ea **Education Authority**

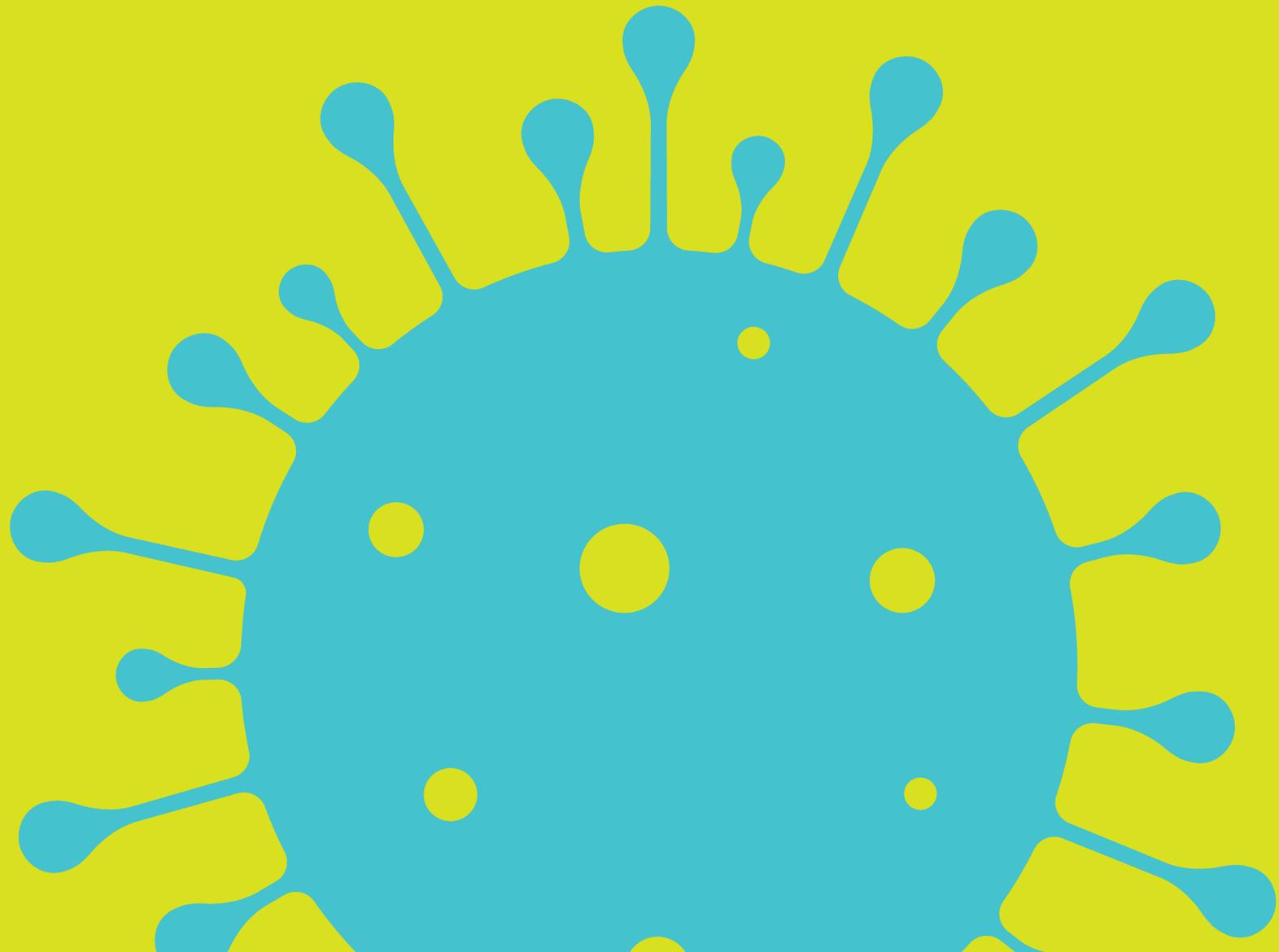**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S DIRECTORATE**
YOUTH SERVICE

Welcoming Youth
Supporting the Restarting of Youth Services

Contents

Introduction

The following guidance, *Welcoming Youth – Supporting the Restarting of Youth Services*, has been developed to help support local and relevant regional services as we move towards restarting EA Youth Work within the post Covid-19 lockdown context.

