

The Link

Resilient, Resourceful and Reimagined – Youth work's response to the pandemic



“Scotland’s vibrant youth work sector plays a crucial role in supporting children and young people’s well-being, and in closing the attainment gap.

“Throughout lockdown we have seen the sector rise to the challenge of providing services remotely, supporting some of the most vulnerable young people across Scotland.

“Whether that’s been delivering online youth work or food parcels, creating new learning packs, or caring for the elderly or for the young - the level of innovation coming to the fore has been hugely impressive.”

Richard Lochhead MSP,
Minister for Higher and Further Education

“Youth and community groups are so important at this time of lockdown for us all.”

Professor Jason Leitch CBE,
Scotland’s National Clinical Director



Foreword

Tim Frew, CEO of YouthLink Scotland reflects on the past months and the resilience of the youth work sector.

Goethe said: *“The things that matter most must never be at the mercy of the things that matter the least.”* Finding ourselves months into a global pandemic this statement feels more challenging than ever. In the early stages of Covid-19, when the thing that mattered the most was containing the virus and supporting those most vulnerable in society with food provision and supporting their health and wellbeing, the youth work sector stepped up and stepped forward to meet the need.

Youth work organisations led the way in repositioning their services to deliver food banks, coordinated and supported community hubs, promoted volunteering, staffed residential care settings and connected with vulnerable children and young people – often repositioning their services to provide online and outdoors activity, when indoor youth work was not advised. We have been mindful of the balance of risks between the spread of the virus and the education and health needs of children and young people, who have been adversely affected by restrictions in many ways.

The agility and resilience of the sector to adapt and meet the needs of children and young people at a local level is highlighted throughout this magazine. What makes the contribution of the sector even more remarkable is that this has been done with one hand tied behind backs, with a significant proportion of voluntary sector agencies compelled to furlough staff and many in local authorities diverted into crisis support rather than learning support.

From this perspective, the Scottish Government’s investment in the Youth Work Education Recovery Fund is most welcome, as are the efforts to address digital poverty and support mental health and wellbeing interventions. We also welcome the Scottish Government’s announcement of a £2m funding package for Scotland’s residential outdoor centres.

However, the wider backdrop of significant funding shortfalls outlined in the Youth Work Sector Leaders’ Report, the closure of outdoor centres and other facilities, takes us back to Goethe. Youth work must be seen

as one of the things that matter the most. If we want to see a sustainable economic recovery, if we want to close the inequality gap in education and health, and if we want address the wellbeing of a generation who will help us to navigate our way out of these sad times.

In 2018, the Year of Young People was heralded as a key marker in Scotland’s ambition to be the best place for children and young people to grow up. In 2020, as the commitment to incorporating the UNCRC into Scots Law has been underlined, we must ensure that youth work is integral to recovery and renewal. Youth work is a key sector in supporting young people’s right to play, right to education, right to leisure and to have a voice in decisions. We are a sector that matters the most and must not be at the mercy of things that matter less as we face tough choices in the coming months.

A powerful lesson in collaboration and mutual respect

For some young people in Aberdeen, Lockdown was a uniquely difficult and unpredictable time. From young Syrian refugees to those whose vulnerability was already making learning a challenge, local youth work services have been crucial to their wellbeing.

"In Aberdeen we were able to rise to the challenges because of two things, we have a willing, creative and digitally skilled workforce and very positive partnership working. The success of the Vulnerable Children's Hubs was down to people from a range of backgrounds and professions working together with a can-do spirit I have rarely seen before. Covid-19 has changed the way we live and work, but it's important to take what positives we can from our experiences and for me, seeing the true value of proper partnership working is one of them."
Craig Singer, Development Manager for Lifelong Learning.

From the start of lockdown until schools returned in mid-August, the youth work team in Aberdeen has regularly engaged with 175 young people, offering wide-ranging support to address safety and welfare, emotional health and wellbeing and confidence to continue schoolwork online.

Like elsewhere in the country, the Vulnerable Childcare Hubs in Aberdeen were staffed by a multi-disciplinary team, including youth workers, and were attended almost exclusively by children aged 12 and under. In Aberdeen, the youth work



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team also worked with schools and other partners to pilot a distinct Senior Hub where vulnerable teenagers, aged 12-to-16 could access community-based support and a range of activities to build skills and confidence.

Looking back on their work together, practitioners from Education, Social Work and Youth Work say the hubs were a uniquely powerful experience of child-centred collaboration:

"It was a partnership of equals with a strong, clear, shared agenda - in an environment that didn't look or feel like school. That was a real leveller, I think. We were working side by side, and as a result, teachers and social workers gained a deeper appreciation and understanding of the youth work approach - perhaps more than at any other point in their working lives."
Madelene McSween, Development Manager, Communities Team.

Laura Gray, Depute Head Teacher at St Machar Academy remarked on the quality of the youth work approach and on the value of collaborative working:

"Learners quickly established positive relationships which had a huge impact on their confidence to be involved, lead and learn new skills in a very short period of time. It provided an opportunity to ensure that young people were safe and to respond quickly to any concerns. As an educator, I also learned a lot from other professionals and built partnerships that will have a huge impact on my practice in the classroom."

All eight participating young people from Lochside Academy saw improvements in wellbeing, skills and engagement in learning, particularly communication skills, which meant they were better prepared to return to school in August. Sharon Desbois, youth worker at Lochside Academy explains:

"We build a relationship with young people and families through the school year. Young people tell us that contact with us supports their wellbeing because it helps to speak to someone they trust. They also discover things they really enjoy learning and doing, and that helps them to feel more motivated." Sharon Desbois, Youth Worker.

Syrian New Scots

"I like everything in Aberdeen... Aberdeen is the smell of mixed rain with flowers really I like this. Aberdeen is the look of nature and wildlife."

Lockdown presented some unique challenges to young Syrian Scots in Aberdeen, whose families are in the process of establishing themselves in a new city. The relationships already established with youth workers in school proved to be an important lifeline.

Young people and their families remained in regular contact with the youth work team, participating in girls' groups, homework clubs and social gatherings online. The EAL Education Team in Aberdeen has described the flexible support that youth workers were able to offer as "crucial" in helping to keep Syrian students engaged in learning - and also in enabling new school enrolments and primary to secondary transitions.

"Youth work is quite alien to many refugee families initially. Culturally, they place a high value on formal education, and it takes time for them to recognise the benefits of the youth work approach. Little by little they have learned to put their confidence in us. Now we are welcomed like part of their extended family, and parents as well as young people acknowledge and respect the additional support we offer." Kirsty Wylie, Youth Development Officer.

As soon as restrictions allowed, face-to-face youth work in small groups began again outdoors. Young people helped to design an outdoor programme with youth workers including: cooking, den-making, treasure hunts and fire-building. They discovered green spaces in their communities, spoke English in mixed groups, and were supported to share questions and worries with youth workers and with their peers. All of the activities used simple equipment and resources, with the intention that young people would replicate some of these experiences with family and friends.

Reflecting on the experience, young people expressed their enthusiasm for the city and its outdoor spaces:

"It was really fun. I enjoy it when we went and did activities with you and thanks for your help and for everything you did for us."

And their parents also valued the mix of social and creative learning activities:

"The children enjoyed it and it was good to go out with their friends and meet new people. They loved the art that they have done with trees. I hope this activity will continue."



Youth Worker, Natasha Watt, enjoyed the energy and positivity of the group:

"Over the summer the young people brought a bundle of energy to every session channelling this energy to showcase their talents, creativity, and individual personalities."

These outdoor sessions created connections that eased the young people's return to school. One group was joined by their ESL teacher, an opportunity to discuss questions and worries about their school return, and offer some reassurance to those transitioning from primary school. Another group walked to school with their youth worker on their first day back, and were met and welcomed by the Deputy Head Teacher. These small, important interactions have helped to ease anxieties and enabled the young people to feel more confident about reintegrating into their school communities as the new academic year begins.

A tribute to the force of youth work volunteers

When the nation was plunged into lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Cadet volunteers stepped up to keep children engaged in a world that provides unique opportunities for fun, friendship, action and adventure as well as new skills and qualifications, all from the complexities of their own homes.

Year in, year out, thousands of Cadet Force Adult Volunteers (CFAVs) selflessly dedicate their time and energy to ensure Cadets get the most from their Cadet experience.

The Cadet organisations are some of the largest and oldest voluntary youth organisations in the country and provide military themed activities and training for young people aged 10-to-18.

The Cadet organisations bring unparalleled opportunities for young people from all walks of life to learn, grow and excel and are run by thousands of ordinary volunteers, doing extraordinary things.

And that's why Lowland Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association (RFCA) launched a new initiative to give Cadets the opportunity to officially thank the adult volunteers who have committed to developing young people.

The CARAs - the Cadet Adult Recognition Awards - are Cadet-nominated honours, which recognise and thank CFAVs within the Cadet services in the Lowlands of Scotland.

Cadets independently nominated a CFAV by using an online form with a written or video submission.

Eleven prizes were awarded following dozens of nominations for a number of outstanding volunteers. The official ceremony took place on YouTube on 7 August 2020.

The CARAs is the brainchild of Lowland RFCA's Head of Communications, Kate Johnston.

She said: "We launched the CARAs on Cadets Day of Armed Forces Week in July and we were thrilled to see so many Cadets taking up the unique opportunity to give back to those who look out for them during their time in the Cadets.

"With the exception of a small body of Permanent Support Staff, a huge proportion of the people who deliver the Cadets are volunteers. Many have day jobs, so once they get back from work they put on their uniform and help and assist these young people in so many valuable ways. They really are just fantastic individuals so we think it's a brilliant time to say thank you."

Each award was sponsored by businesses – local to the area in which the Army Cadet, Air or Sea Cadet units were located – which has enhanced the link between the Cadet world and employers who recognise the value of the many qualifications that can be gained as part of the Cadet Experience.

Kate added: "As an organisation Lowland RFCA champions, on behalf of the Ministry of Defence, the relationship between Defence

and employers. And through our day-to-day work we have really good links with the local business community.

"We mentioned the CARAs to some of them and they were excited to sponsor a CARA which makes the award that little more special. This connects the business world with the Cadet world and brings a nice harmony across the board."

Although the Covid-19 pandemic posed many challenges for Cadets and volunteers, the situation produced inspirational activity from all among the four services. Many delivered shopping supplies to those in need in their community, others made PPE for members of the public and the NHS. Dozens turned out to salute and clap on their doorsteps as part of the #clapinuniform social media campaign to thank our healthcare heroes.

The aim amongst the Cadet leaders and volunteers was ultimately to engage, train, retain and achieve. Adult Volunteers and senior Cadets quickly became adept at re-designing training content and activities to be delivered online.

In the case of the Army Cadets, they set about converting their syllabus including fieldcraft, first aid, signals, and leadership into presentations that could be delivered online.

Alan Middleton, Deputy Commandant of West Lowland Battalion Army Cadet Force, said: "Our senior Cadets and younger Adult Volunteers have shown how adaptable and resilient they are and just how adept they are at designing workarounds in the virtual environment.

"The experience in such an environment is not 100 per cent solution to a lockdown situation

but it was a start and a vital aid to engaging and retaining contact with our Cadets.

"Having done that we then realised that the Cadet Experience had to be more than just an endless trail of training that it needed to have a fun and social dimension.

"All of this activity, training and social communication, was underpinned by a selfless commitment to the community, neighbours, NHS key workers and service veterans which provided a very important source of fulfilment for Cadets and Adult Volunteers."



Supporting BME young people



Youth Community Support Agency (YCSA) is the only Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) led youth work organisation that works with BME young people, including asylum seekers, from across Glasgow City. They provide a range of faith and culturally appropriate services that support young people, and their families, that other agencies are unable to reach. However, as Fariha Thomas explains this key work, which has been crucial to young people before and during the pandemic, could well be under threat.

The agency has been supporting BME young people throughout lockdown and continues to provide essential services despite a funding threat to its very existence. This is especially difficult at this time given that it is widely recognised that BME young people have been particularly impacted by Covid-19. While BME unemployment is already significantly higher than the overall population, in any downturn the gap grows, and with the Covid-19 downturn this is hitting BME young people's life chances.

Lockdown came as a shock, and initially for some of the school aged young people, a novelty - extra holidays. Others were desperately worried about exam results and keeping up with the curriculum, and these fears increased as lockdown lengthened.

For some asylum seekers and homeless young people we work with, it resulted in them being moved into hotel accommodation, in small, very isolated rooms that felt like imprisonment. This severely impacted their mental health, even before some of them were caught up in the stabbing incident at the Park Inn Hotel. Others lost their jobs, or had their employment hopes blighted; while a few were required to work ever-longer hours on their zero hours contracts in retail.

We were able to move some group services, such as ESOL and employability supports online. We offered counselling by phone or video call, with an increase in take up from asylum seekers. We regularly contacted young people by phone or text, according to their preference, and provided virtual one-to-one support around employability, housing, wellbeing and other issues.

We quickly realised the extent of digital exclusion of young BME people but were able to access a range of funds to help overcome. We know, however, that due to higher levels of poverty in BME communities this remains an issue, which requires a more strategic approach as online becomes a default means of communication.

We found many of the young people, especially teenagers, were uncomfortable with online video groups. Having initially planned a Zoom based cooking group for those aged 12-to-18, we adapted our plans and provided instructional videos so that young people could choose when to undertake the activity. YCSA delivered the ingredients and recipes, and young people were encouraged to ask for help, send in comments and pictures of their dishes.

By June we had identified two groups of young people – those who were increasingly fearful of going out, who were sleeping all day and often online all night, and those who were bored with lockdown and were going out, not distancing and were getting into trouble, for example, breaking into school playgrounds to play football. This latter group was especially desperate for real life youth work activities to re-start.

In July, we were able to re-start street work and run our school holiday programme for those aged 11-to-17s outdoors. We were very fortunate in being able to gain sole use of a former bowling green run as a community space by a partner agency, which provided a safe space to run activities with a reduced number of young people. This became

a perfect outdoors location once we had obtained gazebos, and the young people had erected an awning, to provide shelter.

In addition to a range of outdoor non-contact games and team building exercises, we were able to provide arts and crafts activities, and hold topic discussions on subjects chosen by the young people such as bullying, racism, mental health and wellbeing, while enjoying a hot lunch individually packed for the young people.

This opportunity to meet, play and do creative work with others, especially in the lead up to return to school, made a huge difference to the young people – both those with Covid-19 fear of meeting others, and those who began to regain a routine.

We increasingly find that while young people look fine and may say they are fine, just beneath the surface, there are huge levels of anxiety and confidence has dropped.

