

Access to Facilities Survey

June 2021

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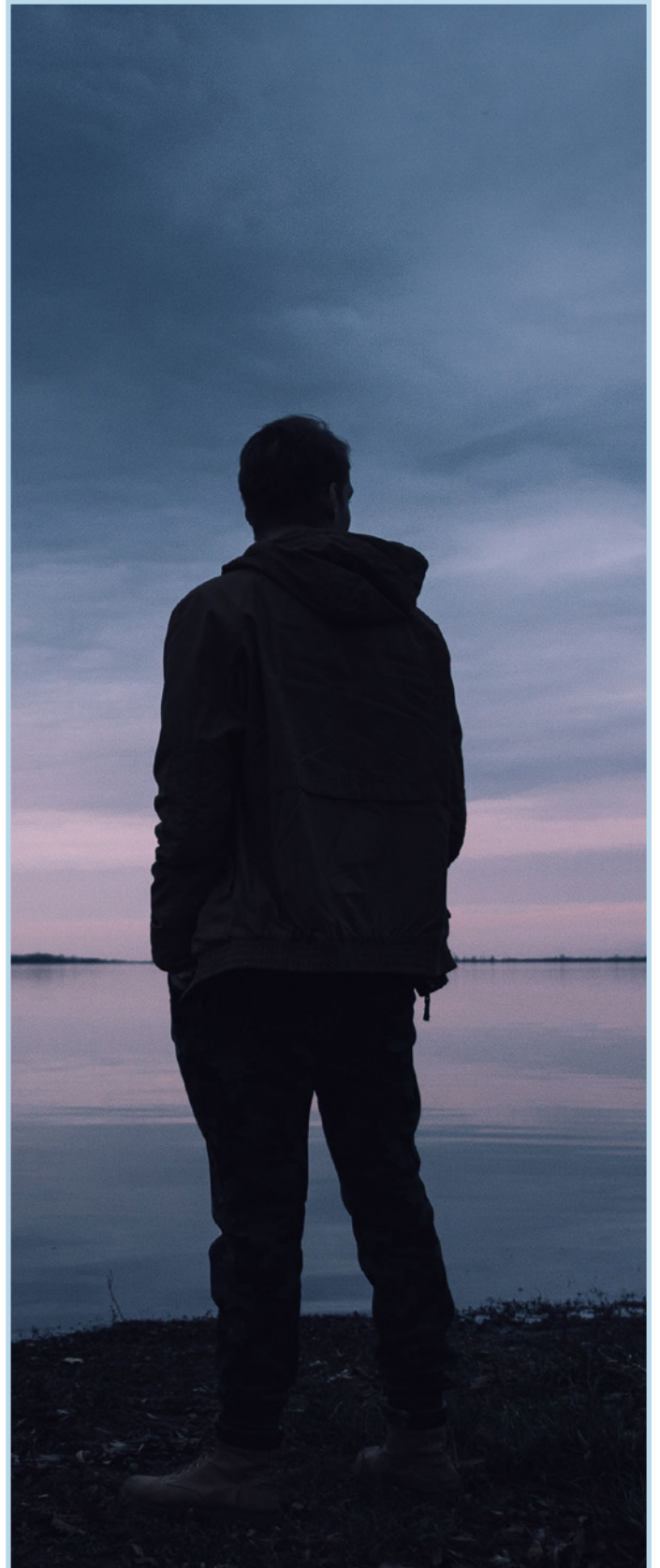
Introduction

This is the third youth work sector survey exploring Access to Facilities. The responses suggest that youth workers are still struggling to access indoor spaces where they can deliver face-to-face youth work, and that access issues are as challenging now as they were in October 2020.

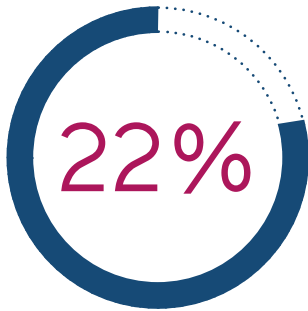
It is clear this is having a detrimental direct impact on young people who need the support of youth workers more than ever, and it's having a concerning wider impact on youth work organisations. Membership and volunteer numbers are dropping off and staff feel increasingly that being shut out of facilities is an indication that their service is not valued or properly understood. Longer-term, these issues will prove critical to the sustainability of services and the retention of skilled staff to support young people.

The issue of facilities access is going to be felt most keenly as we move from summer to autumn, as it may preclude or severely limit youth work services running at all. It's a complex issue. Social distancing and cleaning requirements are legitimately limiting delivery capacity. But the messages from the sector around variability of access to premises are stark, and a concerted effort is needed to support a safe return to more facilities as soon as possible.

