



YouthLink Scotland's Sustainability Policy

YouthLink Scotland is the national agency for youth work and the collective voice of the sector. We champion and advocate for the youth work sector so that all young people can access high-quality youth work. Our membership of voluntary and statutory youth work organisations and intermediaries, including every local authority, spans all of Scotland, and changes lives for the better every day. Our vision is a Scotland where young people realise their full potential through youth work.

As we have been co-developing the National Youth Work Strategy (2021-26), alongside 1000s of young people and youth workers, the role of youth work and climate change has been highlighted as a priority area of action. At YouthLink Scotland we understand that we have a collective responsibility, as a youth work charity and as a part of society, to increase the positive social, economic and environmental impact that we can have through our programmes, processes and policies. As the national agency for youth work we are committed to playing a leading role in delivering [Scotland's Net Zero Strategy](#) by 2045.

We know that youth work already plays a crucial role in supporting young people to understand the world around them and enable them to take action for people, planet and prosperity. However, we also know that with growing concern for the future of our planet that youth work services should be striving to embed sustainable development practices at the core of their organisations.

Our approach at YouthLink Scotland is two-fold: we will consider both our internal practice, policies and procedures and our outward facing delivery programmes and communications. It is our ambition to be a model of how a sustainable youth work organisation should and can operate, leading the sector by example.

How YouthLink Scotland works sustainably

We adopt a whole organisation approach to building sustainability into our organisations practice and culture. We assess the environmental impacts of our operations, regularly review these areas and seek to continuously improve our environmental performance. The below outline is a, non-exhaustive, list of our organisation's environmental considerations:

Office Space

- Our office space is designed with real plants and foliage to boost employee moods and recycle the air.
- Our office is equipped with different recycling bins.
- We consider sustainable catering at events, request dietary requirements in advance and encourage more sustainable food choices.

Waste reduction

- We minimise waste through reduction, re-use and recycling methods.
- We promote and maximise recycling in our office space and amongst staff, stakeholders and young people.
- We aim to never use / provide unnecessary single-use plastic (e.g. cutlery, drinking cups, and bottled water) in the workplace or at events instead favouring reusable or compostable materials where possible.
- We try to donate old / unused digital and computer equipment to another charity or non-profit if possible. If not, we look at electronic recycling options.
- We minimise the use of individually packaged food and drink items at events and meetings.

Transportation

- We support hybrid working so staff are less likely to be using their cars or other forms of transport.
- We encourage travel of staff and young people who are participating in our activities, to be undertaken by either active travel or public transport where possible. Where this is not possible we also encourage staff car sharing.
- We choose venues for events that are accessible by public transport and work with venue managers to support more sustainable events.
- We extend how we work internally to those who we work with externally including speakers at events and our members by encouraging low-carbon transport methods and offering digital accessibility at our events.
- We encourage employees to travel by train instead of by plane for long distance business trips where possible.
- We have showers and secure bicycle storage on site to encourage staff to cycle to the office.
- We are currently engaging in and responding to Scottish Government consultations and working with the youth work sector to support them and their youth groups to feed into future sustainable transport and just transition policies in Scotland.

Paper and Printing

- We encourage staff to avoid printing materials for meetings or for general office use and seek to minimise the need to print materials that facilitate our working.
- We send programmes, agendas and other materials required for our events to participants via email in advance, and where possible these are displayed on screens at events to reduce the need for any printed materials (exceptions made for accessibility requirements.)
- We use e-signatures to avoid unnecessary printing of documents and contracts.

Digital Footprint and Energy Efficiency

- We encourage all employees to switch off their computers and any other electronic equipment and unplug their mobile phone chargers before leaving the office / at the end of a working day.
- We use lights that automatically switch off when they're not in use and overnight.
- We encourage employees and visitors to our office to use the stairs instead of the lift where possible and only if it doesn't limit accessibility.
- We encourage employees to be aware of the use of heating and air-conditioning in the office / meeting rooms.
- We discourage employees from plugging their laptops in when working, and suggest they use up the battery before recharging it which will save energy and prolong the life of our laptops.
- When sending large files, we use hosting services that use a download link on a website such as WeTransfer, Google Drive or OneDrive to prevent the file from being stored on multiple servers.
- We use internal messaging tools e.g., Microsoft Teams instead of emails to use less energy.
- We try to limit the number of receivers copied into our emails to reduce the level of CO2 emitted.
- We encourage employees to close any internet tabs not in use.
- We encourage employees to empty their inboxes and clear out their files and folders (especially on the cloud) regularly, to reduce data storage.
- We encourage staff to reflect on sending any unnecessary emails and to unsubscribe to newsletters and unwanted emails to reduce our digital pollution.

Human Resources, Procurement, Finance and Governance

- We observe existing environmental legislation in Scotland as a minimum standard and seek to out-perform current legislative requirements where possible.