While we believe that face-to-face work cannot be beaten, online supports were useful. Lockdown and its impacts have shown us how crucial youth work is for young people to cope, and begin to adapt to the ongoing restrictions of the pandemic.



Delivering critical services in a time of Covid-19

The last few months has been a pretty difficult and challenging time for Barnardo's Scotland's Edinburgh 16+ staff and service users, as has been the case for all of us.

The emphasis has been on trying to maintain effective communication and connectivity and adapting to different approaches to best meet the needs of the young people we support. We have regularly reached out to all our service users (including current and previously allocated cases) to let them know that we are there for them and we continue to run a daily duty service for them to contact us.

At the height of restrictions, our staff dealt with a range of issues and the type of support given has been wide and varied:

- the biggest issues were trying to encourage young people to stay home and trying to address mental health and overdose concerns from a distance
- we know young people were bulk buying when they get their benefit payment, so they had nappies and food but were then running out of money.

The pressure points and challenges for our services working with care leavers and care experienced young people have included: suicidal ideation; self-harm and distress; drug and alcohol abuse and risks with regards to overdose. Lockdown also means they are

further exposed to domestic violence; increased vulnerability to child sexual exploitation and criminal exploitation; financial crisis and associated vulnerabilities including homelessness.

In helping us respond to this we have been helped greatly by having access to the Scottish Government's Wellbeing Fund and further help from the Land Aid Fund Trust to allow us to try and mitigate some of the connectivity issues causing barriers to receiving support and assistance. Some of the initiatives we have put in place include:

- allocating a worker to every young person – even those who just use drop-in or usually use other 'lighter' support – this provides a link and the security of someone checking in regularly with them
- we have enhanced our crisis line and duty systems and are undertaking welfare calls to check in at agreed intervals
- we have purchased mobile phones and wi-fi packages for young people so they can access technology. This is essential and has therefore been prioritised by services

- we are buying beds, fridges, and other essential household items for young people, as well as providing food and money for utilities. It has been a particularly stressful time for those young people who moved into their own tenancies just as lockdown started, making it difficult for them to access financial supports, as well as the one-to-one support we would have been expecting to provide
- we are utilising social media to connect with young people.

Additionally in trying to respond to the increased emotional difficulties our young people have been experiencing we have developed a new 16+ counselling resource which we can directly refer young people to. This is already proving to be very valuable and hopefully we can continue this into the future.

We have gradually been increasing our more socially distanced contact with young people, usually out in the community, which has been great and we are hopeful circumstances will allow us to do more of this moving forward.

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Turning Lockdown into a #DigiDReam

North Ayrshire Council's Youth Work Team engaged with nearly 65,000 young people through Lockdown. They created a fully interactive digital youth work programme under the branding #DigiDReam.

What did we do?

The programme gave young people a lifeline during this period of time, tackling mental health and wellbeing issues, social isolation, health and fitness, also incorporating the outdoors and cooking skills.

The 42 activities over the initial six weeks were a massive success with young people and partners. Our social media platforms recorded over 51,000 online engagements with young people and families.

After the initial programme, the team and young people came together digitally to plan for the summer for phase two of the #DigiDReam.

It was agreed this would be launched the week before summer holidays started with seven weeks of challenges and activities with three activities each day, five days a week. Alongside this we launched our Get Connected Survey with young people to gather their views on access to digital connections and the impact of lockdown on their mental health and wellbeing.

During the seven-week period 63 separate activities were launched for young people and families to participate – whilst partnering with our Adult Education Team to give the programme a family friendly feel. Again, all of these activities were launched at key points throughout the day from our own social media platforms, as well as our North Ayrshire Virtual Community Centre pages.

The summer programme engaged a staggering 13,055 young people over 16 weeks with posts reaching over 335,000 people over Facebook and Twitter alone.

What's next?

Taking our youth work approach online has brought many benefits to our team – being able to take youth groups online, connecting through digital platforms, the provision of activities and providing a trusted source for information, guidance and support for young people in a language that speaks to them.

From the consultation responses gathered through Get Connected we have highlighted the real concerns for young people:

- Young people are worried that their freedoms and normal routine will never be the same. Another common theme was concern around a second wave and a second full lockdown
- Many have a real concern about the effect on their education, especially about catching up or taking exams
- Some young people are worried about going back to socialising and re-building friendships after a period where they have had worsened anxiety due to isolation
- Lastly, some young people are concerned about their community. During lockdown young people felt a heightened sense of community and people looking after one another, and from comments this is something young people are keen to see continue

We will be working with our schools and key partners to deliver programmes to young people focussing on mental health and wellbeing, resilience, employability and building on skills, to ensure young people have the resources required to learn, to feel connected to friends, family and their community.



The pandemic renews calls for youth work to be a key stakeholder in education

The Awards Network believes now is the time to dispense with unnecessary and unhelpful division between youth work and education.

Addressing the wider CLD sector in early summer, Richard Lochhead MSP, Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science, acknowledged the sector's incredible efforts in responding to the COVID-19 crisis:

"Whether that's been delivering online youth work or food parcels, creating new learning packs, or caring for the elderly or for the young - the level of innovation coming to the fore has been hugely impressive."

Youth workers and youth work organisations have exhibited extraordinary agility during lockdown. Developing and launching a wide array of programmes, they have sought to ensure that as many children and young people as possible have remained connected,

supported and engaged in activity designed to support learning, fun, health and well-being.

Awards Network member organisations have made a significant contribution, responding rapidly with activity and learning resources to underpin youth work continuity at home. Modifications to youth award programmes have ensured access to youth awards has been maintained, and award achievement has continued. Whilst lockdown has presented some challenges, it has also provided more opportunity for young people to take personal control of their achievement journey.

Responses of Awards Network members were highlighted in our April Newsletter. The interest generated resulted in our #youthworkathome

resource, providing links to member programme ideas, materials and information.

Uniformed youth organisations were quick off the mark, launching a comprehensive range of age specific programme resources online, including #TheGreatIndoors from Scouts, #AdventuresAtHome from Girlguiding and #BBatHome from the Boy's Brigade.

In a short video clip for the Boys' Brigade, Scotland's National Clinical Director, Professor Jason Leitch CBE, stressed that *"youth and community groups are so important at this time of lockdown for us all."*

More of our members quickly developed their own award-related online resources, including:

[Heritage Hero Awards at Home](#) from Archaeology Scotland

[#DofEWithADifference](#)

[Awards at Home](#) from Youth Scotland

[Children's University Scotland](#) released a series of daily, weekly and family learning challenges, added to by Holiday Heroes, a six-week programme of summer learning challenges.

New opportunities for recognition of achievement were created. Examples include the 2020 DofE Certificate of Achievement and a three-stage [Great Indoors Badge](#) from Scouts, the first ever Scout badge available to non-members.

The online programmes and activity resources developed by Awards

Network members in response to lockdown have generally been available to members and non-members too. This has provided a great opportunity to showcase to a wider audience the learning and achievement opportunities that youth work organisations can provide.

Lockdown and transition arrangements will inevitably have had an impact on levels of youth award participation, but has not stopped awards being achieved.

Despite disruption to schooling and extra-curricular activity, over 350 young people completed and achieved the newly introduced Young Enterprise Company Programme award at SCQF level 6 by the end of the last school term.

Youth Scotland's Awards at Home and family learning initiatives have seen a significant increase in registrations for its Hi5 and Dynamic Youth Awards during the summer.

With a new online registration platform, it is to be hoped that all the incredible volunteering activity that young people have engaged in to support families and communities during the pandemic will be recognised in an increase in Saltire Award achievement.



Lessons for learning partnership

Experience since lockdown has clearly demonstrated the vital role that youth work can play in supporting and facilitating the learning, health and well-being of our young people. The programme and activity resources developed and made widely available have shone a light on the expertise within the sector with respect to design and delivery of learning programmes, these can enrich the curriculum and engage young people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities in a wide diversity of educational and skills development experiences.

Whether in school, community, home or other settings, what has also been evidenced, is the incredible flexibility offered by youth awards to support, recognise and accredit the wider learning and achievements of our

young people. Not bedevilled by test scores and exam grades, but rather recognising personal endeavour and progression, they can provide valid testimony to learning achievement.

Is it not now time that we dispensed with unnecessary and unhelpful division between youth work and education and acknowledge that we are all partners in young people's learning, collectively working to equip young people with enduring skills for learning, life and work?

The cancellation of formal exams this year has encouraged reflection on different ways of gauging the learning and achievements of young people. It's to be hoped that a broader discussion will ensue, with youth work as a key stakeholder.

Glasgow – A city's pandemic response

In our biggest city, youth workers have embraced new digital spaces to connect with young people



Development of Online Services

Following lockdown and the suspension of Glasgow Life Services in March, the youth work teams reviewed their current physical offer to enable them to continue to engage with and support young people in these unprecedented times.

Glasgow Life recognised there would be a detrimental impact on young people's mental health and wellbeing. It was vital they were able to continue to connect with young people and to offer them access to a range of resources including: advice and information; diversionary activities; issue-based learning and informal discussion.

The South Communities Youth Team undertook a two week test programme with a closed group of young people to work out what would be effective and what kind of activities would be suitable.

More than 90% of the participants mentioned the programme had made them less bored, made them feel better and gave them the chance to get help or support if they needed it.

Eighty per cent said that the programme helped them feel healthier or more active and 75% said that the programme helped them make better choices or decisions.

The positive response to the programme and the benefits that were mentioned support the assertion that the programme helps the mental health and wellbeing of the participants.

It provides the vital link to supportive youth workers with whom the participants have already built up a relationship of trust.

Developing Content

Throughout lockdown, youth work staff have been encouraged and supported in developing a range of virtual and online content. A range of 40 pieces of content have been created by staff that covers topics including sports, quizzes, music, cooking and challenges and stored in a central virtual content library.

Youth Voice: Youth Empowerment and Political Literacy

Glasgow Life continued to provide direct support to both Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament and to members of Glasgow Youth Council. With lockdown, the GYC was proactive in continuing to meet, moving both Executive and full council meetings online, with the Scottish Youth Parliament holding their first ever virtual sitting on the 4th and 5th of July 2020.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

The Executive members of the GYC were approached and agreed to participate in the YouthLink Scotland Mental Health and Wellbeing project. Permission was granted from the NHS Mental Health Improvement Team to use and adapt their existing Healthy Minds training resource for delivery online.

Glasgow Life also developed a range of support materials and links to a range of activities, apps, helplines and websites that would support young

people's mental health and wellbeing particularly during the early stages of lockdown.

The resource aims to reduce the stigma related to mental health and provide young people with a range of tools and techniques to help them share their experiences and manage their mental health and wellbeing.

In addition, the Glasgow Life South Youth Team have been working with colleagues in the HSCP (Health and Social Care Partnership) and Action for Children to deliver support and resources around mental health and trauma in response to the tragic deaths of five young people in the local area in recent weeks.

This has included the development of #KickTheSilence a resource pack which promotes positive mental health during lockdown with free items including footballs, water bottles, baking kits, affirmation cards and advice and information.

The team are also providing support to local organisations including TURF who are shadowing our detached teams to consult with young people around increased youth provision. G52 Mental Health Matters who are receiving capacity building support to be able to develop a peer led mental health support group.

In the North West of the city, youth workers alongside Glasgow Life Community Engagement Officers, have built a relationship with local food banks and devised a weekly 'Boredom Buster' activity sheet, which was distributed alongside food packages to young people within the community.



Family Activity Budget (FAB) and Support to Care Experienced Young People

In 2017 Glasgow Life was awarded funding from the Life Changes Trust to increase access to sporting, creative and learning activities for care experienced young people in the South of Glasgow. The scheme was aimed at young people aged 14 years plus and the South was chosen following consultation with the HSCP.

Prior to lockdown the project reached 370 individuals with over 20 registered providers exceeding the original target of 15. The project almost universally met with enthusiasm from young people, Education Services providers and Social Work Service staff.

Activities were paused in March 2020 due to the closure of venues and cessation of all activities in response to the Covid-19 Pandemic and lockdown.

Pandemic Response-Support to Young People in Residential Care

Glasgow Life has supported the 19 children's houses in the city with additional equipment to support outdoor and indoor physical activity. The programme has seen Glasgow Life appoint an experienced youth work coordinator for each area of the city. Staff feedback at this early stage has been extremely positive as we begin to build relationships. The long-term aim is to ensure that young people in the children's houses are well connected to what's available in the local area.

Over the weeks Glasgow Life youth workers have attended several units within the North West, building relationships with staff and young people. We have been able to deliver issue-based workshops such as healthy relationships, sign post young people to beneficial services that includes employability and to inform young people and staff of accreditation awards like DofE.

Staff Training and Upskilling

Prior to March 2020, if you had asked the majority of youth work staff what is Zoom, you would probably be directed to the popular frozen fruit ice lolly (other varieties available).

To enable Glasgow Life staff to respond to the challenges of virtual youth work and to effectively engage with young people, a range of training opportunities have been provided to staff that has included digital youth work training, how to use conferencing platforms effectively and safely, and webinars on designing and delivering on-line events.

Future Developments

Going forward, Glasgow Life will continue to develop online and virtual content, recognising that while virtual provision can supplement existing youth work engagement, it cannot replace the need for physical provision. Recovery planning is ongoing in preparing for a phased reopening of buildings adhering to Scottish Government guidance, with the rollout of street work to re-engage with young people isolated during lockdown.

Bringing an island together



Youth work within our island communities has always posed different challenges. Keeping young people connected and supported in a remote location requires not only great youth work but creativity and adaptability. These skills have never been more needed according to the team from Arran Youth Foundations.

For an island that seems so idyllic to holidaymakers, it can be hard to explain rural deprivation – we have young people who live in caravans, have suffered from abuse, struggle with poor mental health, or turn to drugs and alcohol out of boredom.

At Arran Youth Foundations (AYF), we pride ourselves on being innovative and adaptable. Never in my ten years working on the island have we needed those skills more than during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The main issues that AYF looks to address are social isolation, exclusion, lack of opportunity, and substance abuse. The charity's main aims are

to build confidence in young people, teach them new skills, and provide them with opportunities to take on more responsibility and decision-making.

We are looking to address the opinion of old that there is nothing on Arran for young people. Young people now know there is an organisation who cares deeply about them.

Through creative practice, we have built 16 weekly term-time activities that include:

- a cooking club that culminates in an annual restaurant night for invited businesses and funders

- girls football coaching
- an intergenerational project at local sheltered housing
- one-to-one mentoring for a school refuser

And lots more... We also do school holiday activities and mainland trips, like gorge-walking, abseiling, go-karts, paintball and Alton Towers.

