



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

GUIDANCE

Youth work services guidance: coronavirus

Guidance on how to safely increase operations of youth services.

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Introduction

This guidance is for those involved in the delivery of youth work services across the voluntary sector, local authorities, or in partnership in Wales. It aims to support them to safely plan their services for an increase or decrease of operations on a phased basis, and as the public health context allows. For the purpose of this document, youth work services are those using **youth work approaches** to ‘enable young people to develop holistically, working with them to facilitate their personal, social and educational development, to enable them to develop their voice, influence and place in society and to reach their full potential’ (**National Occupational Standards**). It has been developed in the context of our **strategic aims** for youth work in Wales. This guidance is of a general nature and should be treated as a guide. In the event of any conflict between any applicable legislation (including the health and safety legislation) and this guidance, the applicable legislation shall prevail.

Where your service is based in Wales you must follow the guidance issued by the Welsh Government even if your head office or other services are in other parts of the UK.

This guidance should be read alongside the **current restrictions** in place in Wales.

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Our updated **Coronavirus Control Plan** can be read for an overall view of what changes are planned to take place, taking into account public health conditions. The plan which takes account of vaccination and the dominant Kent variant, sets out how we plan to move through the alert levels and how we can help people and businesses plan for the future, as we continue our careful approach to unlocking the current restrictions.

We will revisit this plan after vaccination has been offered to all eligible adults – currently scheduled for the end of July – when more evidence and data about its impact will be available.

Scope

Any decision to increase or decrease operations is up to, and at the risk of, each organisation providing youth work services, be they voluntary sector or local authority led. While this document offers a useful guide, any decisions taken must be consistent with applicable legislation, including that related to **COVID-19**, relevant statutory guidance documents, and in line with your own organisation's policies and procedures.

This guidance is not exhaustive, nor directive, but offers high-level principles to consider. It is a living document that will be updated as required, should the **public health** context and latest government guidance change.

This document is intended to be inclusive and reflective of the contributions made by both voluntary sector and local authority youth work services. If in doubt, references to the workforce should be interpreted as including volunteer and paid professionals.

Further, and as with all services aimed at supporting young people, their voice and participation is key. This document does not therefore seek to replace the need for all youth work services to engage with and incorporate the voice and views of the young people they work with in their developing plans for service provision.

This guidance should be read alongside the supporting information in Annex A

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which provides a checklist to support planning.

Background

Youth work services deliver vital preventative interventions and have a significant contribution to make to the post-COVID-19 recovery and reconstruction efforts in Wales. Offering young people safe spaces, strengthened relationships with their peers and trusted adults, and championing their rights and responsibilities, youth work helps young people build confidence, develop skills, and maintain their physical and mental health. Quality youth work practice and approaches role model the expectations and behaviours identified in the Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015), contribute to the well-being goals and deliver in line with the sustainable development principles. Having pioneered new approaches to youth work delivery through outreach and digital means since lockdown began, and supported young people in a range of settings, this guidance now seeks to support youth work services with their planning for a phased increase of COVID-19 secure operations in line with the current public health context.

Informing planning and the decision-making process

An identified need for an increase in youth work services is not the only determining factor in assessing and agreeing if an increase in operations can be delivered. In fact, this decision is much more likely to be informed by the types of activities involved, the service users and in what setting the activities take place. As a result, in making any decision about increasing operations you may need to consider and reflect the requirements set out in other guidance documents and the relevant legislation governing their delivery. This includes consideration of the age group your service is likely to support, and the current regulations relating to that age group. You may find there are substantial differences between what is appropriate for 11-17 year olds compared to the 18-25 age bracket. Youth work services in Wales are diverse and it is not possible to accurately reflect or account for all of the various delivery models with a one size

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fits all approach.

For example, a youth work service's normal or preferred delivery model may include sports, be based in a community centre, or involve group work with young people over a certain number. In these instances, in addition to this guidance, you would also need to consider sector-specific guidance and social distancing advice:

Sport, recreation and leisure: guidance for a phased return

Guidance for the safe use of multi-purpose community centre

Social distancing (The law, guidance and frequently asked questions)

What appears in the following section is therefore not exhaustive and will depend on the type of service you intend on delivering. It can, however, help you to adapt your delivery model, by directing you to relevant guidance documents governing different sectors and contexts, helping you determine what may be right for you. Any decision to increase operations must carefully balance the risks of increased transmission with those associated with inaction or non-delivery of activity with young people, including the most vulnerable or marginalised among them.

Who makes the decision about an increase of operations?

