

Progress Report on School Age Childcare: comments from YouthLink Scotland and LAYC (Lothian Association of Youth Clubs)

We welcome acknowledgement, within the draft progress report, that out of school childcare is broader than regulated childcare services. As identified in the report (and reinforced by your consultation with parents, carers and children), a range of different types of provision is required to deliver our vision for a rights-based approach to out of school opportunities. This will also facilitate greater choice, affordability and flexibility.

However, further to YouthLink Scotland's response to the consultation in 2019, we would reiterate the need to more strongly acknowledge, define and understand the range of services and providers who contribute to this 'wider' picture (including youth work). 'Activities for children' are not the same as youth work. It would be helpful if the report could better represent the breadth and impact of youth work provision within the landscape.

Specifically we hope the following points will help clarify understanding within the report and moving forward:

- It would be helpful to clearly state, at the start of the report, that a range of services are included under the umbrella term of 'out of school childcare'. Additionally, we should articulate that this range will help us deliver the vision for out of school provision. Whilst this is acknowledged within the report, the use of 'childcare' terminology throughout is confusing without providing an explanatory context.
- Consultation with parents/carers/children indicated a need for *"more informal services that are tailored to attainment and life skills being preferable for older children."* It would be useful to express within the report how this will be supported. The youth work sector clearly has a strong role to play here, including providing opportunities for personal learning and achievement (see example in YouthLink Scotland's previous submission regarding youth awards). Again, this may not be the same across 'other activities for children'.
- Scottish Attainment Challenge (page seven) – It would be helpful to acknowledge that the SAC extends beyond school. Many schools and youth work services/organisations work in partnership to close the gap and mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on children and young people. The Scottish Government Youth Work Education Recovery Fund acknowledges the important contribution youth work plays to the education recovery of children and young people out with school.
- Page ten – It would be helpful to include a separate heading for 'organised activities' to reinforce this approach within the landscape.
- As above, it would be helpful to specifically mention youth work when defining the different types of provision included under 'organised activities and services' - *"These include a wide range of activities and services, including arts and culture programmes, sports clubs, **youth work** and outdoor learning providers which*

provide access to such activities for many children round about the school day.”
(and on page three)

- We acknowledge that the report identifies a need to better understand the differing approaches and organisations within ‘activities provision’. However, it may be useful to clarify whose experience and approach to delivery we are referring to throughout the report. In the section on page ten, it is worth noting that youth work is subject to different Scottish Government guidance for delivery during the pandemic, compared to ‘unregulated activities for children’. Whilst the youth work sector has been significantly challenged, we have, at times, been able to deliver with different mitigations due to the educational nature of the approach.
- Similarly, it would be helpful to clarify who we are referring to in terms of acknowledging the significant contribution the ‘childcare sector’, including community-based organisations, during the pandemic. Youth work organisations and services (both third sector and local authority) play a key role in providing crisis support for the most vulnerable families and mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on children and young people’s mental health, learning and development¹. The youth work sector also played an important role in supporting critical childcare hubs during lockdown 2020 and continue to do so in school hubs. Many of these organisations would not consider themselves part of the ‘childcare sector’- yet they are part of the landscape.
- Policy direction - Supporting children’s outcomes (page thirteen) – it might be useful to note the sources for these statements and which approach to provision they cover:
“Access to holiday programmes can deliver a range of potential positive impacts for the children and families who attend, including tackling food insecurity, and wider health and wellbeing, educational, and financial impacts.

“There is also some evidence showing that out of school activities and programmes can have positive impacts on a range of children’s outcomes and indicate that they could play a role in reducing the attainment gap.”

There is evidence of youth work’s contribution to tackling food insecurity and improving outcomes for children, particularly those affected by poverty in the following studies:

<https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/media/5319/national-evaluation-publication.pdf>
https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/media/5659/food-insecurity-report_proofed.pdf
- Contribution to CfE (page fourteen) – We would suggest being stronger here - that CfE ‘does/should’ include all that is planned for children and young people’s learning (rather than ‘can’).
- Continuing to engage (page seventeen) – We strongly agree with the need to include the voice of children and young people, but would recommend that this is

¹ <https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/media/5251/learning-through-lockdown.pdf>

facilitated by those who already have those relationships locally. A national approach may not represent the totality of children and young people who are part of this landscape. We would also suggest that thought should be given to the language used – would all children identify with the term ‘childcare’?

- Research into Breakfast and Holiday Provision (page nineteen) – Scottish Government/YouthLink Scotland’s Food Insecurity Pilot² may provide helpful learning.
- The report notes that Scottish Government will work with those delivering organised children’s activities, to better understand their place in the broader school age childcare landscape (page twenty). The heading for this section is “Organised sports provision”. This would appear to be a typing error. YouthLink Scotland would be happy to support engagement with youth work providers and to help consider how we can better understand this approach within the childcare landscape.
- The report considers the impact of COVID-19 on the childcare workforce. Do we have a picture of the impact on the 'non-regulated' workforce? For example, youth work practitioners with ‘casual’ contracts and the financial impact of service closures for them?

YouthLink Scotland, 3 February 2021

² https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/media/5659/food-insecurity-report_proofed.pdf