All of that stopped the day that lockdown was announced. Putting into practice our innovation and adaptability, we launched a digital youth work programme within a week, with newly-written online policies and procedures to keep everyone safe.



“It was good because it allowed me time to continue doing art and draw my feelings. Also it was the only time away from my family, but I still felt safe because I was at home and not out around the virus.”

Young folk who normally get one-to-one guitar tuition with a tutor funded entirely by AYF, didn't miss a lesson as they continued over Skype.

Our art psychotherapy group continued to meet weekly via Zoom. Individual art packs were ordered and sent out to young folk, who joined in every Wednesday with their friends, our art psychotherapist and youth workers. This group is hugely important to those who participate, helping them to express their feelings and take care of their mental health and wellbeing.

AYF also offers one-to-one sessions for anyone who feels they need this support, and these continued uninterrupted too.

We kept young folk moving by issuing them a weekly exercise challenge. This included walks, 5K runs and cycling.

Whole families came together on Friday nights over Zoom to join in with our very popular family quizzes. This is something we will continue to use long after the restrictions are over.

We enjoyed group games on the Houseparty app, films together via Netflix Party, played cards and had a laugh with our over-16s once a week, got our LGBT+ club together digitally

for a much needed “Chance To Share” – something we normally do every week.

Parents got in touch with us to say thanks for the activities, how badly needed the opportunity to keep in touch with friends was, and how lovely it was to hear laughter during such a worrying time.

All of this demonstrated the critical role youth work has always had and can have on the education and general wellbeing of our young people. For many, AYF's activities were a real lifeline.

This period hasn't been easy for anyone. From a personal point of view, it has been difficult mixing home life and work life so heavily – your office is your living space and your living space is your office. Without childcare, my six year old and one year old often wandered into shot on Zoom calls (and were usually encouraged to stay there by the young folk!)

“During the lockdown Arran Youth Foundations helped me keep my mental health stable. They did their very best to keep as many activities online, including art therapy which I found very helpful and enjoyable.”

Once high schools reopened, we met with our local head teacher to plan how AYF might work together to deliver school-based youth work programmes while not permitted to open our own centre. We are so optimistic about this opportunity and the aim is to deliver it long after restrictions are lifted.

We made the move to outdoor youth work activities when permitted. It has been lovely seeing the young folk again, but with current restrictions, it has its downfalls – activities are all done at a distance that can make that usual level of interaction and camaraderie difficult.

Our team have spent time preparing the youth centre for when further restrictions are lifted. We are desperate to have them back, but we remarked how bare the centre looks with black and yellow cordon tape, couch cushions removed for distancing, anti-bac gel everywhere and certain resources missing.

Our passion for youth work at Arran Youth Foundations has always been really strong, and recent events have only underlined just how vital and rewarding this work is.

Together again



Despite the challenges of Coronavirus, The Boys' Brigade has faith we will come back together again safer and stronger.

We have hope that our relationships with one another will become stronger as we develop a renewed appreciation for the simple things in life. We have hope that society will become safer as we continue to learn about how we can protect ourselves and others from this virus. We have hope that it's not too far in the future that we will come together and start to live our lives to the full once more.

We have all been through a lot over the past months and huge uncertainty remains in our lives. The full consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic are still to be completely understood, but the positive actions that we have seen so many people take in their local and wider communities has been inspiring and gives us all hope.

The normal work of the BB may have come to an abrupt halt in March, but the pandemic did not stop us continuing to live out our vision, mission and values.

The Boys' Brigade has faith in young people and provides them with opportunities to learn, grow and discover in a safe, fun and caring environment, which is rooted in the Christian faith.

In March we launched #BBatHOME – an online programme of activities for young people to take part in with their parents or carers. Made freely



accessible on our website. For 18 weeks, we sent out weekly activity packs. Roughly 300 brand new activities have been designed and shared with our members and their families in recent months, and we have had wonderful feedback:

"As a family, we've really appreciated the efforts made by the leaders and volunteers during these uncertain times. Their commitment to weekly Zoom meetings and staying in touch with the young people has been a really positive experience for our son. I think the BB activities will feature strongly and positively in his memories of this time."

"BBatHOME has done so much for this family's mental health during lockdown. They've kept us laughing together, even on tough days. I can't thank you enough."

We have been working hard to create guidance for BB Companies to follow to ensure a safe return to face-to-face activities. Our guidance framework prioritises the safety of our members, their families and our leaders whilst ensuring that we work together with the local Church and relevant local authorities.

The past months have proven that we are an organisation that can continue to innovate and adapt – very much following our history and heritage.

As we move into the new 2020/21 Boys' Brigade session - which will bring with it new and different challenges - we can surely be confident that our work has something meaningful and important to offer as children and young people adjust to the 'new normal'.

Breaking down the barriers to employability

HYPE Learning Agreements West Lothian work with young people who are already socially isolated so when all courses stopped and everyone stayed at home, their young client group were facing some very specific challenges and fears.

The barriers HYPE young people face tend to centre around social isolation, difficult home/living situations, autism spectrum disorder, issues around mental health & well-being and poverty.

Whilst HYPE is primarily a skills-based pre-employability programme, the reality for most of the young people we work with is this can be the first step to engaging and addressing those barriers preventing them going onto further training, education or employment.

Prior to lockdown a number of young people spoke to staff and tutors about their fear of losing the routine of attending courses and losing a reason to get up and leave the house. The loss of physical social contact with others and often with new found friends is a really big deal for some of our young people who've struggled with friendships and 'fitting-in' through their time at school. With all this in mind the HYPE team of staff and tutors have delivered a range of opportunities during lockdown:

- 150 themed learning activity packs delivered to doorsteps
- 44 targeted outdoor/construction themed learning packs delivered
- 15 targeted individualised craft packs delivered
- twice weekly group video calls
- 42 one-to-one walk and talk sessions delivered, including focussed sessions on personal fitness, art and photography
- WhatsApp groups set up for individual and peer support.

The generic themed activity packs were delivered to all young people participating and included tasks and information relating to mental health and wellbeing, personal care, cooking and preparation for a return to leaving the house 'The New Normal'.

The outdoor and construction tasks involved a range of activities including the planting a Covid Blossom Memorial Tree. Other popular construction tasks included the 'Lockdown Lambo' Airfix Lamborghini kit.

Feedback from young people and their families has been very positive:

"HYPE helped me a lot during lockdown. Especially the Zoom calls and the walk and talks as they both gave me a place to vent and it was just a laugh which took my mind off lockdown." S

"I think my favourite pack was the designing a t-shirt. It was fun to do and motivated me to decorate some of my own clothes." J

"I think HYPE has helped by giving me something to look forward to each week such as the zoom calls and the learning packs. It made all the craziness from the lockdown feel a little bit more normal." A

"It was a good surprise to do the cooking. They didn't ask me to make the steak pie, I just did it because I liked making the pasta that HYPE sent me the ingredients for." S

"Getting a personalised pack was great. It felt like people were thinking about me and like it was my birthday. It reminded me that nobody had forgotten about me." J

"HYPE really helped me through lockdown with being on the app and giving me stuff to do." I



Why we put our **'Heids Together'** to promote youth mental health

In March this year, when faced with an unexpected pandemic, the youth work sector did what it does best and adapted to extremely challenging circumstances for the benefit of young people. Meeting rooms, community halls and drop-ins quickly moved online as digital youth work became a necessity rather than a quirky innovation.

At YouthLink Scotland, we were keen to capture some of this work and were delighted to receive funding through the Wellbeing Fund to create Heids Together, a new mental health & wellbeing resource.

The project engaged with six incredible youth work organisations from across Scotland who have adapted their service delivery and continued the support during Covid-19 - specifically around mental health and wellbeing.

During the 10-week project, youth workers took part in weekly group meetings with us, undertaking five practice development sessions led by YouthLink Scotland, See Me Scotland and Penumbra.

We hope this resource will increase the capacity of the sector to engage in mental health support, increase confidence of youth workers, provide create and innovative ways of engaging in mental health discussions with young people which have been created by young people.

The six organisations involved: Passion4Fusion; LGBT Youth Scotland; Dumfries and Galloway Youth Work; FARE Scotland and St Mungo's Academy; Glasgow Life; Scouts Scotland

You can check out all the resources [here](#)



Challenging bullying online

Lorraine Glass, Policy and Improvement Manager at respectme, shares how they have responded to Covid-19 and its impact on bullying.

When the country went into lockdown an acquaintance suggested that our team might enjoy a lighter workload since *"school's off, so all the bullying will stop"*, if only!

The Time for Inclusive Education survey 'Online in Lockdown' showed that 47% of young people have seen or experienced online bullying during Lockdown, and over 50% report that this has been happening more than usual.

Youth workers can intervene, healing can take place, relationships may be restored and happier memories help overwrite the tougher ones. Covid-19 quickly dismantled many of these supports, safeguards and structures.

In response, the respectme team focussed our energies on the immediacy of the situation, providing advice and support for parents, carers and any adult in a support role. We have developed a [tip sheet](#) to support parents and carers to keep their children safe when it comes to online bullying. Alongside the tip sheet, our Training Manager, Lisa produced a series of [short videos](#) providing parents and carers with practical advice to deal with incidents of online bullying.

We are developing a new training programme for adults to help them to create environments where difference is accepted, understood and celebrated and where the language and behaviours of prejudice are consistently challenged. The experience and role of youth workers, and young people themselves, will be vital in the development and delivery of this programme.

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Youthie in the Hoosie

Stuck in the house, isolated from friends, youth work services across Scotland have found many entertaining ways to connect in with young people. Covid-19 has highlighted what we already know, they are not just a youth work sector, they are a creative sector. Enter Stirling Council CLD Youth Work Team...

This summer, Stirling Council CLD Youth Work have continued to support children, young people and families across the authority.

Youth work was responsible for managing and supporting a large hub provision within Stirling for vulnerable young people and the children of key workers. Children and young people took part in themed activity weeks, mirroring the digital summer programme 'Summer Youthie in the Hoosie'.

Summer Youthie in the Hoosie (delivered on Stirling Young Scot Platform) provided an online youth work summer programme. This built on the 50 days of online 'Youthie in the Hoosie' content created to engage young people during lockdown.

Online content was supported by doorstep delivery of 'Summer Staycation' packs. Delivered to 264 young people, the packs provided activities to engage young people in the digital themed weeks and also included key items of provision

to keep young people learning and engaged – balls, drawing materials, baking kits etc. The final week of the holidays encouraged young people to plan and prepare for an overnight staycation.

Young people's learning and achievement was recognised through Hi5 awards. Stirling Council CLD worked with Youth Scotland to create a localised easily accessible Hi5 award process on the Young Scot Platform. Nearly 100 young people achieved an award.

Youth workers continued support for children who were part of the resilience group. This group supports vulnerable children from primary years 5-to-7. This included doorstep check-ins, delivering school lunches and providing tailored activities. Between them, youth workers saw one young person with additional needs daily, going out for walks and giving them space to chat through feelings and emotions and to have fun with their youth workers.

One parent involved has this to say:

"Thanks guys, you have thought about everything, this will keep the boys busy over the holidays and I'm especially looking forward to the cookies!!!! We really appreciate everything you have done right from the start of lockdown, it's great knowing that you still had their backs through all of this. Thanks again and stay safe."

Echoed by young people who appreciated the ongoing support:

"Lockdown has been better because of the youth team so thank you youth team."

"I miss the youth club so much and wish it was on !! Keep up all your good work yous do."



Young Scot proves that information is key in a time of crisis

As Scotland's young people went into lockdown, their isolation and wellbeing was a huge concern for both national and local government, and organisations within third sector. The charity has ensured that young people, in this time of turmoil, have the information and resources to navigate a path through the pandemic.

Young Scot is the national youth information and citizenship charity for 11-to-26 year olds in Scotland. We provide young people with high-quality information, opportunities and experiences.

During March 2020, as the Covid-19 crisis began to unfold, it became clear that young people were going to be one of the most affected groups. Overnight, they were unable to attend apprenticeships, work or university. Others began taking time off work or studies due to illness or caring for loved ones. For others, school closures got in the way of their exams.

As we anticipated the scale of the crisis, we began updating our [young.scot website](#) and social media channels seven days a week with the most up-to-date and relevant information for young people.

It was so easy for young people to feel scared by what they were hearing, and there was an urgent need for specialised youth information. We quickly began publishing [quality-assured information](#) on how to avoid catching Covid-19 and spreading it. We also published information about emotional wellbeing and how to support others in the community. We shared this information in the digital spaces young people spend their time in – Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook, TikTok and YouTube.

Some of our most popular Covid-19 information was our Q&A sessions with experts and decision-makers. We hosted two [Q&As](#) with the [First Minister](#), who answered young people's questions. We also interviewed the National Clinical Director for Scotland, [Jason Leitch](#), who spoke directly to young people about the need for them to take notice of the lockdown restrictions.

Our approach throughout the crisis was to partner with a range of information experts. This ensured that we shared only the highest-quality information and helped us to challenge the misinformation that young people were seeing. Our partners included the Scottish Government, Student Awards Agency Scotland, Food Standards Scotland and the Money and Pension Service. Other partners included the [Scottish Qualifications Authority](#) who offered insight into exams and qualifications, [Scottish Centre for Conflict Resolution](#) who answered questions on what causes conflict, and [the NHS](#) and [YouthLink Scotland](#) who offered insight into emotional wellbeing.

As we were suddenly unable to create content face-to-face, we quickly began to crowdsource content by encouraging young people to submit their questions and concerns via Instagram. We also worked digitally

with young volunteers to co-create content and activities that support positive emotional wellbeing. We also coached partners on how to create video content for our Q&A sessions. Also, alongside the Scottish Youth Parliament and YouthLink Scotland, we delivered [#LockdownLowdown](#). This survey of nearly 2,500 young people from communities across Scotland helped us to identify the key concerns around Covid-19. In response, we tailored our digital information output to ensure that young people had all the information they needed.

At a local level, we worked in partnership with our local authority partners and supported them to customise our digital information and offer bespoke Young Scot Rewards. We also offered additional online training for partners and young people to develop, create and publish local content on [young.scot](#).

These pages offered a place for young people to discover what was happening to services in their area, as well as bespoke Covid-19 information and co-design opportunities. They also helped local young people to make the most of the Young Scot services they are entitled to, including discounts and Young Scot Rewards.

Also, we created specific Covid-19 information for young carers who

receive our Young Scot Young Carers Package [#YSCarers](#). We produced new content and activities to address their concerns – especially around mental health and sign-posted them to local resources – such as schemes for those who receive free school meals.