This guidance is not comprehensive and does not set out the legal requirements to be followed to ensure the safe return of staff, volunteers and/or young people. It is also acknowledged that the Covid-19 **situation remains one that changes day by day** – and for the most up-to-date information, your first point of reference on current public health measures should be NI Executive **https://www.healthni.gov.uk/coronavirus**

Within this rapidly changing context, this guidance is intended to be a living document to support youth work curriculum and practice. At this stage, the main focus is on supporting local youth groups and clubs begin the first steps towards welcoming young people back into an important service provision. It is acknowledged that this process will be a sequential series of actions, taken in line with government guidance and in response to local conditions. A risk-benefits approach to welcoming young people back should be applied at all times. This approach recognises the benefits of personal and social development (which is at the heart of youth work and will play a key role in helping to relieve stress and anxiety for young people at this time), while simultaneously ensuring our children and young people and wider educational workforce are not exposed to unnecessary risk.

Guidance to support restarting residential based activities, international programmes and other 'off-site' and regional programmes will be developed, if deemed helpful, and as the easing of government restrictions permits.

Guidance Overview

This guidance has been divided into two sections.

Section One – Welcoming Our Young People Back sets out key considerations on supporting the mental health of young people at this time, engagement, youth work programme priorities, managing group sizes, the use of outdoor space, digital youth work and the use of resources.

Section Two – Welcoming Youth – Best Practice focuses on youth work values, wider government principles and the underpinning ethos that will support success in this important and yet daunting context.

Section One - Welcoming Our Young People Back

Key considerations as we begin to plan the programmes and associated routines that will best foster the safety, health and wellbeing of our children and young people.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

This has been a challenging time for everyone, including our children and young people. Returning to youth work programmes and activities which they have 'lost out on' over this period may evoke a confusing mix of emotions. Grieving for the loss they have experienced will be a natural, but difficult response by young people and may be daunting for youth workers to support. It will be necessary to prepare youth workers to be alert for this.

Programme activities to support children and young people at this time include workshops and/or purposeful conversations on their Covid-19 experience, safe spaces to share the positives and negatives of lock-down and facilitated opportunities to record these through story lines, photo collages, art or drama based activities, digital archives. Once young people have had the opportunity to celebrate their courage and achievements, as well as understand any sense of loss they may be experiencing at this time, support should be provided to plan creative ways to address any felt deficit. This may include hosting special event to replace those lost out on, or **citizenship based** activities to raise awareness or provide community help around a given theme.

Maintaining supportive communication with young people (and youth workers) as we work through the forthcoming months together will be important. In addition, the EA Youth Service FLARE Team is on-hand to provide targeted individual support for the most vulnerable young people.

Engagement

Bear in mind that young people may not choose to return to your service immediately. Some may choose to wait and monitor the situation, and there may be a variety of reasons for this. A one size fits all approach will not work for all young people. Young people may be anxious about the uncertainty faced as we move forward.

If you work with young people for whom English is not their first language, who have disabilities and/or are vulnerable, extra measures will be required to establish good communication and ensure any additional needs are meet in a safe way.

Digital Youth Work approaches may help to foster engagement with young people unable to attend on-site programmes at this time. The **Youth Work Online** website provides resources for young people and youth workers enabling them to 'Stay Connected, Stay Safe, Stay Well and Stay Engaged' at this time.

Prioritising Youth Work Programmes/Activities

Review your 'typical' youth work practice from September – December. Applying the risk-benefits approach, are there youth work programmes or activities which may be safer or more critical to restart than others?

Safe, socially distanced participation and citizenship activities have never been so important to developing a sense of belonging and building resilience in young people. These may include designing positive message posters or postcards, building boredom boxes for friends or relatives

who are shielding, calling relatives who are socially isolating, fundraising to support a local concern. Such projects may also support social isolation concerns for young people unable to attend onsite activities at this time and/or link to digital youth work activities.

Group Sizes

When planning onsite activities, adjust group sizes across these to ensure groups are no bigger than current guidance (including youth work staff). Where this adjustment increases the number of groups to manage, how best can this be accommodated? Can groups be rotated on a weekly or fortnightly basis? If so, what measures can be put in place to limit contact and facilitate tracing across the group? For example, placing siblings, known friendship groups and/or young people from the same geographical location within the same group. These measures are increasingly being referred to as 'protective **bubbles**'. As far as possible there should be no contact across established 'protective **bubbles**'. A large room may contain more than one 'protective bubble' provided measures are in place to prevent physical contact. Will the use of coloured arm bands or badges help youth workers and other **staff** or volunteers identify 'protected bubbles' within a larger group in attendance at any one time?