This is likely to impact on both national and local government ambitions as we go forward, there is no doubt that, unless resolved, it will further impact on youth mental health, learning loss, isolation and employment prospects.



Access to facilities



Only 22% have full access to facilities.

We asked organisations to tell us which facilities they are using/want to use, and to outline whether they currently have full access, partial access or no access to these. Whilst some groups told us they are choosing to continue to work outdoors through the summer, the vast majority report that limited access to facilities continues to hamper the support they can offer young people.

It's fair to say that the situation seems to have improved very little since last October. And, importantly, it does not look set to change quickly, since many respondents to the survey say they don't yet have a clear timeframe for access.

It's noticeable that, in general, Local Authority Youth Work Services have better access than Third Sector Youth Work Organisations:

88% of those who want access to leisure centres have no access, but this decreases to

40% for Local Authority Youth Services, whilst

94% of Third Sector Organisations have no access.

83% of those who need access to local authority lets have no access, but this decreases to

50% for Local Authority Youth Work Services, whilst

90% Third Sector Organisations have no access.

76% of those who want access to schools have no access, but this decreases to

30% when looking at Local Authority Youth Work Services whilst

84% of all Third Sector Organisations have no access.



Access to Faith-Based Centres (e.g church halls) is more limited than our survey last year suggested:

74% of those who want access to Faith-Based Centres have no access currently – this compares unfavourably even with October 2020 when

63% had no access.

And other community venues are still off-limits to many:

69% of those who want access to Outdoor Centres have no access currently – a similar position to October when

65% had no access

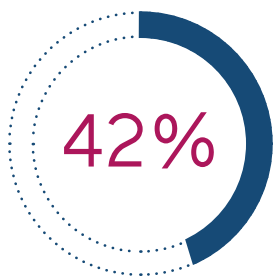
65% of those who want access to other community venues have no access currently

Even where organisations have their own premises,

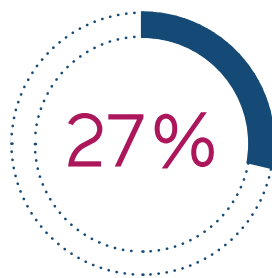
42% say they have no access

Reasons for not opening

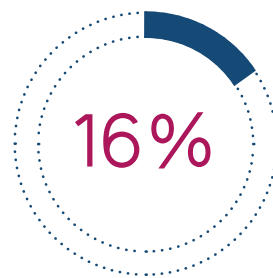
Reasons for lack of access to facilities vary widely – it’s a complex picture:



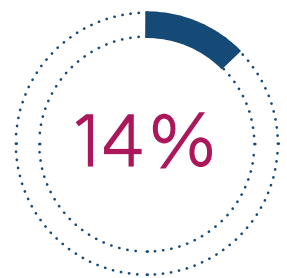
say the reason for lack of access is interpretation of guidance/restrictions relating to Covid-19 safety



of respondents say Local Authority not yet providing lets



say buildings not open due to volunteer hesitancy about safety



say building not open due to prohibitive cleaning/maintenance costs

Other reasons given include: visiting staff not allowed (schools); staff are covering Covid-related posts elsewhere; building/part of the building is being used for other purposes (e.g. vaccinations); kitchen in building is closed; time between lets is increased due to cleaning requirements so fewer groups have access overall; general state of building and working outdoors/online by choice.

More urgency needed in plans for access

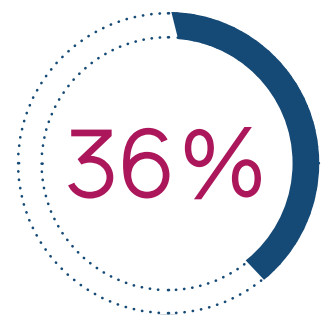
Many youth work teams and organisations tell us that they are still in the dark about the schedule to reopen facilities they would normally use:



Only 22% currently have the access they need



Only a further 14% expect to have the access they need in time for the summer holidays



have been given no timeframe for reopening

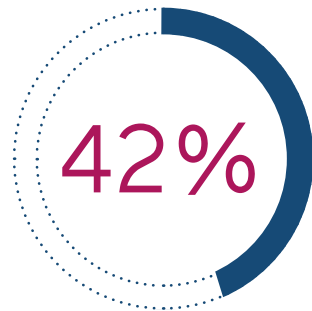


Impacts on young people

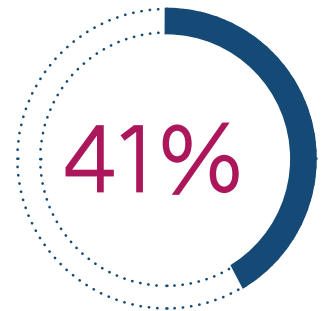
61% report a drop in youth participation and significant direct detrimental impacts on young people:



say young people have lost access to key trusted relationships with youth workers and peers



say young people's progress with learning and development has stalled



say young people have missed out on much needed support in relation to mental health and wellbeing



say young people are unable to access support to tackle learning loss



say the equity gap is widening

Some organisations also make the point that a loss of safe indoor facilities has an impact on inclusion for young people with additional support needs.

