

Education, Children and Families Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 20 September 2022

Youth and Children's Work

Item number
Executive/routine
Wards
Council Commitments

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 The Education, Children and Families Committee is asked to:
 - 1.1.1 Note the progress with re-starting of in-person youth and children's work services as pandemic restrictions are eased.
 - 1.1.2 Note the strong partnership work underway to create a new Youth and Children's Work Strategy in Edinburgh, combining statutory and voluntary sector provision.

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Youth and Children's Work

2. Executive Summary

2.1 This report focuses on:

2.1.1 progress towards creating a new Youth and Children's Work Strategy in Edinburgh, encompassing both statutory and voluntary sector provision. It also briefly outlines the recovery and re-starting of youth and children's work activity paused or, in a few cases, discontinued as a result of the pandemic.

3. Background

- 3.1 The previous report to Policy and Sustainability, in August 2020, set out the steps being taken to deliver youth and children's work during that relatively early stage of the pandemic, the plans to increase and diversify provision as far as restrictions permitted and some of the obstacles faced.
- 3.2 Owing to lockdown restrictions, the COVID pandemic resulted in the suspension of a range of youth and children's work, mainly indoors provision. As a result, outdoor youth and children's work and street work, youth and children's work in schools, and the development of online delivery became more predominant. Youth and children's work staff also became involved in responses such as distributing food parcels and other necessities to families, as well as staffing and delivering activities at childcare hubs for key workers.

4. Main report

4.1 Youth and Children's Work recovery

4.1.1 Following the easing of COVID restrictions, an increasing and varied amount of youth and children's work is taking place across the city. A wide range of activities is already underway and planned. This work will continue to develop and expand over the coming months and is based on feedback from children and young people.

4.1.2 The volume of activity is on course to reach pre-pandemic level. It should be noted that because of changed need arising from the

pandemic, the actual provision may not be exactly the same as it was before the first lockdown. However, the numbers of children and people able to access suitable and relevant provision should soon be at pre-pandemic level.

- 4.1.3 With the easing of restrictions, the Voluntary and Community Sector has been equally agile in responding to the recovery needs of children and young people. A full range of universal and targeted services are in place across the city, which includes universal youth clubs, detached youth work, issue-based work, individual support work, group work and accredited learning. However, challenges remain for some organisations that are reliant upon access to premises for service delivery.
- 4.1.5 In addition to youth and children's work, there are many Wider Achievement opportunities for children and young people re-started and re-starting. Many of them also adopt a youth work approach and some have youth workers engaged as part of the delivery team.
- 4.1.6 The pandemic has resulted in several challenges and changes. The main challenge has been staff recruitment. Significant numbers of sessional staff found other work during the pandemic and, consequently, recruiting new youth and children's workers has, as in several other sectors, proved challenging. One change which will mitigate this will be the introduction of permanent contracts with enhanced terms and conditions (e.g. holiday pay, sick pay, annual leave entitlement) thus making the work more attractive, providing greater security and career pathways.
- 4.1.7 The Organisational Review of Community Empowerment, Libraries and Wellbeing and Wider Achievement was paused in early 2020 because of Covid. Its re-launch in June 2022 affords the opportunity to strategically align youth and children's work with key local, city and national priorities in response to the emerging/changing needs and concerns reflected by young people. This will also ensure youth and children's work delivers existing and new CLD priorities, such as closing the poverty related attainment/achievement gap, improving attendance, and developing the young workforce. While the pause to the Review did pose some challenges for youth and children's work, the strategic alignments ahead offer significant potential for developing youth and children's work in the city and with partners.

4.2 A new Youth and Children's Work Strategy for Edinburgh

- 4.2.1 Work is underway to create a new Youth and Children's Work Strategy in Edinburgh. This will be a joint plan covering the work of statutory and voluntary providers and is based on research with children and young

people during the pandemic. We have still to decide whether this will be a three- or five-year strategy.

- 4.2.2 Youth and children's work will maintain its focus on the 5-25 age range, continue to support and develop the position of universal and targeted youth work and emphasise the role of youth workers as trusted adults for many young people.

4.3 Youth and Children's Work Priorities

Youth and children's work in Edinburgh will continue to enable young people to achieve the wide range of outcomes identified by national and local research. Specific priorities will be informed by the challenges facing children, young people and their families in the aftermath of the Covid pandemic, including:

4.3.1 Reducing Inequality and the Impact of Poverty

Providing access to social, educational and recreational opportunities, information, advice and support for children and young people from disadvantaged families and communities

4.3.2 Health and Wellbeing

Helping children and young people to be physically healthy and emotionally resilient, particularly as they recover from the impact of the Covid pandemic on mental health

4.3.3 Closing the Attainment Gap

Supporting children and young people who have disengaged from education during Covid to return to school and move on to positive destinations in training, further education and employment.