In the current public health context, and at this stage of lockdown easements, voluntary sector and local authority youth work services are individually responsible for taking decisions about any increase of operations of the services they deliver. They are also responsible for decision making about the increased use of any settings, centres or buildings they propose delivery from, and which belong to them. In being responsible for making these decisions they are also liable for them and should therefore ensure they are familiar with any and all legislative/health and safety requirements placed on them, that they have taken steps to meet these requirements, and that their proposal represents COVID-secure delivery.

Any youth work services using a Community Centre space would need to consider this guidance and liaise with the Community Centre Manager, who would have to give regard to the guidance on Community Centres and consider the activity being proposed. Those services hiring private sector spaces to deliver activities can do so, providing the organisation they are hiring from is operating in line with their own sector-specific guidance and overarching social distancing requirements and the activity they propose is COVID-secure. Any youth work services can deliver outdoor outreach for the most vulnerable individuals, providing they meet overarching social distancing requirements and deliver in a COVID-secure way.

Operational guidance for youth work services

Youth work services are diverse and may look even more different as lockdown eases. This diversity requires organisations to consider their proposed delivery models in the context of their unique circumstances, as well as alongside any obligations placed on them as part of COVID-19 restrictions or legislation, to ensure they are operating safely. Due to this diversity, this document will not offer a one-size fits all approach. Instead it attempts to draw together key areas you may wish to consider as a minimum to help ensure your proposals are COVID-19 secure, and provides a checklist to support you in your planning (Annex A).

Engaging with young people, the workforce and partners

Clear communication and engagement, and adopting participatory approaches where appropriate, will be key to understanding how young people are feeling and what they want to see as part of any planned increase of operations. It can help them better understand the science behind COVID-19 and their role in reducing the risk of transmission. Furthermore, once a delivery model has begun to be established, good engagement will help in communicating any additional steps you are taking to safeguard their well-being, as well as in ensuring that any new rules or procedures are well-understood. This might include clarifying how young people can register their interest to attend, and how you will respond to young people just turning up, both of which will help you better plan your offer

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and ensure staff availability. It will also help ensure they are aware of what procedures or steps will be taken if someone falls ill.

These principles should be adapted with other stakeholders to ensure their voices are heard and that they feel part of the planning and decision-making process, including staff, volunteers, managers, trustees, and other key partners.

You should engage and agree cross-organisation protocols if facilities are shared with multiple partners. Lastly, you should liaise with relevant insurance providers to ensure appropriate cover is in place and it is up to each individual organisation to take responsibility for this.

Key responsibilities and core principles

It is everyone's responsibility to understand their role in helping reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19, youth work services should take into account any of their **responsibilities as employers**. Businesses that are permitted to operate, or premises that are allowed to open, must do so safely in a way that complies with the COVID Regulations, in addition to other legal obligations imposed on employers (such as health and safety legislation).

Youth work services may also have a duty of care to volunteers to ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, they are not exposed to risks to their health and safety and are afforded the same level of protection as employees and the self-employed – see government information on **coronavirus volunteering and how to help safely**. Employers and organisations who have volunteers and other individuals who are clinically **extremely vulnerable** (formerly shielding) and those at **increased risk** should ensure that they continue to follow the government's **advice on social distancing**.

Any reopening plans should also be consistent with core public health COVID guidance regarding health, hygiene, and social distancing, and **safe workplace guidelines**, to ensure employees and colleagues are safe to return to work.

Anyone with control of non-domestic premises (such as a community centre, village or community hall) has legal responsibilities, these may arise under

health and safety legislation or duties of care. They should take reasonable measures to ensure the premises, access to it, and any equipment or substances provided are safe for people using it, so far as is reasonably practicable. Providers of youth work services will also need to consider what legal responsibilities they may have under the COVID regulations in undertaking activities in other spaces, including the outdoors or hired venues. Providers will need to undertake suitable and sufficient risk assessments and to put in place measures that comply with the COVID regulations.

Risk assessment

To help decide which actions to take prior to increasing operations, a COVID-19 risk assessment should be completed, taking account of the core guidance on social distancing and the points set out below – see guidance on [completing a risk assessment](#).

Those responsible for a youth work services setting or activity should undertake their own risk assessment, taking account of any guidance relevant to their specific activity or sector.

Social distancing and determining capacity

Measures should be in place to ensure all users of settings follow the up-to-date guidelines on [staying safe and social distancing](#). You should consider and set out the mitigations you will introduce in your risk assessment.