Our youth information and social media reached all corners of Scotland, [and feedback from young people and stakeholders](#) has been overwhelmingly positive – especially our live Q&A sessions with the [First Minister](#). During lockdown, our [young.scot/coronavirus](#) pages received nearly 85,000 visitors, and we attracted over 3,618,000 views/impressions across our social media channels, resulting in 81,500 engagements with our audiences.

Such was the success of our digital information on Covid-19, the Scottish Government supported us to help deliver 'Clear Your Head'. This campaign showcased the practical things young people could do to feel better during lockdown. They also supported us to develop our [#AyeFeel](#) website – to support mental health and emotional wellbeing. The site has quality-assured information, expert advice and content made for young people by young people. It hosts information on topics such as how to improve

sleep, managing stress, productive ways to spend time online and coping with conflict.

As we move out of lockdown, we have taken time to reflect on the past few months. What strikes us most is the sheer number of organisations and public bodies who recognised that young people were one of the most impacted groups and wanted to respond accordingly. By forming partnerships with them, it allowed us to provide young people with the information they so desperately needed.

As Scotland continues to move out of the lockdown restrictions, we remain committed to responding to the immediate and evolving information needs of young people – helping them navigate this period of enormous turmoil.



Youth work crucial to the wellbeing of our young carers

A recent Carers Trust Scotland survey shows the pandemic's dramatic impact on the wider wellbeing of young carers in Scotland.

There are many young and young adult carers across Scotland providing unpaid care for a family member or friend who is ill, frail, disabled or has mental health or addiction problems. Young carers aged 12-to-17 and young adult carers aged 18-to-25 responded to the survey.

Key findings from the survey:

- 45% of young carers and 68% of young adult carers who responded to the survey say their mental health is worse as a result of Coronavirus
- 71% of young carers and 85% of young adult carers in Scotland who responded to the survey were more worried about the future since Coronavirus
- 51% of young adult carers in Scotland who responded to the survey are spending more money due to Coronavirus
- 58% of young carers in Scotland who responded to the survey say their education is suffering as a result of Coronavirus
- 42% of young adult carers in Scotland who responded to the survey say they are unable to take a break from caring as a result of Coronavirus.

Even before the outbreak of Covid-19, young carers and young adult carers were all too often spending significant amounts of time caring for a relative in addition to the time they needed to spend on education, work and time for themselves. Coronavirus has significantly increased those pressures.

We had to make the difficult decision to cancel the Scottish Young Carers Festival this year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. 2020 would have been the Festival's 13th year, providing young carers with a much needed break from their caring responsibilities.

The Scottish Young Carers Festival provided the opportunity for young carers to meet other young people in similar situations, share new experiences and have fun! The event also provided a national celebration for young carers to share their experiences, the impact that caring has on them and to suggest changes that could make their lives better.

To mitigate the impacts of Covid-19, we have been working with Scottish Government and with young carers and their services to deliver a new kind of Festival this year ['Best of the Fest!'](#)

On Wednesday 5 August to Friday 7 August, we had dozens of live activities and events including yoga, magic shows, cool creatures, circus tutorials and live music!

Our traditional marketplace at the Festival, which invites organisations to promote their services and resources to young carers was also online in 2020! Organisations such as Young Scot, the Scottish Youth Parliament and Social Security Scotland hosted live workshops for young carers and youth workers to find out more about the opportunities available.

Scottish Government is providing over £100,000 for Carers Trust Scotland to administer a small-grant scheme to eligible young carer services. These services will be able to apply for funding to provide fun and respite to the young carers they support. Youth work is essential in supporting young carers during this time and this scheme will ensure that activities and support can still be provided through a local, tailor-made approach.

These activities come at a very important time for many young carers, as our recent survey also found that 69% of young carers and 76% of young adult carers in Scotland who responded felt less able to stay in touch with friends since Coronavirus. Seventy four per cent of young carers and 73% of young adult carers in Scotland also said they are feeling less connected to others since Coronavirus. One young carer said:

"Has made me more anxious, lost, unconnected, unsure and very sad that we can't hug our dad, nanna, aunts/uncles, cousins and friends. Future so uncertain."

These events and activities will go some way to providing support and respite to young carers in Scotland. The young and young adult carers who shared their thoughts and experiences with us have been clear about what they want and need for their future:

- support for their emotional wellbeing and mental health
- help to stay connected to friends and their communities
- breaks from their caring role and the support of specialist young and young adult carers services
- more help to balance caring, education and employment
- support to stay fit and healthy.

Our vision at Carers Trust is that unpaid carers count and can access the help they need to live their lives. It is vital that young and young adult carers are able to be children and young people first and foremost and live their own life alongside their caring responsibilities.

**CARERS
TRUST
SCOTLAND**

The future of learning and youth work is green



Have you ever come across the term Learning for Sustainability and wondered what it's all about? Perhaps you've heard it in reference to schools, colleges or teachers and not seen the relevance to the youth work sector? This article brings together Learning for Sustainability, youth work and the road to recovery post Covid-19, to help you make the connections to your role as a youth worker in a time that it's never more needed.

Learning for Sustainability (LFS) is an educational approach that enables young people and educators, both formal and informal, to build a socially-just, sustainable and equitable society in Scotland. It links with key policy drivers such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's), the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child (UNCRC) and the Curriculum for Excellence. As an umbrella term it weaves together a wide range of thematic activities and learning streams that support young people's development and understanding of the world around them including outdoor learning; sustainable development and global citizenship.

So how does this link to youth work?

It goes without saying that young people across the world have been at the forefront of demonstrating their voice and leadership in tackling major global issues such as poverty,

climate change and racism. Recent engagement with young people across Scotland highlighted that the environment and climate change is a key priority that they want to see included in the next [National Youth Work Strategy 2020-2025](#) and [The 2019 Power of Youth Social Action Report](#) highlighted:

"The vast majority of young people are eager to make a difference in society and want to make the world a better place."

Young people are leading the way as active, global citizens and inspirational change makers.

Through a person-centred and rights based approach, youth work exerts a strong influence on young people's lives, transition points and future development. There's no doubt that youth work is well-placed to engage young people in reflective

conversations and strengthen the connections between local action and global social change.

Youth work activities that seek to integrate aspects of Learning for Sustainability are significantly contributing to the development of the values, knowledge, skills and confidence of young people, to enable them to engage with the challenges that society faces on both a national and global level. This is even more relevant in the midst of our recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Embedding Learning for Sustainability in our practice as youth workers is more important now than ever. We have a real opportunity to shape a new normal, one that is more socially and ecologically just for everyone in society, and one that is fundamentally more kind to our planet.



Green recovery for youth employment

By now you will have heard the phrase a green recovery. But what is it and how does it relate to youth work? A green recovery, in this case from Covid-19, moves beyond purely economic improvement, and puts people and the environment first to address the economic and health crises in a sustainable way.



Bridging all three areas (people, environment and the economy) is youth employment. Young people's employment has been particularly impacted by Covid-19. Young people are disproportionately concentrated in sectors affected by lockdown and have been furloughed at a higher rate compared with all workers.

Where youth employability is concerned, youth work contributes both explicitly and implicitly. The skills young people develop through participating in youth work, described in the National Youth Work Outcomes, support young people's employability and ability to articulate their learning.

Our Bright Future

Over the next year, YouthLink Scotland is working with Our Bright Future (OBF) to support their policy and advocacy work in Scotland related to young people. Our Bright Future, a partnership led by The Wildlife Trusts and funded by the National Lottery Community Fund,

is composed of 31 projects across the UK, helping young people aged 11-to-24 gain vital skills and improve their wellbeing.

During youth-led research conducted by OBF, young people across the UK decided on three key changes that would support young people and the environment:

Ask 1: More time spent learning in and about nature

Ask 2: Support to get into environmental jobs

Ask 3: Government, employers, businesses, schools and charities to pay more attention to the needs of young people and the environment.

The recent green investment in jobs from the Scottish Government is welcome and we would hope that our youth work sector will be part of driving that investment forward by supporting young people and building skills.

Case Study

Impact Arts - Creative Pathways: Environmental Design

Impact Arts have been delivering Our Bright Future-funded projects for the past four years. Creative Pathways: Environmental Design is their flagship employability project working with groups of young people aged between 16-19 years, with the aim of getting young people into employment or further education with a specific focus on environmental issues.

Projects have included creating community gardens, transforming derelict land, working with park rangers, installing a community pizza oven, and campaigning on environmental issues.

To date the projects 577 young people have learnt new skills, 383 young people have progressed to positive destinations, and 33 community spaces have been created or transformed. Find out [more](#).





UNCRC incorporation can empower youth workers as human rights defenders



YouthLink Scotland's Policy and Research Manager Kevin Kane reflects on the UNCRC Incorporation Bill - an the future possibility of a statutory right to youth work.

Our vision at YouthLink Scotland is for the human rights of young people to be integrated into all aspects of society, which is why we view the Scottish Government's commitment to incorporate UNCRC into Scots Law as a landmark moment for the sector.

[The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child Incorporation \(Scotland\) Bill](#) will positively affect the lives of children and young people the length and breadth of Scotland.

Incorporation will undoubtedly bring about huge benefits to children and young people, but it can also act as a catalyst for youth workers everywhere to be empowered as human rights defenders for the tens of thousands of young people they already support across the country.

The role of a youth worker in relation to UNCRC will go far beyond information provision. That is important, of course, but what is imperative is the key role youth

workers will now play in working alongside young people to embed the legislation in schools; within hubs in the heart of the community (universal and targeted); in the local authority and voluntary sector; those involved in care and support; in outreach; and in outdoor learning settings. Our vision is that every young person and youth worker is in the strongest position to build on the legacy of incorporation.

We intend to use incorporation to embolden young people through the soft and hard skills of youth work. This will help young people understand, promote, and defend their own rights – and that of their peers. In doing so, we will shine a light on the essential role youth workers play in advocating on a young person's behalf. Youth workers do a wonderful job at this already, however, incorporation will bring legitimacy to a youth work approach already taking a maximalist approach to incorporation.

Scotland's [National Youth Work Outcomes](#) are enshrined by UNCRC. As such, the youth work sector is strategically positioned to act in the promotion of cultural change – and in a unique position across sectors to help implement any new laws.

Incorporation is a further opportunity for the youth work sector to look again at the possibility of a statutory right to youth work. We know UNCRC and youth work are inextricably linked. It is not a big leap, therefore, to consider the idea of a statutory right to the practice. This would be extremely positive to young people within the youth work sector. It would also introduce new and formative experiences for those currently not involved or able to access any form of youth work - and provide a solid anchor to the advancement of children and young people's right in the future.

What's next for digital youth work?

Digital Consultant, Hilary Phillips talks about the crucial role of youth work online as we plan for the future, however uncertain.



At the start of April I joined the team at YouthLink Scotland to support their work around digital youth work. In the first few weeks of lockdown there had been an overwhelming demand for training relating to online youth work and between late March and early June over 750 people participated in our online training sessions and webinars, with many more watching content on Youtube.

One of my all-time favourite pieces of youth work advice is to *"be prepared, but be prepared to change"*. Clearly, that's exactly what was happening, as teams and individuals responded to the crisis.

Many organisations have been open and generous in sharing information and approaches and SCVO's Digishift programme gets a shout-out as it provided a hugely important place for third sector organisations to share their journey through the crisis.

Within just a few weeks of lockdown happening there were local authorities running Easter activities online, national charities streaming daily content and uniformed

organisations running regular online groups. What an incredible shift to digital!

Of the many stories of people going above and beyond, here's one that illustrates just what was involved. The small team at the Ferrywell Youth Project were working with guidelines that stated they needed parental consent before young people could take part in online activities. For them, that meant paying a socially distant doorstep visit to each household, to get a consent form signed. So that's what they did.

Youth organisations have worked through the challenges of obtaining parental consent, getting devices into the hands of young people that need them, adapting existing guidelines, creating new policy, planning and delivering activities in a completely new setting.

There is no doubt that for young people there are many negative consequences to the crisis, ranging from loss of learning to the impact on mental health. For youth work organisations, we will be evaluating

the impact as we head into an uncertain future. Thinking specifically about digital youth work, we now need to put the experiences of the last six months into a wider context.

At YouthLink Scotland we have been exploring and developing digital youth work for the last 10 years, recognising its key role in planning for the future. We played a lead role in a European consortium, attracting Erasmus+ funding to develop resources which are available at digitalyouthwork.eu.

As a result of the crisis we have now launched a new web hub, digitalyouthwork.scot, where we are gathering material that's relevant to the sector in Scotland, as well as linking to the European project.

For everything we do at YouthLink Scotland we want to respond to the needs of the sector. The training programme was an immediate response. Now we have the opportunity to consider the impact for the future, we want to hear about needs.

Closing the poverty-related attainment gap

The youth work sector has continued to support and engage children and young people throughout the coronavirus pandemic, including continuing to contribute to closing the poverty-related attainment gap.



Supporting transition back to school

Youth work organisations and local authority CLD youth work services delivered a range of online and face-to-face activities to support children and young people to return to school, including supporting those at key transition points.

Youth work provided structured opportunities to re-connect with peers, re-build confidence, undertake wider learning and achievement, and address concerns and anxieties regarding a return to school. Where relevant, transition support was embedded in universal youth work provision, with targeted interventions in place for vulnerable children and young people. Individuals in need of specific transition support were identified through school and through youth work's existing relationships with the young people and families.

South Ayrshire CLD youth work supported P7-S1 transition through a blend of online and face-to-face delivery. The 'Carrick Transition Project' involved online sessions for P7 children who were making the transition to Girvan Academy. These sessions allowed young people from cluster primary schools to establish positive relationships with their new peers and local youth work staff before making the transition. This also acted as first engagement with S1 Youth Club staff before transitioning

into the group after the summer. Targeted face-to-face support was also delivered through 'Transition Walk and Talk' across four areas.

Supporting school hubs

Children and young people of key workers and those who were identified as vulnerable continued to receive multi-agency support through community/school hubs. Youth work in these settings ensured children and young people had access to a range of learning opportunities and support including transition and health and wellbeing. In many cases this was provided by the Local Authority CLD Youth Work Teams.

Across North Lanarkshire, all CLD youth workers and support workers led on summer hubs, in collaboration with key CLD partners. They met the needs of 540 children and young people a day, across nine venues. Similarly, in West Lothian, youth workers delivered learning programmes such as STEM activities, and provided opportunity for accreditation using Hi5 and Dynamic Youth Awards.

