

**Social Isolation and Loneliness Fund
End of Project Report 2022/23
YouthLink Scotland**

“It was clear this young person (young carer) had been desperate to access TD1, thanks to the funding it opened a door for them and for us, we have now been able to enhance the support they receive. The young person said “I am so happy I have finally been able to come to TD1, it’s such a cool place and getting free lunch was so cool as I was able to keep my money and buy food on the way home so I could have something at night time”” (Eildon West Youth Hub (TD1 Youth Hub))

1. The Fund:

The overall objectives of the fund were to:

- Enable the youth work sector to respond directly and at local level to the immediate and longer-term impact of Covid-19 and the cost-of-living crisis on vulnerable young people
- Contribute to addressing child poverty in Scotland in-line with Scottish Government policy and the ‘Every Child, Every Chance: tackling child poverty delivery plan’.
- Support youth work organisations to establish, develop and/or maintain contact and support for young people judged to be at particular risk of social isolation and/or loneliness

A total of **£ £147,226** was awarded to **42 organisations** (see Appendix 1) in 15 local authority areas



Grants of £5,000 were available to eligible organisations

2. Beneficiary information:

The fund reached **2,173** young people in total. The following table shows numbers of young people across equalities groups.

Equalities group	Number of young people
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Black, Asian and minority ethnic young people	532
Care experienced young people	140
Homeless young people	26
LGBTI young people	210
Rurally isolated young people	310
Young carers	96
Young parents	31
Young people affected by substance misuse	168
Young people living in high SIMD areas	1273
Young people not in education, employment or training	121
Young people with additional learning support needs	345
Disabled young people	210
Young people who have refugee status	23

(Please note that individual young people may have inter-sectional experiences and more than one protected characteristic)

3. Delivery

Most projects fell into one of the following categories (with some overlap):

- The provision of specialist youth work that supported young people with specific protected characteristics or needs (young parents, young people with additional support needs, young people with disabilities, young people not attending school.
- Additional support hours to existing provision to support young people in areas of high deprivation where the impact of the cost of living crisis and the ongoing impact lockdown has been profound.
- Enhancement of existing service to meet the needs of specific young people that they had concerns about or to enhance the number of sessions they could make available where these services were currently benefitting vulnerable young people experiencing social isolation and loneliness.
- Additional resource to re-engage young people in provision or reach young people who would not usually attend.
- Additional resource to improve the inclusivity of current provision (including issues of rural isolation)

4. Achieving fund objectives:

Overview:

As is often the case within the grassroots youth work sector, funded organisations achieved huge impact with a small amount of additional funding. Recipient organisations were typically small youth work organisations, well established in their communities and already reaching vulnerable young people and able to respond directly to expressed need with a little additional resource.

“The funding meant that we were able to provide outdoor activities that allowed a young person who had newly moved to the area, who required additional support and experienced social anxiety, who had not been attending school to interact with young people of a similar age to make new friends in an

environment which was suitable for him. The difference in this young person after attending the activities, which included nature-based learning, bush craft, den building and outdoor team building activities was immense, his mother was also taken aback by the changes the activities brought to his self-confidence and ability to communicate with his peers. He now has new friends in the local area” (Northern Corridor Community Volunteers)

“A (17) had recently had to leave the family home and was staying in homeless accommodation due to relationship breakdowns. Attending Y2K drop ins was her only social activity and she accessed the service every week. The introduction of Time To Talk sessions within the drop ins, provided an opportunity for the young person to engage in supported, safe discussions and activities that explored areas such as self-care, exploring our communities and positive relationships. The young person found these focused sessions extremely valuable as they allowed her to connect with peers and build positive relationships with like-minded young people. Through these sessions, the young person was also able to explore opportunities within her community that would ensure she was able to stay connected and included. As a result, the young person took part in volunteering within the local community church where she was able to link in with other young people and contribute positively to her community” (Mayfield and Easthouses Youth 2000 Project)

Objective 1 - Enable the youth work sector to respond directly and at local level to the immediate and longer-term impact of Covid-19 and the cost of living crisis on vulnerable young people.

Objective 2 - Contribute to addressing child poverty in Scotland in-line with Scottish Government policy and the ‘Every Child, Every Chance: tackling child poverty delivery plan’.