4.3.4 Rights and Participation

Asking children and young people what is important to them, including their views on youth and children's services.

It is important to recognise that all these priorities can be achieved through universal, open youth work, as well as more targeted services.

4.4 Youth and Children's Work Strategic Actions

To support these priorities for children and young people, the following strategic actions for youth and children's work have been identified:

4.4.1 Develop the skills of the youth and children's workforce

Provide access to a youth work led local training programme delivered by a range of partners and includes essential topics (i.e. child protection, emergency first aid and trauma informed practice) alongside

topical training (i.e. Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenting and substance use awareness).

An annual training report will be published, including data on increase of skills, knowledge and confidence, alongside case studies on the impact of training.

4.4.2 Communicate with a range of stakeholders

Engage with a range of stakeholders including Elected Members, public sector and other interested organisations to raise awareness of the role and impact of youth and children's work.

Youth and children's work will be represented within Edinburgh Community Planning Partnerships and other local networks.

4.4.3 Increase partnership working between youth and children's services

Identify opportunities for partnership working through the Edinburgh Youth and Children's Work Strategy Group, alongside local youth work providers forums.

Regular youth and children's work events will be held, providing opportunities for partnership working, raising the profile of youth and children's work and highlighting good examples of practice.

4.4.4 Improve equality and diversity within youth and children's work services

Support youth and children's services and create opportunities to improve equality and diversity within services, including engagement in decision-making and increasing participation in services.

Work in partnership with diverse communities to develop and share "Top Tips" for inclusive youth work practice.

4.4.5 Implementation Plan

The Strategy will be regularly reviewed by the Edinburgh Youth and Children's Work Strategy Group. This will involve:

- 4.4.5.1 Gathering evidence of effective practice from providers across the city,
- 4.4.5.2 Listening to the views and experiences of children and young people
- 4.4.5.3 Identifying and responding to gaps in services and emerging priorities.
- 4.4.5.4 Additionally, we will work together to develop Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for each action as part of this work.

4.4.5.5 Officers and partners will align aspects of the new Youth and Children’s Work Strategy in Edinburgh with Edinburgh Learns for Life (the strategy for education and learning in Edinburgh). The proposed themes based on feedback from young people suggests that the new Strategy has potential to contribute to actions in Edinburgh Learns for Life Boards as set out in the table below:

Proposed Youth and Children’s Work Strategy theme	Edinburgh Learns Board links
Health and Wellbeing	Health and Wellbeing Board
Reducing Inequality and the Impact of Poverty	Equity Board Wider Achievement Board Learner Participation Board
Rights and Participation	Learner Participation Wider Achievement
Closing the Attainment Gap	Pathways Board Wider Achievement Board

The emerging Wider Achievement workstream contributes to delivering Edinburgh Learns for Life and acknowledges the important role of youth work linked to Learning Communities.

The new Youth and Children’s Work Strategy in Edinburgh will also align with the CLD Plan, which is also a partnership plan.

4.5 The Youth and Children’s Work Strategy in Edinburgh also needs to reflect and support the priorities of the new National Youth Work Strategy being developed by YouthLink Scotland for the Scottish Government. This is due to be published towards the end of 2022 and the priorities are agreed as:

4.5.1 Skills and Achievement

4.5.2 Funding and Investment

4.5.3 Youth Work is Valued, Understood and Communicated

4.5.4 Workforce Development

4.5.5 Health and Wellbeing

4.5.6 Youth Work is Inclusive and Accessible to All

In addition, the implementation themes of the previous Youth and Children’s Work Strategy for Edinburgh will be considered, along with the local evidence base for youth and children’s work in Edinburgh, particularly the Universal

Community Based Youth Work Research and the Education Youth Work Recovery evaluation.

- 4.6 The final draft of the Youth and Children’s Work Strategy in Edinburgh will be overseen and prepared by a steering group drawn from voluntary and statutory providers and will include and consult children and young people. This is expected to be ready and published by autumn and a launch event will be organised to promote and celebrate the new strategy.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Work with colleagues and partners to align the new Youth and Children’s Work Strategy in Edinburgh with existing plans and strategies.
- 5.2 Ensure the links between the new Youth and Children’s Work Strategy in Edinburgh with existing local and national plans are clear

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 There is no requirement for additional resources for this work; costs are met from existing budgets.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 The Council and Voluntary and Community Sector providers will continue to engage with children, young people and staff on their plans for youth work.
- 7.2 The findings of national surveys of young people during lockdown have been taken into account in planning the resumption of youthwork. For example, young people are particularly concerned about the future, the impact of the lockdown on their schoolwork, and on their own and others mental health.
- 7.3 An Integrated Impact Assessment will be prepared as part of creating the new strategy

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 <https://democracy.edinburgh.gov.uk/documents/s25435/Item%206.6%20-%20Resumption%20of%20Youth%20Work%20Services%20v0.2.pdf>

9. Appendices

N/A