Outdoor learning

In Aberdeen, weekly outdoor education sessions were delivered with a focus on community. This included targeted integration work with Syrian New Scot young people

and youth participation groups. The outdoor education activities were a tool to engage the young people, build confidence, relationships and discover parks, woods and outdoor spaces on their doorstep.

Scouts Scotland also delivered outdoor learning to small groups of looked after young people in partnership with Fife Foster Care Services.

Family support and learning

Many youth work organisations have taken a whole-family approach to delivery during the pandemic. This includes supporting families on an outreach basis around health and wellbeing, transition and other family support needs.

In Orkney, 530 family activity packs (including outdoor activity, craft, recipes, gardening activities) have been distributed in collaboration with schools and other partners.

Summer programmes

Youth work services, youth clubs and groups would normally deliver full programmes of learning activities during the summer holidays. Significant work has been undertaken across the sector to continue to provide summer programmes this year. In many cases, programmes were developed for online and outreach delivery, running virtual

sessions, delivering hundreds of activity packs to homes, and setting challenges to encourage engagement, physical activity and continued learning.

A significant number of youth work organisations and services also told us they were planning detached youth work approaches to engage children and young people in face-to-face activities. Due to the need to focus support on mitigating the impact of Covid-19, face-to-face delivery was in many cases targeted at those most vulnerable.

Detached youth work has been used as an approach to delivery in many local authority areas. This allowed youth workers to engage with young people on the streets, ensuring they were safe, promoting health and wellbeing and providing opportunities for outdoor learning.

Young people's voice

In Dundee, youth work provided opportunities for young people to express their concerns around Covid-19 and their hopes for the future. Youth voice opportunities continued in Orkney, using a digital platform to maintain contact with the group and keep momentum going. Young people had specifically asked to continue this support and dialogue during the summer break.



Food insecurity

YouthLink Scotland has been working with the Scottish Government Tackling Food Insecurities Unit to explore the impact of a youth work approach to addressing food insecurity.

The pilot involved six projects delivered across the school summer holiday period. These took place in Moray, Dundee, South Lanarkshire, East Ayrshire, Falkirk and Scottish Borders. Each targeted young people (S1-S6) affected by poverty, with the aim of addressing food insecurity, alongside learning through youth work to close the poverty related attainment gap.

Employability

Youth work partners continued to support senior phase pupils during the summer, including employability programmes and 'next steps' support.

In West Lothian, young people on their Helping Young People Engage (HYPE) Learning Agreements received personalised home learning packs to continue moving towards progression. Keyworkers also continued to support young people in transition from school into further education, training or employment.

Fast Forward continued to support young people digitally through their Going Forward project.

Care experienced

Across the country, youth workers have supported care experienced young people during this difficult time, giving them a safe space to voice their concerns, anxiety about the future and to talk about their emotional wellbeing.

In the Inverness area, virtual sessions were delivered for care experienced young people. These provided opportunity to socialise and have a meal together, the sessions were supplemented by one-to-one support, particularly for those experiencing concerns around mental health.

North Lanarkshire CLD Youth Work continued to provide support and activities with the Children's Houses. They have reported a significant increase in children and young people undertaking Youth Awards.

Health and wellbeing

All youth work interventions during the summer provided opportunity to improve health and wellbeing. Outdoor learning and physical activity were key elements of most programmes.

LGBT Youth Scotland continued to deliver all of their youth work services online over the summer holiday period. This included 21 youth groups and one-to-one sessions every week. Young people raised concerns around managing the transition out of lockdown and LGBT Youth Scotland worked to support young people on this issue.

Youth awards

Opportunities for personal learning and achievement have continued across the country through youth work. Thousands of young people across Scotland have been involved in youth awards during the pandemic, ensuring they continue to engage in learning in a fun, supportive environment.

The impact of youth awards and the youth work approach has helped to raise attainment and self-esteem before returning to school after many months of lockdown and isolation. It was also an aid for parents and carers to encourage a personal or family goal.

Youth work and school partnerships: What happens now?



Collaborative (SEIC) to support education recovery. The process will enable participating teachers and youth workers in each location to:

- Build a shared understanding of enablers of and barriers to attainment in their local context, including the perspectives of young people
- Learn more about the range of support that youth work can offer locally to complement school-based provision
- Identify priority areas for collaboration
- Work together to track progress and evaluate the impact of youth work in these areas
- Gather insights about the benefit, challenges, barriers and enablers of working collaboratively
- Develop a shared approach to - and a clear framework for - joint planning and evaluation between youth work and schools in future, focussed on Scottish Attainment Challenge outcomes.

At national level, the youth work community came together to form a Covid-19 Youth Work Recovery Planning Group, supporting a collective and strategic approach to the renewal of youth work. In many school communities, youth workers, teachers and others worked side by side delivering learning for key workers and vulnerable children, identifying families who needed outreach support and drawing on each other's resources to enable access to learning.

For some, these experiences provided a glimpse of what could be possible for the future of youth work and school partnerships.

The driver for this is clear – collaboration towards shared outcomes enriches experiences and accelerates improvement in outcomes for our children and young people.

provides information about how youth work and school partnerships can work together to plan and deliver [Curriculum for Excellence in the Recovery Phase](#), with a continued focus on equity.

This includes helping children and young people reconnect with school, addressing the impact on health and wellbeing, rebuilding effective relationships with parents and continuing to close the poverty-related attainment gap.

YouthLink Scotland is also offering practical support to develop partnerships, through their Youth Work and Schools Partnerships Programme.

In partnership with YouthLink Scotland, Edinburgh City Council LifeLong Learning and Lothian Association of Youth Clubs (LAYC) have developed a collective approach to working with schools.

YouthLink Scotland are also working with the South East Improvement

The message from Scottish Government is clear – collaboration is key to education recovery, and youth work has a strong role to play.

The youth work sector understands its role. Youth work has always been part of the education system, planning and delivering curriculum experiences and outcomes for children and young people – both in schools and in the community.

This includes providing opportunities to develop skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work, delivering approaches such as youth awards to attain and achieve.

The pandemic interrupted, challenged and changed these planned experiences for young people, alongside the impact of school closures. Importantly, as a relationship-based practice, it also disconnected many young people from the vital trusted relationships with youth workers.

So when we talk about education recovery, we need to understand that it is more than the formal curriculum.

To support collaboration [COVID-19 Education Recovery: Youth Work](#)

Working towards Scotland's National Youth Work Strategy (2020-25)

YouthLink Scotland has been engaging young people, youth workers and stakeholders on the co-production of the renewed National Youth Work Strategy (NYWS) for Scotland.

This has involved local and national engagement with over 1000 people face-to-face, including just under 600 young people from a range of backgrounds, as well as continued engagement with our members and key networks.

The National Young People's Group (VOICE), supported by YouthLink Scotland, Young Scot and Scottish Youth Parliament are part of the consultation process for the next strategy. The group co-designed a survey to seek the views of young people.

In total 800 young people completed the survey. This included young people from every local authority area in Scotland:

- 72% were currently participating in youth groups/projects
- 80% felt a youth worker had a positive impact on their life
- The vast majority of young people believed:
- Youth work should be a right for young people in Scotland
- More youth work opportunities available to young people in Scotland
- And that young people in Scotland should have the right to be supported by skilled, competent youth workers who take account of their wellbeing.



When the young people were asked to share their three main priorities for youth work in the next 5 years, overwhelmingly, their main priorities included:

- More youth groups (available across all of Scotland and at different times of day)
- Focus on mental health and wellbeing
- And funding!

In January 2020, over 100 delegates attended a NYWS strategy event in Glasgow, co-designed and co-facilitated by the VOICE who shared the key themes emerging from the engagement events and their survey.

Key Findings from Thematic Events

Last year 25 local and thematic events took place across Scotland. The purpose of these events was to ensure the new national youth work strategy is informed, from the outset, by the experience, knowledge and aspirations of all youth work stakeholders at a local level.

Through the local and thematic events and the VOICE survey, 1400 young people have been consulted and a 1000 representatives from the youth work sector.

Strong key themes have emerged which will hopefully shape our next strategy:

- Funding & Investment
- Mental Health & Wellbeing
- Youth Work – Accessible and Inclusive
- Workforce Development
- Value & Impact of youth work communicated

The Scottish Government has committed to co-developing a new National Youth Work Strategy. The co-production process was paused during the Covid-19 pandemic and we look forward to re-commencing the development of the strategy as soon as possible.



Addressing food poverty

Tackling food insecurity is an ongoing challenge for those who live with the shadow of poverty and low wages. This affects a significant number of children and young people, and puts unacceptable barriers in place to their wellbeing, education and future life path and happiness.

YouthLink Scotland has been working with Scottish Government Tackling Food Insecurities Unit to explore the benefit of working with the youth work sector to address the impacts of food insecurity.

The pilot involved six projects delivered across the school summer holiday period. These took place in Moray, Dundee, South Lanarkshire, East Ayrshire, Falkirk and Scottish Borders. We look at the practical approach taken in the Borders.

TD1 Youth Hub delivered the programme on behalf of the Community Learning and Development Service at Scottish Borders Council. Young people were identified through the crisis support TD1 workers provided during lockdown and from referrals made by the school pastoral team prior to lockdown.

Given the restrictions in place, the programme was delivered mainly online. Activities provided a range of opportunities for young people to develop skills, engage with their peers and improve health and wellbeing. This included STEM sessions, baking, photography and self-care. All young people were offered the opportunity to work towards a Youth Achievement Award or Dynamic Youth Award, to recognise their learning and achievement during the programme. In collaboration with school, TD1 workers will provide ongoing support to allow young people to complete

these awards now they have returned to school. Alongside the activities and group work, all young people were offered one-to-one support via what's app, texts and phone.

Each week a food parcel was delivered to participants. This provided food for both the young person and their family, recipe suggestions based on a weekly theme and included any equipment the family needed to cook the meals.

Digital poverty has meant some young people do not have a home WiFi connection or access to home technology. TD1 workers sought to overcome these barriers by providing a mobile device (Raspberry Pi). Where it has not been possible to connect digitally, TD1 youth workers continued support by phone or on the doorstep during initial lockdown.

Towards the end of the summer programme TD1 workers were able to meet outdoors with those young people who were vulnerable or had struggled with the digital side of the project. Those trusted relationships built with youth workers ensured young people were supported, reducing anxieties and helping prepare for the return to school.

"Over the period my son has been working with TD1, it has had a phenomenal impact on my son, his confidence and self-belief has increased massively. The support provided by TD1 has been first class and for me as a parent having access

to these resources through the food, the STEM kits, the coding project has been so helpful. I would not have been able to provide all these activities to my son. It has also helped him catch up with schoolwork as the coding was something they had been doing at school, but he was struggling. Providing a device and weekly sessions has allowed him to catch up and he is now a lot more confident about the move back to school. I can't thank TD1 Youth Hub enough for all their support to my son."

Parent of young man, aged 13

"I have loved doing all the cooking stuff over the summer, I wasn't really into cooking or that, but over the summer TD1 would drop me stuff to cook with. It was actually really easy as you joined the Zoom session if you wanted to extra help - which I always needed. It was good though as a video was posted online showing you what to do and an ingredients/how to do it sheet was with the pack. I felt really buzzed that I was cooking food which even my parents liked and would eat it too! I even cooked a few times using the same recipe on my own as I was getting really confident with it. I don't know what I would have done all summer without doing this, was highlight of my week every week!"

Participant, aged 15



The impact of community-based universal youth work

The Scottish youth work sector is under unprecedented pressure to demonstrate its impact, this was true before Covid-19 and is even more so today. As universal youth work is voluntary and open to all, this is particularly challenging to research, yet we've always known anecdotally about the transformational impact that youth work has on young people's lives.



In 2015 a critical review of the literature on Universal Youth Work found that:

'Universal youth work has the potential to contribute to a range of important outcomes and achievements for young people, in particular health and wellbeing, educational attainment and employment. The youth work sector need to be more informed about the nature and purpose of their impact through ongoing longitudinal research.' Edinburgh Youth Work Consortium and University of Edinburgh, 2015.

To respond to this need towards the end of 2019, YouthLink Scotland, in partnership with Lothian Association of Youth Clubs (LAYC), Northern Star and University of Edinburgh conducted a study of universal youth work in Edinburgh. This provided an opportunity to build on previous studies of 'The Impact of Community-Based Universal Youth Work in Scotland' and 'The Impact of Community-Based Universal Youth Work in Dumfries and Galloway'.

This time we wanted to understand the impact of universal youth work in a city with the voluntary sector. This study, as with the previous studies, utilised the Transformative Evaluation Methodology (Cooper, 2018).

A group of local youth workers from nine youth groups across Edinburgh were trained as practitioner researchers. They collected 96 stories from young people based on their personal reflections of significant changes to their lives resulting from participation in community-based universal youth work.

These stories are a powerful reminder in the current climate of the unique role that youth work plays in young people's lives.

The 96 stories demonstrate the wide-ranging impacts. They felt safe, valued and supported, made positive choices and were better able to deal with the stresses and challenges of life. This research highlighted the diversity of voluntary youth work provision, whilst still maintaining core elements that generated impacts

in young people. These included building and maintaining positive, respectful relationships, as well providing tailored supported at the right time. They also provided a safe and welcoming space where young people were encouraged to have fun and challenge themselves.

The move to online engagement, as a result of Covid-19, has undoubtedly had a profound impact on how universal youth work is provided. This will be explored in a separate study being conducted about the impact of digitally-based universal youth work with LGBT Youth Scotland, due to be published towards the end of 2020.

What we know from the Edinburgh study is that the commitment of youth workers to provide tailored support, their positive relationships with young people, and knowledge of local communities evidenced in this study, should help to maintain support for young people in difficult times and ease the transition to online engagement.

"It's always been something to keep me out of trouble, and given me somebody to talk to. Becoming a dad-to-be at 14 played a big part to where I am now, with the help of everyone at the [youth club], they were always there to listen and guide me. I always felt welcome and supported and enjoyed coming here every week with a bunch of my friends. And definitely I'm a more confident person because of coming here. And I feel like I have made better life choices. I've chosen a different path from all my old friends, a lot of which are in jail or worse. Even now, whenever I'm going through a rough time I can always pop in for a cuppa and a chat and I always leave feeling ten times better."

Young person, aged 25.





"I think CYC has been a vital lifeline during lockdown. Supportive workers connecting with our young people on chat groups has been fab. I know my son has enjoyed a good few catch up sessions with the staff and it made them feel they weren't alone. Young folk don't always talk to their parents about everything so this gave them an opportunity to speak to other friends and youth workers and feel like they belong."