If considering opening a physical premises, the size and circumstance of the building will determine the maximum number of people and the number of activities that can be accommodated while also facilitating social distancing. In defining the number of people that can reasonably follow distancing guidelines, the total floor space as well as likely pinch points and busy areas should be taken into account (e.g. entrances and exits) and where possible alternative or one-way routes introduced.

A risk assessment should determine the maximum capacity of a setting, hall or

hire space while being able to maintain social distancing according to the relevant guidelines. It should also identify points of high risk in the building and mitigating actions to address the identified risks. Those planning the increase of operations should also consider what changes might be needed to enable safe access to and use of the building. These may include:

Making use of multiple exit and entry points to introduce a one-way flow in and out of the premises, with appropriate floor markings or signage. Any changes to entrances, exits and queues should take into account the need to make reasonable adjustments for those who need them, such as people with disabilities.

Managing the arrival and departure times of different groups so as to reduce the pressure at exits and entrances.

Queue management – the flow of groups in and out of the premises should be carefully controlled to reduce the risk of congestion. It may be necessary to introduce socially distanced queuing systems.

Use of outdoor spaces – activities taking place outdoors are far safer than those taking place indoors and, for this reason, organisations should utilise outdoor areas wherever possible in line with our **current restrictions**. When delivering youth work services outside you must ensure that you follow the guidance relevant for your activity and ensure social distancing protocols are in place at all times. The **sports, recreation and leisure** guidance may support your planning in this instance.

Youth work services are diverse and may look even more different as lockdown eases. This diversity requires organisations to consider their proposed delivery models in the context of their unique circumstances, as well as alongside any obligations placed on them as part of COVID-19 restrictions or legislation, to ensure they are operating safely. Due to this diversity, this document will not offer a one-size fits all approach. Instead it attempts to draw together key areas you may wish to consider as a minimum to help ensure your proposals are COVID-19 secure, and provides a checklist to support you in your planning (Annex A).

A. Engaging with young people, the workforce and partners

Clear communication and engagement, and adopting participatory approaches where appropriate, will be key to understanding how young people are feeling and what they want to see as part of any planned increase of operations. It can help them better understand the science behind COVID-19 and their role in reducing the risk of transmission. Furthermore, once a delivery model has begun to be established, good engagement will help in communicating any additional steps you are taking to safeguard their well-being, as well as in ensuring that any new rules or procedures are well-understood. This might include clarifying how young people can register their interest to attend, and how you will respond to young people just turning up, both of which will help you better plan your offer and ensure staff availability. It will also help ensure they are aware of what procedures or steps will be taken if someone falls ill.

These principles should be adapted with other stakeholders to ensure their voices are heard and that they feel part of the planning and decision-making process, including staff, volunteers, managers, trustees, and other key partners.

You should engage and agree cross-organisation protocols if facilities are shared with multiple partners. Lastly, you should liaise with relevant insurance providers to ensure appropriate cover is in place and it is up to each individual organisation to take responsibility for this.

B. Key responsibilities and core principles

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complies with the COVID Regulations, in addition to other legal obligations imposed on employers (such as health and safety legislation).

Youth work services may also have a duty of care to volunteers to ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, they are not exposed to risks to their health and safety and are afforded the same level of protection as employees and the self-employed – see government information on [coronavirus volunteering and how to help safely](#). Employers and organisations who have volunteers and other individuals who are clinically **extremely vulnerable** (formerly shielding) and those at **increased risk** should ensure that they continue to follow the government's [advice on social distancing](#).

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D. Social distancing and determining capacity

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Ventilation when indoors – indoor activities should take place in ventilated areas of the building and with doors or windows open when possible.

Travel

Those wishing to use a youth work service should consider how far they need to travel and how they will travel to and from the building safely. Members of the same household should travel together. Where transporting young people to and from an activity where it is the only way to provide the service, full consideration must be given to social distancing guidance and the appropriate use of face masks. The Welsh Government's **advice on travelling safely** is available.

Toilets

Portable toilets and toilets inside premises should be kept open and carefully managed to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19. Guidance can be found **here** on how to provide safe toilets for public use.

Catering

Guidance for the hospitality sector has been developed and is available **here**, this includes guidance on catering facilities which some may find helpful to refer

to.

Water supply

If buildings have been closed or had reduced occupancy during the COVID-19 outbreak, water system stagnation can occur due to lack of use, increasing the risks of Legionnaires' disease. HSE [guidance covering water management and legionella](#) is available.