- We inform and encourage all employees to work by YouthLink Scotland's principles on environmental sustainability.
- We provide employees with training and guidance on environmental sustainability activities to take at the workplace.
- We include information on the charity's environmental practices within induction procedures for new staff.
- We reimburse work-related travel for staff and young people. However, we encourage travel undertaken to be by active travel or public transport.
- We encourage the use of accommodation providers committed to sustainable practice (e.g., those certified by the Green Tourism Business Scheme).
- We support walking meetings amongst employees and encourage use of green space e.g., during staff and team away days.
- We assess our suppliers economic and environmental sustainability credentials.
- We ensure employees are aware of ethical pension options within our organisational pension plan.

Communications

- This sustainability policy is publicly available and accessible on YouthLink Scotland's [Learning for Sustainability section of the website](#).
- We commit to following up once a year to report on progress and encourage YouthLink Scotland members to do the same.
- We catalogue the steps that we are taking organisationally, including challenges and solutions, to develop a framework to support the wider youth work sector do the same.
- We promote organisational and personal responsible behaviour towards the environment by communicating good news stories and positive initiatives to be more sustainable within the youth work sector e.g. [The 2021 Link Magazine](#).
- We encourage staff to reflect on sending any unnecessary emails and to unsubscribe to newsletters and unwanted emails to reduce our digital pollution.
- We opt for eco-friendly, durable, recycled and recyclable promotional items and avoid any single use plastic items.

Content of our work

- We are committed to building a meaningful legacy of COP26 in Scotland alongside young people and youth workers. We will achieve this through our national programmes, policy work, communications and workforce development.
- YouthLink Scotland have an extensive [resource library](#) of activities, lesson plans, frameworks, case studies, guidance and toolkits themed around Learning for Sustainability.
- We are working with Young Scot and the Woodland Trust to deliver [Scotland's Young People's Forest](#), which will be co-designed, led and governed by a panel of young people. The mission of the panel is to create and regenerate native Scottish forests, which are accessible to all, to help combat the current climate emergency, promoting and connecting education, wildlife, and well-being. As part of this project YouthLink Scotland:
 - Created a [toolkit](#) for the youth work sector to develop their skills and confidence in supporting youth groups to engage in climate action, their natural green spaces and green skills/employability.
 - Delivered training for the youth work sector on themes including eco anxiety, climate justice, green employability and creative outdoor learning.
- We delivered the Scottish Government Funded [COP26 Youth Climate Project](#) in partnership with Young Scot and Keep Scotland Beautiful. The programme ensured that young people could play a key role in Scotland's response to the climate emergency, and that youth workers are equipped to support them to do so. As part of the project YouthLink Scotland:
 - Co-delivered Climate Emergency Training to Youth Workers
 - Created new activities for the [Climate Emergency Toolkit](#)
 - Facilitated a network of local COP26 youth work champions and provided them with COP26 information, resources and collaboration space.

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- Administered additional funding to Local Authority Youth Work services to support youth-led local climate action projects.
- We were the lead organisation in Scotland for the [Our Bright Future Project](#), ensuring that the three youth-led asks are embedded within our policy and advocacy work. As part of this project YouthLink Scotland:
 - Hosted a [Climate Hot Seat event](#) to ensure the climate and nature emergencies were at the forefront of decision maker's policies.
 - Undertook [Green Employability research](#) for the youth work sector.
- We have a number of other national programmes that connect and contribute to our work on sustainability and climate change including [#IWill](#) and are conscious of sustainability considerations within our other national programmes and work streams.
- We organise and facilitate events, member's networks and policy seminars based on the needs of the Youth Work sector to develop youth workers' understanding and capacity on Learning for Sustainability e.g., our Learning for Sustainability Partners Forum and partnership with Learning for Sustainability Scotland.
- We work with youth workers and organisations to reach those who may be less likely to be informed or engaged in environmental sustainability, increasing awareness across Scotland.
- We are committed to being an organisation that places high value on equality, diversity and inclusion within youth work. We seek to reduce the barriers to participation for young people and recognise the value of their contributions to society in Scotland.

Continuous Improvement and Governance

- We are constantly seeking ways to improve our sustainability approach as an organisation. We are committed to working with our stakeholders including our: board, staff, member organisations, young people, suppliers and funders to ensure their voices are central in helping us to build a more sustainable and greener youth work sector in Scotland.
- We are committed to further developing this sustainability statement, exploring opportunities for an organisational carbon footprint audit and developing a robust Net Zero strategy.
- We invite and support any suggestion of better ways of working to increase the social, economic and environmental sustainability of our work. Suggestions can be sent to info@youthlink.scot.org.
- We will seek consistent progress on our on environmental processes and our Board will consider this policy every two years.

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