- Most of the recipient organisations mentioned the provision of food as an increasingly important part of providing a safe and inclusive environment for vulnerable young people. The sharing of food was also mentioned as a way of bringing young people together.
- As with most youth work provision, all of the provision funded was free to access and this was mentioned by many projects as essential, generally and in the specific context of the cost of living crisis.
- Several projects working to support young people and their families in the context of the cost of living crisis.
- Many projects referred to the ongoing impact of Covid-19 as a key exacerbating factor in young people’s experience of social isolation and loneliness. This impact is mediated via impact on mental health, social anxiety and self-exclusion.
- Many of the projects were able to sign-post young people and families to other available support.

“B (young person) revealed to staff that there had been some serious financial challenges at home over the past couple of years which had been the cause of some of the stress, leading to isolation and a feeling of helplessness. Learning about the challenges B and her family were facing, we were able to access an emergency fund to help short term, and signpost the family on to debt relief, food, and fuel support. B and

the family are now less isolated and much more connected to the community, and The WHY Project as a trusted local point of contact when in need of support or signposting” (The Wee Haven Youth Project).

“Young Person B is 8 years old. She is a very quiet young person and often struggles to make and maintain relationships with her peers. She lives at home with her mum who is a lone parent and is unable to work due to ill health and as a result Young Person B is often unable to attend extra-curricular groups and activities due to high costs. Mum was very keen for young person B to attend our provision as it was one of the few groups accessible to her both due to location and it being free of charge. At first Young Person B was very hesitant and withdrawn as she had never attended a group without mum being present too but with support she quickly became more comfortable in the group and due to the informal and interactive style of activities began to form connections with others in the group. Young person B particularly enjoyed the cooking and baking activities and enjoyed trying new foods within the group. Both Young person B and her mum can note a positive change since she has started attending the group and she now has a core group of friends who she will also now play with outside of group times. Mum also noted that the food provision during group was a big help to her, particularly during the Easter Holidays as with the rising costs of food she was concerned about this”. (Springhall and Whitlawburn Youth Development Team)

Objective 3 - Support youth work organisations to establish, develop and/or maintain contact and support for young people judged to be at particular risk of social isolation and/or loneliness

“A lives in a family where he is a carer however it is a very chaotic family with addictions issues in the family. This young person is unable to access evening sessions with TD1 due to being required by parent to stay in every evening to look after siblings. We have a strong relationship with this young person at school and we were able to introduce this young person to our lunch time drop in as it was during the school day. During engaging with the lunch time drop in which was funded we were able to enhance our relationship with the young person which resulted in them disclosing they were finding life difficult and we were able to work with them and their guidance teacher to get them access to 1-1 support. This has allowed the young person a regular weekly opportunity to talk to someone and discuss the issues impacting their lives, we have been able to offer additional support to the family and other siblings. This support is now on-going and we have been able to work with the young person and their family to support them attending some sessions of youth work out with school hours. The young person said that “I am so happy I have finally been able to come to TD1, its such a cool place and getting free lunch was so cool as I was able to keep my money and buy food on the way home so I could have something at night time” Youth work said “it was clear this young person had been desperate to access TD1, thanks to the Social Isolation and Loneliness funding it opened a door for them and for us, we have now been able to enhance that support they receive” (Eildon West Youth Hub (TD1 Youth Hub))

“We worked with vulnerable children, young people and families on low incomes experiencing social isolation and loneliness exacerbated by COVID-19 and the cost-of-living crisis and in partnership with YMCA Edinburgh, we provided support for Ukrainian refugees escaping the horrors of war, staying aboard a cruise ship berthed in Leith Docks to settle into life in Leith” (Pilmey Development Project, Edinburgh)

“A is 17 and from a home where he is not very accepted because he is gay. He is regularly made to leave the house and not provided with support and care he needs. This leaves him very isolated and often he doesn't know where to turn for help. He has been coming to our Boys' health group and often goes on a walk and talk with RYA staff. Our youth staff have helped him to apply for several colleges. They assisted with his homework and have helped him getting alternative temporary accommodation with a carer. He has now been offered a place in college and will get student accommodation. He continues to attend our Boys Health group, volunteers with our children's clubs and has set up an equality and diversity club at Royston Youth Action to raise awareness of these issues affecting him and many others. The project has been a real lifeline for him and has made him feel less isolated. (Royston Youth Action)

(See appendix 1 for all short case studies)