Hygiene, cleaning and infection control

Anyone responsible for premises open during COVID is under a duty to take reasonable measures to minimise the risk of exposure to coronavirus, this includes a duty to:

1. take all [reasonable measures](#) to ensure a 2 metre distance is kept between individuals (other than those from the same household)
2. take other reasonable measures to minimise risk of exposure (such as maintaining hygiene and avoiding face to face transmission); and
3. to provide information to those entering premises on how to minimise the risk (such as by providing signs and posters)

COVID-19 is mainly spread between people who are in close contact with one another and by droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It can also be spread through heavy breathing, shouting and singing, as well as through contact with a surface or object that has the virus on it.

Cleaning to an appropriate standard helps minimise the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19). A cleaning regime should be established based on the risk assessment and use of the building. High usage areas and anything that is frequently touched, especially if it is touched by lots of people, will need more regular cleaning than normal. Guidance on cleaning to the appropriate standard can be found [here](#). If you are cleaning because of a known or suspected case of COVID-19 in your workplace you should follow the guidance [here](#).

Hygiene and face coverings

Practicing good hand hygiene is important. Users of the facilities should have access to soap and water to wash their hands for at least 20 seconds or access to hand sanitiser when entering and leaving the building and after coughing, sneezing, blowing their nose or being in a public area. Youth work services might also consider:

- signs and posters to build awareness of good handwashing technique, the need to increase handwashing frequency, advice to avoid touching your face and to cough or sneeze into a tissue which is binned safely, or into your arm if a tissue is not available
- providing hand sanitiser in multiple locations, such as reception areas, in addition to washrooms
- providing hand drying facilities (paper towels or electrical dryers)

Wearing face coverings is mandatory for all people over the age of 11 years in indoor public places and other indoor places not open to the public where 2m distancing cannot be maintained, unless the individual has an exemption. The mandation applies to both staff and young people. More information about the use of face coverings for employers and managers of premises can be found [here](#). A separate guidance on face coverings for the general public can be found [here](#).

Face coverings and implications for individuals with any level of hearing loss

The impact of wearing a face covering for a deaf individual with any level of hearing loss should be carefully considered, as communication for many deaf people relies in part on being able to see someone's face clearly. The National Deaf Children's Society has provided the following [communication tips](#), which staff may find useful in this regard. Anyone may remove their face covering temporarily whilst keeping 2m distance to assist a person who relies on lip reading for communication.

Test, Trace, Protect and what to do in the case of suspected or actual infection

Those experiencing coronavirus **symptoms** (which include those listed below) should not attend a youth work setting, or use youth work setting transportation.

- New continuous cough.
- High temperature.
- Loss of or change to your normal sense of smell or taste (anosmia).

Individuals who have symptoms, have tested positive or have someone in their household, support bubble or extended household (when permitted) who has symptoms or has tested positive should not attend and should self-isolate. Neither should they attend if NHS Test, Trace, Protect have told them to self-isolate because they have been identified as a **contact of a positive case**. Guidance on self-isolation can be found [here](#).

Individuals who are **clinically extremely vulnerable** from Coronavirus, or in an **'at risk group'** must still follow the same **rules** as the rest of the population in Wales with regard to social distancing etc, but are also advised to take extra precautions to keep themselves safe from coronavirus.

They may decide, for their well-being, to attend a youth work service despite the additional risk this poses to them. In this case they and anyone with them should strictly follow the social distancing guidance.

If anyone becomes unwell with symptoms of COVID-19 in a setting, they should be sent home and advised to follow the **self-isolation guidance** and to **apply for a coronavirus test** whilst they, and members of their household, self-isolate.

If they need clinical advice they should go online to NHS 111 Wales (or call 111 if they don't have internet access). In an emergency, call 999 if they are seriously ill or injured or their life is at risk. They should not visit the GP, pharmacy, urgent care centre or a hospital.

Other people who may have been in contact with the person who has become

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unwell should wash their hands thoroughly after the interaction, but they do not need to take any other specific action unless they develop symptoms themselves or have been contacted by NHS Test, Trace, Protect as a confirmed contact of a positive case. If they develop symptoms they should follow the [self-isolation guidance](#) and [apply for a coronavirus test](#).

The areas used by these individuals should be thoroughly cleaned according to the guidance referenced above.

Test Trace Protect

The Welsh Government Test, Trace, Protect strategy sets out the approach to tackling coronavirus, testing people with symptoms in the community, tracing those who have come into close contact with people who have tested positive for coronavirus and protecting family, friends and our community by self-isolating.