Outdoor Activities

Given that we know the virus is less likely to spread outdoors, can you identify safe, outdoor spaces for use by your programme? Making creative use of outdoor space will also support social distancing. Are there local park spaces which can be safely accessed and used? What programme activities lend themselves to the outdoor environment?

Resources and Materials

Review the resources and materials you use to deliver programmes. Can **these** be reduced? Are there ways to limited sharing of resources? Can natural or junk materials be used to allow them to be thrown away (preferably in the recycle bin) after use. If sharing of resources cannot be reduced are there appropriate and adequate cleaning materials available to clean these after use?

Digital Youth Work

On-line forums may provide peer **support, but** should be established using clear contracting with young people and be closely monitored. Where young people have no prior experience of using on-line forums, training and awareness raising activities on the safe use of such platforms should be completed first.

Flipped learning is a concept whereby young people engage independently with an issue or topic before engaging in group **exploration, and** may be of use to youth workers as they consider the introduction of digital youth work activities. Is there an appropriate piece of music, online media or YouTube clip that young people could watch or listen to prior to meeting (either onsite or online) that will facilitate group discussion on a given issue or topic?

A number of free quizzing platforms including Quizlet and Kahoot can also be used to provide fun, accessible tools to support digital youth work and promote engagement by young people.

When planning digital youth work activities, bear in mind that learning will not make the same progress as it would face-to-face. Learning outcomes should be set for all digital youth work activities as they would for face-to-face **sessions, but** are likely to focus on one clear outcome.

Child Protection and Safeguarding

Child Protection and **Safe Guarding** Risk Assessments should be completed across all planned youth work activities in order to maximise the risk benefit offer to young people.

Covid-19 Risk Assessment

By following the guidance above, and discussing and planning this with key staff members, you will have contributed towards Covid-19 Risk Assessing your service for young people. This information must documented, circulated and retained for review in line with current public health measures.

Welcoming Young People Checklist:

1. Have you completed a Covid-19 Risk Assessment of your services for young people?
2. Have you identified programme activities to best support children and young people's health and wellbeing?
3. Have you considered any additional communication or support measures, particularly for young people with disabilities, young people for whom English is not their first language and/or vulnerable young people?
4. Have you prioritised the youth work programmes or activities that will be critical and/or safer to restart?
5. Have you adjusted group sizes in line with Government Guidance?
6. Have you identified any safe, outdoor spaces for use by your programme? If so, what programme activities lend themselves to the outdoor environment?
7. Have you reviewed resources and limited sharing and/or enhanced cleaning procedures?
8. Are there distance/online activities which can be introduced to enhance service delivery?
9. Have you completed Child Protection and **Safe Guarding** Risk Assessments for all planned youth work activities?

Section Two – Welcoming Youth – Best Practice

Best practice in youth work involves engaging with young people to facilitate their personal, social and educational development and enable them to gain a voice, influence and a place in society. Youth Workers help young people to engage with their local communities, taking account of cultural diversity. Utilising numerous approaches, youth work supports the young people to realise their potential and to address life's challenges critically and creatively. The new normal can be daunting, but as we take our first steps towards welcoming young people back, we have much to draw on to build good practice.

Youth Work Values

Participation and active involvement is a core youth work value. It directs us to start where young people are at in relation to their personal and social space, to seek to go beyond this starting point by promoting participation and social commitment, and to encourage young people to be creative in their responses to the world around them.

Equity, diversity and inclusion points to the importance of valuing each individual and their differences, promoting acceptance and understanding and strengthening young people's belief in themselves. It is underpinned by the principles of equity, diversity and interdependence.

Partnership with young people and others recognises and is actively responsive to the wider networks of peers, families, communities and cultures which are important to young people and recognises the young person as a partner in the learning process.

Personal, social and political development is concerned with how young people feel, and not just what they know or do, and with empowering the voice of young people to make an informed influence on the world around them. If safeguards the welfare of young people and provides them with a safe environment.