Parent.



Partnership working was a key element and our partners at Fife Council CLD were intrinsic to the work. We were involved in the delivering of Lockdown Loot bags to young people; it was also a way to doorstep drop and check-in. Packs included a four-week programme, to encourage young people to join us online. This is when we discovered Discord. One of our colleagues in Fife had successfully piloted this platform. After various training and research meetings, locally and nationally, we figured it was worth a bash. We recruited two of our Wellbeing Ambassadors to volunteer, helping us build our server. Within one week, we had 48 members, 7 different channels and a programme of delivery that mirrored our normal delivery week...it worked!



The art of the possible

Cupar Youth Café talks about their response to young people's isolation and the need to keep youth work alive.

Quizzes, online scavenger hunts, bake-it, the CYC Badge Challenge, Earth Day 2020, Meet the Wellbeing Ambassadors, PE with Joe, doorstep drop-off's, the Daily Check-in LIVE, skype chats, song writing challenge, Discord, launching TikTok, 16+ Programme online - these are just some of the things we delivered online over Lockdown.

Cupar Youth Café is part of Cupar YMCA-YWCA based in rural North East Fife. Our busy space, offers young people a safe and young person focussed venue to turn up, drop in, hangout and get involved. Our week consists of at least seven sessions per week. When lockdown hit and our building closed, the team responded quickly to take our youth work online and keep the young people engaged in some form of 'normal'.

We had to act fast. Our organisation already used Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to engage locally, but never did we think that this would be our only way to keep in touch with young people. We had to think creatively about keeping the connections going.

Wellbeing Ambassadors

We began with a private Facebook group for our Wellbeing Ambassadors, who were undertaking in-house training to help support their peers within the project. We met weekly with this group via Skype to find out the best way to keep young people engaged, encourage others to join us and to check-in on some of the young people we were working with. They were an invaluable resource to influencing our work and telling us what was working.

The Daily Check-in

'Live' was a huge aspect of our lockdown response. We were 'live' between 12pm and 2pm, with youth workers responding to mails and comments. Young people came by to 'check-in' every day, just to say hi. They liked to know we were there in real time and it helped to build on our connections.

Moving into summer, we continued to offer our weekly Discord chats, a summer of song writing from our Music Space Project and some weekly fun from the youth work team.

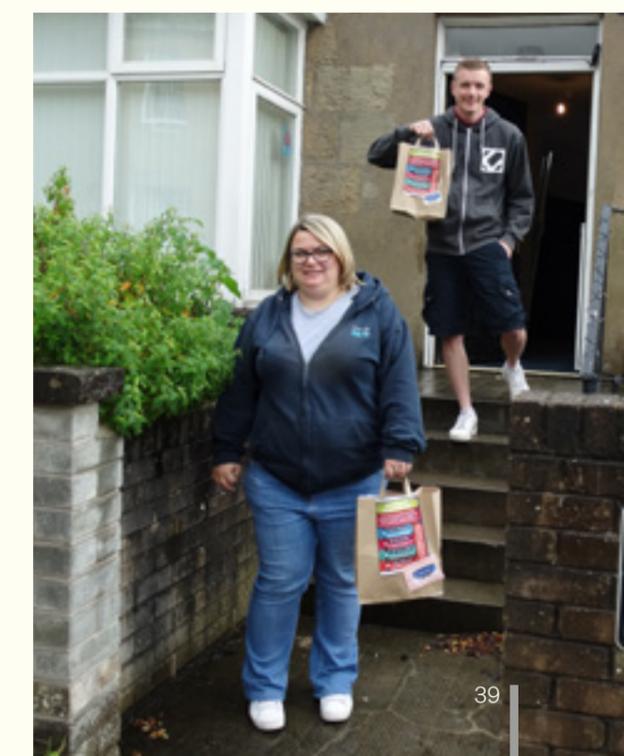
The response from our young people has been inspiring and has made us realise the value and impact it can have on their lives. Trying to be there when you aren't is a challenge but we responded. We learned and we tried as many ways as possible to continue to make our youth work delivery, young person-led and a service that can meet their needs, even during lockdown.

"I feel keeping connections with CYC is important during lockdown because not everyone has strong relationships with those at home or are not used to being isolated. Having a place to discuss struggles with others and distract ourselves from the effects of the pandemic is so uplifting and much needed."

Young Person, aged 16.

"It's been very good keeping connections with CYC, as it keeps some sort of normality in these crazy times. I've most enjoyed the online Music Space, song writing has been very fun."

Young Person, aged 13.





Adapting to the needs of vulnerable youngsters



For East Lothian Council, their response to the global public health emergency was to put the needs of vulnerable young people and the effect on their health and wellbeing at the heart of their services.

Our Children's Hubs, located in each of our main towns, provided support for keyworker and vulnerable children. However, in setting these up we were aware that young people would not necessarily benefit from a service that had such a range of ages. A more tailored service was needed for vulnerable young people.

Sheila Laing, Virtual School Head Teacher for care experienced children and young people in East Lothian, was asked to lead an initiative to provide youth work activities for young people during lockdown. This was to be safe, socially distanced, in the same way as the Hubs with small-sized groups. Referrals were taken from schools and Children's Services, this could be because the young person had low mental health, was at risk of home or placement breakdown or at risk of offending.

Sixty five referrals were made, creating 13 groups and offering individual

sessions for 12 individual young people. These included youth groups in Musselburgh, football in North Berwick, a sports group in Tranent, and an art group in Prestonpans.

Talking about the project, Sheila Laing said: *"There has been exceptional multi-agency working from a wide range of professionals and third sector agencies to provide this youth work provision. People are bending over backwards to support the young people. We started in May and our plan is to continue through the summer and we hope some of it will carry on into the future, giving these young people support in the challenging months ahead."*

One of our young people commented: *"This is the most fun I've ever had"*. Young people also felt the activities helped them to combat loneliness and feel supported.

As well as providing a vital connection for young people, the Hubs and

groups also offered a wider insight into the world of youth work. Members of staff from across council services shared their skills and experience by volunteering in the Hubs. This also included Senior Phase pupils, 50 of whom registered their interest in providing a full week of support in a Hub over the summer holidays. After completing their week, many signed-up for a second experience having enjoyed it so much.

Mark Urwin, East Lothian Council's Acting Active Schools Manager said:

"The highlight is absolutely watching all the staff, senior pupils and young children interacting, enjoying and adapting to the current situation. Whilst there are undoubtedly very serious impacts of Covid-19, we have seen the best of people on a daily basis, a desire to help others, from young to old, very humbling indeed."

Oan Yer Bike

Many people have taken to cycling during lockdown, official figures show almost a 50% rise in journeys by bike since March. This is good news for a greener future. In Dumfries and Galloway, a new street-based project is about to launch, giving young people a platform to take action to protect the future of our planet.

'Oan Yer Bike' will provide the opportunity to explore the challenges of climate change.

A series of themed activities will promote the benefits of:

- active travel
- food security
- nature conservation
- sustainability and environmentally friendly practices

... and encourage young people to become climate activists within their own community, and, beyond.

The project has been co-produced with young people in response to a recent survey of 10-to-25 year olds in Dumfries and Galloway, who felt the area could be improved by better walking and cycling routes and access to good quality natural spaces.

Councillor Adam Wilson, Dumfries and Galloway Council's Young People Champion said:

"We believe that one of the most important ways in which we can help young people participate in climate action is by giving them the confidence, skills and opportunities to make change. We must support them to have their voices heard by local decision makers."

Oan Yer Bike, funded by Scottish Government's Cashback for Communities, will be delivered by our team of detached youth workers in local parks and town centres. Activities include BMXing, team challenges, food tasting, community benefit projects and localised versions of the global initiatives like 'Earth Hour', 'Show the Love' and 'Green Ambassador'. Alongside this, young people will have the opportunity to engage with local decision makers about issues that are affecting them and raise awareness of climate change in the wider community.



Deaf young people at risk of further isolation during this crisis



During this pandemic, we've seen the introduction of face coverings on public transport, in shops and, most recently, secondary school corridors and communal areas. This has created further isolation and anxiety for young deaf people, who are now involved in a new campaign.

At Deaf Action, a charity which supports more than one million deaf people estimated to be living in Scotland, we appreciate that masks are there for protection. However, we are concerned about the impact that 'opaque' face masks can have on deaf people and everyday conversations. They can muffle sound and make lipreading impossible.

With our '[Clear Masks For All](#)' campaign, we offer a solution which keeps people safe, while also allowing for clear communication. We're calling for transparent masks to be made available in educational and medical settings, as well as to anyone who needs them.

Throughout this crisis, we've heard from supporters about the level of anxiety and isolation they experience around face coverings, and the communication breakdowns which can occur as a result. Some deaf people are avoiding public spaces altogether, which has a significant impact on their mental and emotional wellbeing.

With face coverings now mandatory in secondary school corridors and communal areas, we're concerned that deaf young people will experience those same feelings of nervousness and separation. Although they are yet to be introduced in the classroom, we know that social interaction is an important part of a young person's education, and this shouldn't be impacted by preventable communication barriers.

Soon after this policy was announced in August, we heard from deaf student Billy-Jack, who told us that he wanted

to refuse to go into school when he first heard the news:

"Masks are not required in the classroom, but I'll want to chat to friends in between lessons. If there's a room change for a class, then it's in the corridor where I know from others where I'm meant to go."

"It's embarrassing when I can't understand people because of face coverings. This will be the first time talking to my friends where my deafness will be a barrier, when it isn't even my fault."

We then went on to film a [video](#) with Billy-Jack to raise awareness of the problem facing deaf students, which is now available to view on our Facebook and Twitter accounts.

Both Billy-Jack and our CEO Philip Gerrard also appeared on STV News to highlight this problem, and we're pleased to have been able to support Billy-Jack in making sure that his concerns – and those of other deaf young people – are publicised and raised with the Scottish Government.

As our 'Clear Mask For All' campaign continues, we want to see the Scottish Government raise awareness of the communication needs of deaf people as well. Using gestures, written communication and learning basic British Sign Language can also help to remove barriers in conversation.

Members of the public can find out more about the campaign, and how to write to their local MSP about the issue, over on our website:

www.deafaction.org

Wild Learning

Having to cordon off the mountains and lochs and meet young people online from living rooms and kitchen tables, was a head scratching moment as **Robin Jeffery, Delivery Manager of Venture Scotland** explains.

Development and growth is sometimes hard won and often comes from unexpected places, but we were always confident that by braving the chilly waters of the North Sea, helping your team scramble in and out of a rocky coastline, swimming in sea swell and taking a big jump out of your comfort zone, guaranteed the growth that we have to offer.

It might be the simple realisation that you were capable of doing something you had never done before, and maybe never even thought of, or, like the plunge into the North Sea, it could go deeper and kindle a profound realisation that the script inside you which said you had no valuable skills and would never achieve anything, could be re-written and your future changed.

The charity I work for, Venture Scotland, offers an outdoor-based personal development programme. It uses the exploration of the beauty and wildness of Scotland's natural spaces, to nurture and cultivate self-awareness.

I am conscious that Venture Scotland is balanced between two worlds, one is youth work and the other outdoor activities. The natural challenge of outdoor activities in inspiring landscapes balanced by the in-depth, positive, supportive relationships that we cultivate and which are the conduit for personal change.

Once the Covid-19 wave broke and the screws of lockdown tightened, we fell back on our youth work skills and engaged with our participants in what was effectively a digital youth club. Check-ins and reviews as standard but experimenting with film reviews, live home baking, quizzes, Pictionary, hang man - we tried it all!

And on the whole, it worked well, despite the Zoom fatigue. The safe, supportive and engaging space that is central to trust was able to help participants through the lows and provided some much-needed highs. Staff were on hand to provide one-to-one support and challenges were set, to get them outside exploring their local natural spaces.

But this was no substitute for our pre-Covid offer of a progressive, four stage, personal development programme. A programme that uses outdoor adventure activities like climbing, canoeing, gorge walking, wild camping and wilderness residentials in remote bothies to stimulate, inspire and help sustain young people's desire and momentum to change themselves and their lives.

As you might suspect this does not pack down well into a Zoom session.

However, due to the fickleness of the Scottish weather and conditions, thinking creatively on our feet is well practiced by Venture Scotland's Delivery Team. So, we put our thinking helmets on and set to trying to deliver a digital format of the first section of our programme.

In normal times, 'Challenge', the first part of our programme, begins with a beach or forest day where we get to know each other, employing the



classic youth work tools of simple ice breakers, fun games and light touch reviews. The next day we visit a local climbing venue and build on the beach day's introduction to the group and comfort zones.

The next three days are a big step outside of those comfort zones when they are asked to go away with people they have just met, even though by that point they had probably shared some intense experiences on the rock face or solved the conundrum of a human knot. The real core of Challenge though, is the bothy residential. Three days at a remote bothy (an old shepherd's cottage), where we live together, eat together and share the experience together.

Clearly, replicating a beach day, climbing day and a residential online was a tall order. How do we replicate the satisfaction of reaching the top of a climb? How do we recreate the experience of sitting around a dinner table swapping stories in a bothy in the middle of nowhere?

Well, some things were beyond us, but we looked to our outcomes as a guide: positive engagement, trust in relationships and increased awareness of change.

Ice breakers and some games transferred surprisingly easy onto Zoom, others we mined from the wealth of resources and information that lockdown has provided. We had previously delivered The John Muir Award on our outdoor programme and it slotted in nicely to our digital offering. It encouraged our participants to get out and explore their local natural spaces, share their findings and maybe share a bit of themselves too. We knew well that silly games and adventures help to break down barriers and begin the process of building a team.

So we felt hopeful that after four weeks our participants would be ready for the final part of the Digital Challenge; the part that would attempt to model the bothy trip, where our participants could try leaving their old selves behind and experiment with new thoughts and behaviours.

Challenge echoed in our minds.

Challenge had to be there, but a challenge that was engaging and fun. A challenge that brought a team together to solve a problem, maybe to solve a mystery?

And that is what we went with.

Building on the challenges of the past four weeks, participants had to work together to choose and then complete a range of individual and team based challenges which won them clues to help solve the mysterious theft of an Etive heirloom...

A great plot and script were devised by Daniel, our Volunteer Co-ordinator, and staff delivered Oscar-winning performances playing the characters. Trials with existing groups have proved positive so at the very least it has to be better than watching another episode on Netflix!

As the wave of Covid-19 gradually recedes, we are left with new skill sets and old skill sets repurposed. It will be fascinating to see how we can inform and develop our programme once we get back to 'normal', weekly check-ins on Zoom could allow those who find it difficult to travel to have more contact with us and introductory chats on Zoom, may help young people feel more at ease, speaking from their own front room.