The Test, Trace, Protect service needs to know who those who test positive may have been in contact with. If they have visited premises open to the public they may not know who that is. For that reason, certain businesses must collect and keep information about who has been on the premises, and when, for 21 days. [Keeping records of staff, customers and visitors](#) guidance provides advice for businesses on collecting and keeping this information.

At times you will collect the data of children, for example, where a 16 year old person visits the premises. You must consider any associated risk in retaining this information. You can find further information on these risks on the [ICO website](#).

Children and young people

Young people aged 16 and 17 are generally notified by NHS Wales Test, Trace, Protect. In those circumstances they'll treat the child as an adult and must self-isolate according to the same rules.

For under 16s they will notify the parent, guardian or other responsible adult about a child's need to self-isolate. In those cases the parent, guardian or responsible adult is required to take all reasonable measures to ensure that the child complies with the requirement to self-isolate. In the rare circumstances where a parent, guardian or responsible adult is notified about a young person aged 16 or 17, this requirement to take all reasonable measures to ensure that the young person self-isolates will apply.

Further information about [contact tracing](#) is available, along with guidance on [keeping records of staff, customers and visitors](#).

Individual considerations – colleagues and young people

It is important to account for the needs of individuals and to be clear on any new expectations. Required behaviours should be positively reinforced rather than non-compliance stigmatised. Signs of distress should be identified and supported, and intensive or specialist support sought when needed. The high standards of safeguarding youth work services held prior to lockdown must be upheld as we move into new spaces and models for delivery.

There are a whole host of new issues that may need to be taken into consideration. This can include any additional emotional, financial and psychological pressures that youth workers and young people may be under, either directly or indirectly related to the public health context. These might include worries about the virus, pressures from being furloughed or having lost work, stress from additional caring responsibilities or bereavement, or anxieties about returning.

It will therefore be important to consider your organisations' HR policies and support mechanisms and ensure they are up-to-date, reflecting the new challenges we are facing and the support that staff will require as a result. Ideas to promote welfare that services may wish to incorporate include reflective spaces, making use of counselling, welfare breaks and giving opportunities for workers to share their experiences.

Individual risk assessments

Throughout the course of delivering services, and in preparation for them, you may wish to consider undertaking a [stress risk assessment](#).

Further to this, and in planning for your return, the [COVID-19 workforce risk assessment tool](#) can support your planning.

The Tool uses government guidelines, and the most up-to-date research, evidence and data available to identify known risk factors, including age, sex, ethnicity, underlying health conditions, Body Mass Index (BMI) and any relevant family history in relation to COVID-19. It is a combination of these various factors coming together which contribute to the severity of infection.

The Tool was designed for those working in the NHS and Social Care in Wales, however education staff are encouraged to use the Risk Assessment, and to complete this online through the national e-learning platform: [Learning@Wales](#).

You may wish to direct staff and young people to the Young person's mental health toolkit on [Hwb](#).

Additional considerations

Those delivering youth work services may wish to better understand or refer to other policy and coronavirus related guidance, particularly if sharing facilities with different organisations. Some examples of specific guidance and regulations are included below:

[Community centres](#)

[Childcare provision](#)

[Families First services](#)

[Playground and play area guidance](#)

[Places of worship](#)

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Sport, recreation and leisure

Culture and heritage destinations and venues

Schools

Further education

Performing Arts

To assist you in developing your own checklist to expand your services or re-open your centres see the template checklist linked to this guidance at Annex A.

Planning for the future

Despite our best efforts, there remains the possibility of future waves of infection or isolated outbreaks, and this means we need to plan ahead so we are able to respond with agility. Further waves of the virus could bring additional issues so there is a need to prepare plans that can be increased or decreased as the public health context allows.

Phasing any increase of operations and considering a blended approach to delivery

“This time has shown that we need to be able to move quickly and work flexibility, when we come out of this period we need to be able to react quickly to new circumstances” – Voice of young person

It is clear that current public health advice does not support a simple green light for youth work services to re-open across the country, all at once, or as they were before lockdown was implemented. While measures will ease they can also potentially increase in the future and until otherwise advised, social distancing measures must remain in place. If youth work services are to be able to provide some kind of continuity for young people alongside possible changes in the public health advice, careful planning will be required to develop delivery models that can be stepped up and stepped down as needed.

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At this point, it is important to acknowledge that youth work services are diverse, and that many have unique circumstances that must be factored in to their ability to adjust or phase the delivery of different levels of activity. These circumstances may ultimately dictate their capacity to respond with agility and in line with whatever public health advice allows. This guidance, therefore, does not seek to prescribe a one-size-fits-all approach, but attempts to set out some overarching principles youth work services may wish to consider.

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