As we move towards restarting EA Youth Work, our youth work values provide a familiar yet never so important guide to the approaches we take. Our starting point must be responding to where young people are at, supporting young people to explore experiences and feelings, to find creative responses to the current world around them and to achieve this by promoting acceptance and understanding and by recognising young people as a partner in the learning process. Safeguarding the welfare of young people and providing safe environments for them to re-engage will underpin this approach.

Covid-19 Safe Working Principles

A number of important safe working principles to responding to the Covid-19 context have been highlighted by governments, academics, employers and trade unions and will be helpful as you work with your staff, volunteers and young people to restart EA Youth Work Services:

- **Safe Working Practice**: Management, staff, volunteers and young people have a responsibility, legally and socially to each other to follow safe working practices.

- **Compassion and Understanding**: The health, safety and wellbeing of each other in youth **work spaces** should be approached with compassion and understanding.

- **Mental Health and Wellbeing**: The mental health and wellbeing of the educational workforce and learners is a key focus going forward.

- **Meaningful Engagement**: EA Youth Service management is committed to regular and meaningful engagement with all employees and/or their recognised trade union(s) about planning for the reopening of youth work.

Further Help and Guidance

General Covid 19 Guidance: **https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus**

Contact Details and Specific Guidelines per Local Council District:
https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/localcouncils-in-northern-ireland

Youth on Line
https://www.youthonline.org.uk/
The EA Youth Service providing resources for young people and youth workers enabling them to 'Stay Connected, Stay Safe, Stay Well and Stay Engaged at this time.

Telephone Support Lines for Children and Young People
https://www.familysupportni.gov.uk/Content/uploads/userUploads/Support%20for%20 Young%20People%20REVISED%20March%202020.pdf
A list of useful numbers for all children and young people compiled by the Education Authority.

National Occupational Standards for Youth Work
http://cldstandardscouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/YouthWorkNOS2019Intro.pdf
Developed by industry experts, NOS sets out the agreed values, principles and standards for youth workers across the four UK nations.

Understanding Grief
https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/feelings-and-symptoms/grief-and-loss/#what-is-grief?
A range of resources to help children and young people understand grief, examples of how to support children young people to express grief and guidance and a **parents** survival guide to supporting children and young people through grief.

Remote Education during Coronavirus
https://www.gov.uk/guidance/safeguarding-and-remote-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19
Government Guidance produced to support educators on how to follow safeguarding procedures when planning remote education strategies and teaching remotely during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

Youth Work in an Online Setting during Covid-19
https://www.youth.ie/documents/digital-youth-work/
A guidance document produced by NYCI for youth workers and those working with young people to examine youth work in an online setting during Covid-19 under the following headings:

- What is Digital Youth Work?
- Moving Offline Youth Work Online – Digital Youth Work Best Practice
- Media Literacy And Online Safety
- Consent

Web Safety in Youth Work

https://www.youth.ie/programmes/projects-initiatives/web-safety-in-youth-work/

A NYCI resource created to support those who work with young people in all youth work organisations who often share similar concerns, risks and challenges to ensure all young people, staff and volunteers are safe online.

Jim Gamble TED talk

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eTTer3-RmFw

A TED talk by Jim Gamble, former chief executive of CEOP and a renowned child protection expert discussing the nature of online threats, the importance of individual leadership and simple ideas that can make us all safer.

Designing Safe Outdoor Spaces to Promote Learning

https://www.virtuallabschool.org/school-age/learning-environments/lesson-3

A virtual lesson focused

Posters to Download, Print and Display from the Public Health Agency:

Hand Washing Poster: **https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications/coronavirus-wash-your-hands-poster**

Stay Safe, Save Lives Poster: **https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications/covid-19-coronavirus-stay-safe-save-lives-poster**

Respiratory Health and Cough Etiquette Posters aimed at Children and Young People produced by the Health Protection Surveillance Centre

Post Primary, English:

https://www.hpsc.ie/az/respiratory/influenza/seasonalinfluenza/infectioncontroladvice/respiratoryhygieneposters/Secondary%20English.pdf

Post Primary Irish

https://www.hpsc.ie/az/respiratory/influenza/seasonalinfluenza/infectioncontroladvice/respiratoryhygieneposters/Secondary%20Irish.pdf