Clearly Zoom will not replace fireside reviews, wrapped up warm against the chilly night at our bothy in Glen Etive in the Highlands. But it has given us new tools to refashion old ways and improve our offer to our participants.



The Loch Ness Conquer

- LGBTI youth work in the Highlands

Youth worker **Nikki Nathan Darling** looks back at their journey, from the isolation of rural life to the elation of 'conquering' the Highlands.

I was 12 when I first came out as a lesbian. No mean feat back in 1998 when Section 28 still prohibited schools from "promoting" my "lifestyle", as if my sexuality were a prime-time ad slotted between episodes of the Bill.

I grew up in Elgin, not far from Inverness, but a whole world away from the gay metropolises of Glasgow and Edinburgh. It was through coming out that I first realised the power of youth work. A youth worker in Elgin, whom I still consider a dear friend, put me in touch with [LGBT Youth Scotland](#) (LGBTYS).

I remember physically shaking the first time I picked up the phone to chat to someone, I thought I might be sick from nerves. It was Ann Marriott who answered the call and we spoke for over an hour that night. For the first time since I really got to know myself... I didn't feel alone. LGBTYS only operated in Edinburgh at the time but Ann put me in touch with a pen pal and I was invited to residential from the age of 14. It was only once or twice a year that I ever saw other LGBTI people, but it changed my life.

Joining LGBTYS as a youth worker was a full-circle moment for me.

When I returned to Scotland after two years of pursuing my DJ

career abroad, I worked a couple of sessional youth work jobs, including the precursor to our Inverness Pillar group. When LGBTYS came in to run Pillar, it was completely fitting that Ann was one of the interviewers that day. She was a huge role model for me, inspiring me to be a positive role model for the young people I work with too.

Since I began running Pillar, I have seen us grow from one or two attendees a night to 20+ at our busiest. I rarely sit back and take stock of what we've achieved but when I do, I revisit my teenage self and wonder what they would make of this accomplishment. Young people in rural areas, proudly attending an LGBTI youth group, making friends, growing in confidence. Vitally, almost everyone leaves in a better place than when they first joined.

In recent years, a change has taken place in the Highlands. I remember, years ago, sending packs of resources to schools and no one responding. I couldn't even get someone to answer the phone. Parents were fearful of sending their kids to us in case they were bullied for attending. My own folks had the same fears for me. Now, schools are contacting us!

Highland Pride has been the starkest symbol of progress. When

I started work here, eight years ago, young people said it would "never happen" as "nobody would come, and it wouldn't be safe". Highland Pride arrived in 2018 and last year it became the best-attended Pride in Scotland. What an immensely powerful and joyous testament to all that progress.

I'm proud to say that LGBTYS have worked hard to keep young people engaged with youth work during the pandemic. We run youth groups on Discord, participate in project work with partners and continue to offer one-to-one support. We are now truly a national organisation and, having powered on in defeating Section 28, winning marriage equality, and seeing some rights of trans people improve, we will power on past this pandemic too.

From Edinburgh to Inverness and our local legend who lives in the loch, LGBTYS has conquered. We are all a living story at LGBTYS, youth worker or young person. This is simply mine: The Loch Ness Conquer.

By Nikki Nathan Darling (They/them)



Girls' Brigade Scotland launches At Home with Gracie Bee!



When Covid-19 stopped face-to-face youth work in its tracks the priority for GB Scotland was to keep connected with our Leaders. They in turn, reached out to the girls and young women in local Companies. A large number of our Leaders are NHS workers, teachers, paramedics, they are key workers, as well as being parents, so they needed time to focus on their professional and family lives as a priority.

GBS took a light touch approach to how Companies engaged with their members, supporting them via a series of initiatives:

Let's Talk for those who were at home alone or needed a friendly voice

Let's Pray for a variety of individual and collective situations

Let's Share which was all about sharing ideas and resources, to keep girls connected with GB

Now, amongst the guidance and risk assessments to help prepare Companies for when the time is right to meet again face-to-face, GB Scotland has launched At Home with Gracie programme material for the new 2020-21 session.

At Home with Gracie offers age appropriate material for each section – Explorers, Juniors and Brigaders – which can be used via virtual platforms or as material for girls to work on at home with their families or as a mix of both. There is a separate themed programme for each week, which offers a wide range of badge work options, as well as lots of fun activities.

GB Scotland is also running two great competitions this year.

A STEM based 'Women in Science' competition for all ages and the Jean T Morrison Memorial competition, which invites girls and young women from each section to send

in photographs of their completed tasks. These range from Gracie Bee cupcakes for Explorers, make your own pizza for Juniors and decorate and fill an afternoon tea box for Brigaders. The finalists will each be given a different task and we plan to have a live final via Zoom with guest chefs to judge. Who says you can't have fun in this new norm?

GB Scotland introduced E-enrolment this year with a 60% reduction in membership fees. It's not really about the money, although that's welcome, but about re-engaging with girls, their parents and carers. It's great to see girls being signed up and already enjoying our new material.

Yes, Covid-19 has brought a multitude of challenges to everyone but in GB Scotland we are embracing new technology and methods of working for programmes, training, meetings and so much more. Our priority is to return to face-to-face youth work when it is safe to do so and we will support Leaders in whatever decision they make about when the time is right for them.

What is guaranteed is that things will not simply go back to the way they were. The way forward will be different but it's an exciting challenge for GB Scotland and one we plan to engage and develop in the months and years ahead.



Youth work in Highland brings a sense of purpose and hope

Just before Easter, most of Highland Council's youth workers were no longer providing most of their crucial services. Eighty five per cent of contracted youth workers and nearly 100% of its sessional staff were furloughed. But despite this, they have all been helping their communities in different ways.



In April the Scottish Youth Parliament, YouthLink Scotland and Young Scot partnered to deliver [LockdownLowdown](#) – a survey of young people from across Scotland on their concerns about Covid-19.

One in 11 respondents to the survey came from Highland. The findings coincided with the experiences and growing concerns of the remaining core youth work team.

- mental health and wellbeing issues, especially anxiety
- disruption to education and socialising impacting on outcomes, including those young people missing from education
- fears for the future (life, education and employment)
- how for some children and young people being at home has put them at potentially greater risk of harm
- digital exclusion (phone, computer, broadband, social media) which for too many is disempowering.

These results and intelligence gathered on the ground informed and guided youth workers towards positive interventions.

"Bug-in Bags" was an early initiative for care experienced young people (CEYP) who received packs delivered personally comprising food, essentials, toiletries and activities. Contact often led to hearing about financial worries and enabled signposting to partners for help with bills and staying connected digitally.

Following a successful application to Moray Firth Radio's Basic Essentials Family Grant, adult learning coordinators and youth workers identified and engaged with about 60 families with children and young people aged from new born to 18. They co-created individualised packs with the youngsters – games, stationery, top-ups and, inspirationally in a handful of cases, materials and equipment for young people looking forward to starting college in the autumn.

Our youth worker in Dornoch, alongside a couple of community groups, put together and delivered over 500 activity packs for all children at the Academy and its three associated primary schools.

Green Health packs, with funding from Leader, were also delivered to hundreds of families across Highland. The aim was to bring families, who have struggled with mental health during lockdown, a little closer to each other and to the outside natural world, making positive differences to confidence.

The core youth work team facilitated twice weekly digital workshops for three weeks during the summer. These covered issues identified by young people including: worries and anxieties; managing stress; gaming and internet safety; managing conflict at home and the practicalities of returning to school.

A variety of virtual platforms have been widely used and their potential developed:- weekly Houseparties for CEYP, a Facebook chat group for LGBTQ+ young people living north of Inverness, and Skype sessions complementing phone calls, email, social media. Also messaging for young people on Activity Agreements in the Dingwall area resulting in the gaining of multiple qualifications and college acceptances.

Youth workers have stepped up and beyond during this pandemic by listening, supporting, and advocating. They are committed to carrying on the journeys with young people towards whatever future comes along.

Opinion

– Scouts Scotland

Having survived through two world wars and many testing times in the last 100 years, one of our oldest youth work organisations has succumbed to the global pandemic. Katie Docherty, Chief Executive of Scouts Scotland talks of the financial blow to her organisation and looks to the future of Scouting.

Like many voluntary organisations the pandemic hit Scouts Scotland hard. When we closed our outdoor education and residential centres and cancelled our events at the end of March, we knew that we would have a financial shortfall. Despite doing everything we could to stem our losses, we have had to go through a restructuring process which saw around 50% of our staff being made redundant.

Which is why we joined organisations across the outdoor education sector to campaign to help save Scotland's outdoor residential centres. The campaign launched on 8th September and in less than six weeks more than 23,500 people had signed the petition. 35 different organisations had supported the campaign including Girlguiding Scotland and YouthLink Scotland, and cross party MSPs took part in a debate in the Scottish Parliament.

The Scottish Government have now announced a £2 million emergency fund for residential outdoor centres, which we are hopeful will allow highly skilled outdoor staff to work with schools to deliver meaningful outdoor education and also pay for essential fixed costs. While it is short of the £3 million the sector needs, it's a promising start and shows the Scottish Government values residential experiences.

We are also looking to the future as positively as we can. We know that lockdown has been particularly hard on young people.

Mental health has been a priority for the Scouts for a long time, but we know that this will be crucial for young people who have been isolated for so long. Some of our Scouts have been working with YouthLink Scotland and a



number of partners to develop a free online mental health resource for youth workers.

Embracing new technology will be great for the Scouts, we have volunteers and young people in all parts of the country from Shetland to Berwick, getting them altogether and ensuring no one is left out was always a logistical challenge. Now that everyone is used to having a Zoom meeting, we can get more people together, more easily. It won't replace face to face meetings, and we know that not everyone can access digital technology, but this will present a good opportunity for groups.

We have refocused and extended our strategy to look at how we help our groups and young people recover from the pandemic. We have been able to use funding from the Gannochy Trust to create local funds for Scout groups in areas of deprivation, where the impact of the pandemic has been felt the most.

We might have all been in this journey together but it hasn't been felt the same by different parts of society, we know these groups will need more support.

Young people have been through so much. We can't wait to get back together safely, to continue to give them the fun and friendship that Scouts is famed for but also to support them to achieve their full potential.

Youth work will be a vital part of the recovery of young people, we hope that the funds are made available to ensure we can be there to help change lives.



Celebrating the great indoors

We Scouts are famed for our love of all things outdoors but when the lockdown came that had to change. We had to embrace a new way of supporting both our 40,000 young people and our 12,000 adult volunteers, all without being able to get together face-to-face or heading off to camp. So what do you do, that's right, take the great outdoors, indoors.

The impact of lockdown and isolation has had a detrimental impact on young people in Scotland. We knew Scouts were missing out on seeing their friends, and vitally missing much needed fun. Our volunteers have been amazing, many adapted really quickly and began holding online meetings, everything from scavenger hunts to cook-alongs. Our young people told us that the online meetings were often the only time that they were connecting with people from outside of their household.

In April groups began running their own camps at home. In one month alone more than 2,000 young people and their families took part in online camps which also included challenges like den building, learning new skills (such as how to filter water) and online campfires. We even had families join in who have never been part of Scouts before. It gave people a chance to connect as a community when we were all still isolated at home.

Other groups took their activities offline. Recognising that not everyone in their group might be able to access groups online, and also that the volunteers busy with dealing with working and home-schooling, might not be able to commit to a weekly online meeting. They created "at home" activity packs for their young people.

One of the best things to come out of this was how much our young people wanted to help other

people. Making a difference in the community has always been core to the Scouts. It was difficult to think of how we could still do this, while also keeping our young people safe. One idea that came was around how we could help reduce social isolation of people living in care homes. The "Care for Care Homes" campaign saw Scouts across the UK carrying out over 10,000 acts of kindness like painting kindness rocks, sending posters and cards.

Morven Bayton – Scouts Scotland MSYP on Scouting through the lockdown.

"As quite a sociable person I've found most aspects of lockdown a challenge, particularly not meeting people face to face. School has also been difficult because, let's just say, focus isn't my strong point when there's so many distractions!"

"Scouting has been an amazing support throughout Lockdown with our group quickly adapting to meeting via Zoom and using it as an opportunity to focus on individual badge work. It has also provided, for me at least, some small sense of normality as the Zoom was at a similar time as our meeting before lockdown. It's even given me the opportunity to grow some of my leadership skills as I've been more involved in helping other groups as a young leader. This has included running different games and activities, and, occasionally, reminding our leaders that they've forgotten to switch their microphones on!"

Taking wellbeing online

See Me is Scotland's programme to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination. At the heart of their mission are youth champions and youth workers, which means young people are a fundamental part of this movement for better mental health.



Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic See Me has been developing new ways to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination online. At the same time, we have also been working to support volunteers in different ways, as the traditional methods of volunteering stopped and the young champions involved in the programme faced increased stress from the pandemic.

See Me's youth workers, with our youth champions, designed a range of different digital activities, including creating an online magazine. When the impact the pandemic was having on young people's mental health became clearer, they adapted to less formal volunteer activities, focussing on digital catch-ups and fun events. These included quizzes, game nights, wellbeing check-ins, even having an online chat session while one of the youth workers dyed their hair blue and green!

Outside of engagement with the youth champions, the youth workers alongside the See Me team have been leading on two pilot projects, creating new digital resources to get young people speaking about mental

health and learning more about stigma and discrimination.

See Me has created the first module of our new See Me Toolkit, a pack designed to give people an understanding of mental health stigma and discrimination and knowledge of how to tackle it in any area.

Module one is an interactive digital pdf which was piloted in June with 60 pupils from nine schools across North Ayrshire. See Me youth workers, youth champions and the staff team supported teachers and pupils through the digital pilot, creating the new infrastructure needed for online training.

To help all young people get involved, including those who might not be confident posting, many of the questions just required them to post emoji reactions back, to see if they agreed, disagreed or were unsure about statements. The activities have different ways for people to engage, such as using text chats, polls and quizzes, as well as voice and video chat.

During this period See Me also received funding from YouthLink

Scotland to create online mental health stigma and discrimination training specifically for the youth work sector.

Six activities were developed, including some which were specifically tailored to the pandemic on themes such as social isolation, online communication and Covid-19 related anxiety.

All of these activities were connected to the development of a new LINK model. The model was developed in response to people saying they didn't know how to support others with their mental health.

- Listen effectively
- Introduce non-stigmatising language
- Notice how someone is feeling
- Keep yourself safe and ask for help if you need to.