When this impact data is broken down by organisation type, it's clear that Local Authority Youth Work Services are seeing even more significant impacts amongst young people, perhaps this is not surprising, since their focus is still primarily on targeted support for the most vulnerable young people.

82% report a loss of access to trusted relationships

73% report issues around vital support for health and wellbeing

64% report stalled progress with learning and development

55% report that young people are missing out on support to tackle learning loss

Examples of direct impact:

“Not having access has had a massive impact on our service, we have been delivering outdoor youth work for over a year with no end in sight. We have seen a drop in engagement levels, mainly at our groups and clubs, leaving already very isolated young people more isolated.”

“From May last year there has been no youth and children’s work in an area of deprivation and buildings have been closed alongside outdoor work. There seems to be little plan or idea on how things should develop for the benefit of children and young people of this community.”

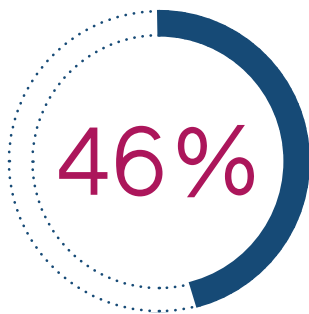
“It is great to have the council prioritising youth work, both third sector and local authority, for access to services, it is important to note that the picture will be different across Scotland. Our council is clear about the role youth work will play in the recovery from Covid.”

“We are targeting support at our most vulnerable young people and families, as we have restricted access to venues. Other families in need are not being given the support we know they need, which under normal circumstances we can provide. When restrictions ease, the workload will be intense, in order to redress the imbalance and provide much higher levels of support to a wider range of young people and families.”

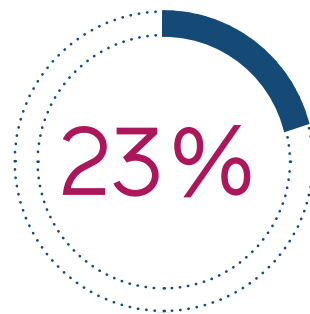
“Young people who were regular members at our youth provisions have been partaking in riskier behaviours including alcohol misuse. Luckily we have been able to run a street work project since June 2020 and have been able to keep in contact with some of them. A few of these young people have been in some serious trouble with the police on several occasions, which if services were running, I believe could have been prevented.”

Impacts on organisations with longer-term consequences for young people

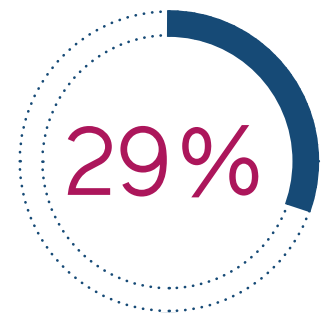
As time passes, and challenges around delivery continue to hamper staff and volunteers, respondents are seeing wider organisational impacts that have the potential to damage service provision for young people in the future:



of respondents are seeing a drop off in membership



are seeing an impact on morale due to a feeling that service not properly understood or valued (this rises to 59% in Local Authority Youth Work respondents)



are seeing a drop off in volunteers

Examples of direct impact:

“We are unable to meet in the school therefore we cannot attract new members or volunteer leaders. Present members, young people and leaders are also finding other interests to fill their time. No meeting place, no storage facility, I don't hold out much hope for the group.”

“Due to not being able to deliver services - we've been unable to secure long-term match funding. This has resulted in two of our roles being made redundant due to Covid.”

“If not permitted to access local indoor school facilities by late September, it will be a fight for survival.”

Survey Response

In late May 2021, YouthLink Scotland asked organisations from across the youth work sector to participate in a survey that would provide an updated snapshot of current access to community facilities by youth work organisations across the country.

Over a two-week period, ending June 7th 2021, 251 organisations accessed the survey and 220 submitted complete responses:

22 Local Authority Youth Work/CLD Teams, 32 Local/National Third Sector Organisations and 166 Local Branches of Uniformed Organisations. All 32 Local Authority areas were covered in the responses.



Access to Facilities Campaign
#YouthWorkNeedsAHome



Achieved.
Valid Until
December 2021

