young people – particularly those who have been disproportionately affected. The Scottish Government Youth Work Education Recovery Fund is a welcome investment, importantly recognising that education recovery and addressing the equity gap extends beyond the school gate. The fund is supporting young people to engage with youth work activities that build their confidence and skills, support their health and well-being, and address the poverty-related attainment gap.

The fund, administered by YouthLink Scotland, has made 64 awards to organisations across Scotland working with young people impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Over 13,000 young people in Scotland stand to benefit directly from the Fund.

Covid-19 Youth Work Guidance

YouthLink Scotland works closely with the youth work sector and Scottish Government, to develop guidance to support delivery of youth work and the sector's recovery planning process.

[The latest guiding framework can be found here.](#)

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