These activities were delivered to six different youth organisations, giving them session plans so that they could run the sessions themselves with their young people and peers.

You can find out more [here](#).

Youth Scotland Action Fund made immediate impact for community youth groups during Covid-19 outbreak

At the very start of the pandemic Youth Scotland's Action Fund was established to help youth groups and youth workers meet the needs of young people in response to Covid-19. A Micro Grant fund supported by some key funders: STV Children's Appeal, The Robertson Trust and Gannochy Trust. They reallocated existing funds to meet the emerging needs of youth groups.

Youth Scotland was able to launch the Youth Scotland Action Fund on 25 March this year. Within the hour of the fund launching, About Youth, a member group based in the Calders in Wester Hailes, Edinburgh, was successfully funded.

In their application, About Youth said:

"We are already getting feedback from young people saying that they are finding the temporary closure of youth facilities difficult. As a result, we want to try a variety of different methods to engage young people online... Currently we are looking at delivering live streams, film, book and music clubs, coordinated online games tournaments and group quizzes and challenges."

Speaking to Alan Ross from About Youth, he told us about how the fund made a difference:

"The difference this fund has made, is it's about giving us additional resource that gives us what young people need, and it's easier to adapt to that than our existing funding can be."

"By aligning it with digital youth work, it gives the tools to bring it together and to enhance our meaningful contact with young people. In general, at the moment, the needs of young people are not being well represented – this funding allows us to make sure they are represented."

We asked how quickly the funding will make a difference:

"Many parents having been in touch to say it has made a huge impact. There is a group of girls aged 14-to-16 who have engaged really well, and some of the best sessions have been when we have all sat together to colour in, and ended up chatting about what the inspirational messages mean to them, what the clubs will look like when we re-open, and even planning a trip abroad in 2021!"

While the fund has closed for now, they were able to support 131 youth groups with 167 grants totalling over £80,000. Through these groups, over 12,000 young people in 30 local authorities across Scotland

have benefitted from support and the onward impact to their local community.

Youth work evolves. It's ironic but pleasing that in a socially distant world that we find ourselves communicating more than ever – especially in our revamped digital training and youth awards programmes, and often in digital spaces that have previously been perceived as the domain of our young people more than us. Youth work evolves but the relationship remains at the heart of it. We are proud of not only the scale of response from the youth work sector, but at the immediacy with which it has happened. The case to #InvestInYouthWork is stronger than ever.



Govan youth workers replace pandemic fear with hope

From one-to-one support on mountain bikes to feeding the community, a youth project at the heart of Govan stared Covid-19 down and provided the care and support to get young people through this uncertain time.

Govan Youth Information Project (GYIP) was formed in 1994 with the aim of delivering youth work to young people within the Glasgow Govan area.

When Covid-19 hit, it affected many of young people who rely on our services, including our Easter Holiday programme, which offers great youth work and helps address holiday hunger and food poverty.

Like many other youth work organisations during this time, it's been our partnerships that have delivered that crucial youth work response. Working with The Govan Community Food Provision with Govan Housing Association and The Salvation Army, we provided meal deliveries five days a week in five areas. In this time we distributed 8,400 lunches as well as essential hygiene products, Easter eggs, surplus food and more.

Realising Covid-19 was going to be a prolonged affair, we engaged with young people by distributing arts and craft packs with our lunches, posted links to Zoom sessions and hosted quizzes with Just Eat vouchers on social media.

Feedback from the young people indicated they were bored of playing consoles, so we provided 300 family night packs, consisting of board games, pizza, juice and snacks, so families could spend quality time together. We also purchased lots of outdoor toys and delivered to our members.

Recognising as the weeks progressed and the implications of lockdown on young people's mental

health, we purchased two mountain bikes so we could offer social distanced one-to-one support and distributed football bags with balls, water bottles and mental health information.

On the 15th of June we began our street work initiative after a successful grant application to the CashBack Youth Work Fund and although only in its infancy, the street workers have been successful in making contact with a number of young people, building relationships, trust and mutual respect through regular contact.

Being only a small voluntary organisation with three full-time staff has allowed us to be innovative and agile, compared with many statutory organisations remaining furloughed.

What we do together, we do better. Govan Housing Association provided personnel to deliver lunches and tablets with data. Unlockemployment shadowed our service, offering jobs and benefit advice. Head teachers

identified pupils and families needing support. Make do Grow made age specific arts and crafts packs and the Green Brigade provided Easter eggs and much more.

Financially we have been fortunate with many funders contacting us after hearing about our food provision. By documenting our work on our social media platforms, we gained praise from our elected members, MP Chris Stephens, MSP Humza Yousaf and Councillor Richard Bell as well as many residents and partners.

While Covid-19 has had negative impacts for our young people, community and partners have rallied together to offer support, which has been tremendous and GYIP have been happy to play a part in this.



Combating anxiety in a time of trauma and disruption



According to The Prince's Trust in Scotland thirty two per cent of 16-to-25 year olds say they are "overwhelmed" by feelings of panic on a daily basis, and a third insist that everything they have worked towards is now "going to waste."

These figures are a cry for help from those that need it most.

Youth work is paramount to combating the devastating impact of lockdown and Covid-19 for the future generations.

Working in partnership, The Prince's Trust and mental health charity Mindset have adapted and developed their unique Wellbeing Service in Glasgow to ensure no one is left behind as the world takes on a whole new landscape.

As part of the Wellbeing Service, The Prince's Trust and Mindset regularly come across young people suffering from anxiety and panic attacks. For many, these symptoms present a huge barrier to progress in life, if they are not treated effectively.

Rather than just offer a safe space and someone to talk to, Mindset provides specific techniques to help manage anxiety and panic attack triggers.

In the six months before lockdown the service had almost 50 young

people engaged in one-to-one support, 93 in group sessions, with a total of 107 young people referred to the service. That number is set to increase significantly as the country starts to see a return to normality.

A whole new group of young people will need support going forward. For some, this will be as a result of trauma suffered through the pandemic.

Throughout lockdown, the Wellbeing Service, which forms part of a project run by The Prince's Trust Scotland and SAMH, funded by The National Lottery Community Fund, has ensured that the education and development of our children and young people remains top of the agenda. Not once has it closed, nor has their support wavered.

Young people have already reaped the benefits of the support mechanism, with 75% being better able to self-manage their mental health and look towards a more positive future after engaging with the service.

Stuart Fyfe, Chief Executive of Mindset, said:

"As the world adapted to lockdown, Mindset focused on training The Prince's Trust staff to better understand mental wellbeing and the factors that impact it. We provide both group and valuable one-to-one support all year round, even throughout lockdown, which has been a lifeline for many young people, in what has been a challenging and for many, a traumatic time."

Over the coming weeks and months youth work can play a significant role in supporting Scotland's children and young people to safely and successfully transition back into full-time education or take their next steps in training and employment.

Investing in the right mental wellbeing support delivered by partners that young people trust will be critical.



For Girlguiding Scotland the value of youth work has never been clearer

“Having the support of my fellow guiding members has helped me massively by just having someone to chat to. Staying connected and having that support brings a sense of community in these hard times.” Girlguiding Scotland Speak Out Champion, Erin Waldie, aged 18.

The past few months have been really difficult, especially for our young members. Recent research by Girlguiding revealed nearly a third of girls and young women in Scotland feel lockdown had a negative impact on their mental health – amidst high levels of worry, stress and loneliness.

The closure of schools had a major impact on all girls and young women. Many reported they missed seeing their friends and learning. The majority of younger girls (aged 4-to-10) missed their teachers and teaching assistants (81%), and over half missed playtime with their friends (60%).

Girlguiding Scotland Speak Out Champion, Ella, age 17, said:

“The results of the survey show that many girls and young women are experiencing poor mental health right now and it’s vital that young people know where to go for support. It can be easy to forget about mental health during a crisis like this as we focus on the physical effects of the virus, but having services like helplines and online resources easily accessible make a huge impact.”

During these times of uncertainty, Girlguiding Scotland has been continuing to work alongside our dedicated volunteers to offer exceptional experiences and support for girls and young women.

As an organisation, we’ve supported this new way of guiding by developing a range of new activities to get stuck in to. In May, Girlguiding Scotland launched the Guiding at Home Challenge – a weekly online challenge with activities

for children and adults. We also launched the brand new Tri Sports – Individual Challenge, focused on the 2020 ‘Be Well’ theme from the Girlguiding programme. The challenge encourages girls to get active, try something new and aims to boost their physical and mental wellbeing.

Girlguiding also launched #AdventuresAtHome, an online hub of activities open to members, children and young people across the UK to help them continue to have fun, build resilience and support their wellbeing during this time. It features a wellbeing package with helpful resources to support young people to deal with their emotions during this time.

Like with many other charities, the coronavirus crisis presents serious funding issues in a sector that was already calling for more investment. Over the past few months the value of youth work has never been more clear, and we need to keep making the case for the role of youth work in the education recovery plan.

As lockdown comes to an end, Girlguiding Scotland remains true to our mission of empowering girls and young women to find their voice and to discover the best in themselves. We will always be here for girls and young women, offering them a safe space to have fun, find friendship, taken on new challenges and have adventure.



Now is the time to listen

Venture Trust’s Director of Operations Mike Strang: Young people’s voices need to be at the heart of youth work recovery.



For those vulnerable young people who were already struggling and furthest away from the labour market before the coronavirus crisis, inequalities are likely to get worse before they get better.

At Venture Trust – like many other youth organisations – we have adapted and continue to adapt our support for young people in response and recovery from the pandemic.

Many young people referred to Venture Trust are often dealing with one or more of the following: poverty, alcohol and drug addiction, poor family relationships, mental health issues, conflict with the law, learning and housing issues. The majority also have had little or no work experience. It is this group that will be disproportionately affected by the fallout of the pandemic.

Our personal development programme for young people helps them set out and achieve their goals, grow in confidence and stability. We help participants to work on skills such as establishing trust, personal boundaries, consequential thinking,

problem-solving, dealing with challenging situations, responsibility and accountability. These life skills form the building blocks before long-term unemployment and the issues this brings can be tackled.

We will need to continue to adapt how we deliver our youth work in line with Government guidelines. Previously we combined one-to-one support in communities with group development delivered in the Scottish outdoors. Limits on group sizes, physical distancing and travel mean we now work with smaller numbers and use greenspaces like parks, gardens, river walks, hills, and beaches that are easily and safely accessible to young people.

The digital support we have developed during lockdown will be blended into our model. However, there are significant challenges to digital support with many young people telling us they don’t have adequate access to data and hardware. To address this, we are tackling data poverty in partnership with other organisations.

We will sustain our support when restrictions are eased by restarting our innovative Change Cycle employability programme with our delivery partners The Bike Station and Bike for Good. In the meantime, our employability team continue supporting young people through digital workshops and physical distanced face-to face meetings to help them into jobs, training, study and volunteering.

An [independent evaluation of the programme](#) from the first three years shows with the appropriate and sustained support young people from deprived areas can find a path that is right for them.

Emerging from an unprecedented time, the voices of young people need to be amplified and at the heart of Scotland’s recovery response. Reports and research have shown Scotland’s young people were not part of the conversations and decisions made when the coronavirus crisis took hold and lockdown was enforced. Now is the time to listen.





A journey to better mental health

Using the power of storytelling, one Lothian charity has created a unique resource for BME young people.



At Passion4Fusion, their community engagement and support empowers young people and their families to improve their health and wellbeing in a safe and non-judgemental environment. They reach out to families and the wider BME community to identify issues that affect African communities and work them to find solutions that will support integration into Scottish society while contributing to community cohesion.

As part of YouthLink Scotland's Heids Together project, the charity have created a new resource that explores mental health and storytelling for BAME young people. The project was organised according to key themes, identified through consultation with young people living through the Covid-19 lockdown and beyond.

The project was delivered by a group of young peer leaders, whose lives have been impacted by mental health. They were trained in storytelling and have engaged with other young people about their experiences of mental health and coping mechanisms during the pandemic.

With their training, the young people utilised storytelling, acting and illustrations to explore the issues of mental health and Covid-19. Cultural or religious barriers to discussing or confronting mental health concerns were also explored, such as anxiety sometimes being referred to as demonic possession. [Watch their film.](#)

This fantastic story was written by BME young people in Edinburgh in order to raise awareness of the



issues they face that may cause stress. Having cultural barriers plays a big part of how mental health is perceived and whether they seek help or not.

Mental health problems are more common among BME communities than the general population yet providing culturally sensitive mental health services is something that is hard to come by.

An excerpt from ['Wise Milton'](#), a mental health story by young people inspired by the effects of the pandemic.

The book centres round an old man called Milton who has left his village because of a virus. He meets young people who give him water and are curious to speak to him about his experiences and share their own feelings.



“Can I ask you a question too?” Derek pops his head out “of course child”, Milton answered, Derek with a shy voice started to speak. “I am going to high school in the next village and I am really worried about making new friends, I fear that everyone will know everyone and may be they already have their own friend groups and I feel like no group will want to accept me. My mum has told me that it is ok but she doesn't really understand my anxiety”.

Ethan jumped in to share his experience of high school. “I am not going to lie”, he said. “When I first went to high school I didn't have friends straight away. I also didn't have the nice branded trainers that most of my peers had, I was bullied for almost three years. It brought my mental health down and became depressed, dropped out of football and always enjoyed going back home after school because in school I felt threatened by everyone. This led me to not get involved in activities in school because of fear of the bullies. Having a strong relationship with

my mum who would encourage me through the hard times helped me a lot. I also had a few friends who genuinely liked me for who I was not what I had. Through this experience I have learnt to be a good friend and good listener to others”.

“Boys and girls”, Milton said, “see, I have just come from a far, far away land, and I am still travelling, first I want you to know that making good friends isn't easy. Look at this big tree, it took a long time of watering, nurturing and love to grow to this extent, so are friendships. The best relationships take time to get stronger. Secondly, it's very important that you stay true to yourself. Don't change your behaviour so that other people accept you. If you stay true to yourself then like-minded people will be attracted to you and then those people will become your friends. In the meantime, try your best not to offend anyone and be friendly. Oh I better get a move on to the next village, it's getting a little late”.

Supporting Scotland's youth work sector during the pandemic

The Covid-19 outbreak represents a massive challenge for the youth work sector.

YouthLink Scotland is working with the sector to help overcome these obstacles by providing guidance on how to move your youth work offer online, as well as signposting vital information and services to help navigate the challenges posed by Covid-19.

Find the latest advice and guidance at
www.youthlinkscotland.org

#YouthWorkChangesLives



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