
Guiding principles to support the safe delivery of youth work

April 2022

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This advice is to support youth work leaders to continue to make local-level risk assessed decisions and actions regarding delivery of face-to-face youth work, within the context of wider public health advice from 18 April 2022.

From 21 March 2022 the Scottish Government strategic approach to COVID-19 shifted from a focus on legal requirements to suppress the virus, towards recommended approaches to effectively managing and improving our resilience to the COVID-19 virus.

Youth work leaders should consider this youth work sector advice alongside the Scottish Government's updated [Strategic Framework](#) and associated [guidance for colleges, universities and CLD](#).

What defines a youth work group/activity?

Youth work takes many forms and operates in a wide variety of learning environments. [The Statement on the Nature and Purpose of Youth Work](#) defines youth work as “an educational practice contributing to young people’s learning and development.” Youth work engages young people within their communities: it acknowledges the wider networks of peers, community and culture, it supports the young person to realise their potential and to address life’s challenges critically and creatively, and it takes account of all strands of diversity.

Youth Work has three essential and definitive features:

1. Young people choose to participate.
2. The work must build from where young people are.
3. Youth Work recognises the young person and the youth worker as partners in a learning process.

Youth work’s focus is on the 11-25 year age group with particular emphasis on 11-18 year olds. Youth work acknowledges that some provision focuses on children under 11 years e.g. in uniformed groups.

Youth work is an essential part of the education system and in delivering children and young people’s rights under the UNCRC, including those relating to play, leisure and education. As such, the [Scottish Government guidance for colleges, universities and CLD](#) emphasises that:

- It is expected that local/community facilities will permit access to organisations and groups working within this sector operating in line with their own requirements under the terms of the Strategic Framework where adequate mitigation measures are being adhered to.
- To emphasise that in-person youth work must be allowed to take place and any access barriers addressed to avoid an inequitable picture across the country for young people.

Guiding principles for youth work delivery

The following guiding principles are recommended good practice approaches to the safe delivery of youth work. They have been based on the existing expectations before delivery, that youth work leaders have been following for the past two years:

- Delivery of youth work will be informed by risk assessment.
- Protective measures will be in place and communicated.
- Taking a rights-based approach to delivery, including the protection of those at higher risk.
- Clear communication processes - to ensure staff, volunteers, service users and parents understand the measures you have put in place to manage risk.

Risk assessment

All decisions regarding delivery should continue to be informed by comprehensive risk assessment. This will include decisions regarding the capacity of a venue or setting - the number of individuals (staff, volunteers, children and young people) that can safely be accommodated in a setting at any one time. Risk assessment should identify the specific risks and subsequent measures that are required to protect the health and safety of everyone within each setting to be used for delivery (this includes all service users, staff, volunteers, and any external partners or visitors). A separate risk assessment may be required for different approaches or sites for delivery. Risk assessment will also outline how safeguarding measures are to be implemented, communicated and reviewed. Risk assessment should be reviewed on an ongoing basis¹.

Health and hygiene

Youth work leaders should continue to ensure that protective measures continue to be in place and are communicated to young people and other service users. This will include:

- Enhanced cleaning arrangements.
- Adequate ventilation and facilities, equipment and procedures for personal hygiene.
- Continuing to follow national testing guidance and guidance for self-isolation.
- Specific measures to protect those who are at higher risk from infection.

There is no longer a legal requirement to wear face coverings. You are however encouraged to follow good hygiene procedures such as regular handwashing and respecting the choices of individuals regarding continued wearing of a face covering in busy public places or on public transport. In risk assessing this element you may also wish to consider the higher risk individuals in the community and also take into account individual anxiety levels about working with / being involved in groups.

Equality

When planning youth work delivery, organisations should consider the particular needs of different groups of staff, volunteers and individuals. It is against the law to discriminate, directly or indirectly, against anyone because of a protected characteristic, such as age, sex, race or disability. Employers and organisations also have additional legal responsibilities towards disabled individuals and those who are new or expectant mothers. Youth work is a rights respecting and rights promoting practice. Taking a rights based approach will be crucially important when addressing inequality in children's realisation of their rights, especially those disproportionately affected by poverty. Information and resources on protecting the human rights of children and young people are available from the [Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland](#). Where necessary, groups should also be signposted to relevant specialist organisations.

Communication

It is important that youth work leaders have clear communication processes in place - to ensure staff, volunteers, service users and parents understand the measures you have put in place to protect individuals and manage risk. This includes having a clear procedure for and guidance to support staff, young people and volunteers if there is an accident, incident or safety concern.

¹ Example template risk assessments can be found at <https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/covid-19/practical-resources/>

Delivery in spaces managed by others

Where youth work is delivered in spaces managed by others, including community halls, church halls and private outdoor settings, the organisation responsible for the setting should ensure they have a venue risk assessment, including the procedures and facilities to protect against transmission and provide reassurance to visitors. A youth work group or organisation using these premises or settings should undertake a risk assessment for the activity they will be delivering and should comply with the protective behaviours put in place by the person responsible for the premises.

Responding to local concerns

Youth work leaders are responsible for decisions regarding responses to local concerns, outbreaks or elevated local risk. This will be based on risk assessment and could be informed by local public health teams. This may apply to individual groups, settings, localities or youth work spaces within premises managed by others. Where youth work takes place in a setting managed by others, youth work leaders should comply with any additional protective behaviours put in place for communal areas.

Travel, outings and residential learning experiences

Youth work leaders should continue to follow Scottish Government guidance² regarding any protective actions required for public transport. The following approaches may also help manage health and hygiene on transport:

- Protective measures will be informed by risk assessment.
- An effective enhanced cleaning regime is in place. This includes cleaning of frequently touched surfaces after each journey.
- Good respiratory and hand hygiene is encouraged and facilities provided.
- Appropriate ventilation, such as keeping windows open, where possible, and ensure that mechanical ventilation uses fresh rather than recirculated air; or use air conditioning with attention paid to the appropriate frequency for changes of filters.

[Scottish Government advice for schools](https://www.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/) will continue to be useful for youth work leaders planning or delivering residential learning experiences.

For more information please contact Marielle Bruce mbruce@youthlinkscotland.org or visit our website www.youthlinkscotland.org/covid-19/

² <https://www.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/>

