


Managing youth sector activities and spaces during COVID-19



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Version 11



NYA
National Youth Agency

Forewords

When young people have a sense of belonging our communities are stronger. Youth sector activities provide somewhere to go, something to do and someone to talk to. They represent a rich and varied range of youth and community organisations, professional youth workers and volunteers. With young people at their heart, youth services are a vital lifeline to many vulnerable or disadvantaged young people in particular.

Most easily recognised in youth clubs, uniformed groups, residential centres, youth councils and community projects, youth sector activities include volunteering, social action, skills and enterprise, peer support groups and young people led campaigns. Activities take place in community buildings, are street-based, in parks, outward bound and online. All provide a safe space for young people to come together with friends, explore their identity, learn new skills and have fun.

The sector has faced significant challenges in response to COVID-19 pandemic. Much of the regular provision has stopped or adapted with reduced levels of activity, youth and community centres closed, residential trips cancelled. Therefore, NYA has published this guidance on youth sector activities to ensure the safety of young people, youth leaders and volunteers through COVID-19 and its aftermath. It complements a **readiness framework alongside a set of planning tools and resources** co-produced with youth sector partners to help inform decision-making in support of local activities. We are grateful for the insights and time given by others to help produce this guidance in support of such a vital and vibrant youth sector.

Leigh Middleton, Chief Executive
National Youth Agency

Youth work can be transformational and youth sector activities provide an essential service for young people and communities. Thousands of youth workers and volunteers make a valuable difference to young people's lives - they build trusted relationships and create opportunities for them to thrive. Our youth services allow young people to develop the confidence to make decisions and act on issues that affect their lives, lives of others, their communities and civil society.

As we look to return to "normal", now more than ever we value the contributions of young people, as volunteers supporting others, and the hard work and dedication of the youth sector.

Nigel Huddleston MP
Minister for Civil Society
Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport



The NYA is the Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) for youth work in England and as such is the national partner for the government, the Local Government Association and non-governmental bodies, and with relevant bodies in related professions (such as teaching, policing and social care).

The NYA sets the standards for youth sector organisations in recognition of practice, qualifications and the youth work curriculum and convenes the National Youth Advisory Body for policy advice and guidance. We have worked with an expert group of youth work practitioners, national youth organisations and young people to shape this document.



UK Health
Security
Agency



Health & Safety
Executive

This document has been prepared in consultation with UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

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1.0 Introduction

This version of the NYA's guidance applies from 01 April 2022. From this date the law in England has been amended to remove all legal requirements and restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

HOWEVER, at the time of publication the COVID-19 rates in England are among the highest ever. We recognise the nation needs to learn to live with COVID-19. At 01 April 2022 the World Health Organisation (who defines pandemics) still classes COVID-19 as a serious health risk to populations around the world. With domestic COVID-19 rates so high the NYA highly recommends youth sector providers continue to apply measures to minimise the risk of infection from COVID-19 to those in our communities who may be most at risk.

Providers should apply good judgement and continue to follow COVID Responsible measures.

The youth sector is diverse and includes statutory, voluntary, uniformed and private organisations as funders, commissioners and providers of activities and spaces for young people. These organisations provide services and activities outside of but often complementary to other statutory services, such as schools, colleges and child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS).

This guidance is only intended for use in England. There is current advice and guidance that should be adhered to for the formal, statutory services and national guidance from UK Health Protection Agency (UKHSA) on social distancing, travel and other measures for COVID-19. This guidance is complementary and contextualised for youth sector organisations and is intended to support organisations as they prepare for the appropriate reopening of services.

The youth sector has specific and unique challenges and needs, and this guidance has been developed to support your practice.

Youth sector organisations typically work with young people aged 8 to 25 years, although other age groups are recognised. This guidance takes into consideration the safety and support needed for young people, staff and volunteers and wider public health considerations for youth services and activities.

There is a wide range of youth provision, normally defined as 'youth work', which includes open-access work through youth centres, community projects, volunteering and youth social action, alongside targeted services and specialist groups for vulnerable young people. Such activities are run by local groups, community organisations and local authorities or as part of national programmes. The types of activity include, for example, youth clubs, street-based youth work, peer-led youth groups, uniformed youth groups, youth councils, outdoor education and residential trips.

National associations for specific types of organisations (uniformed, etc.) and activities may have additional advice and guidance to safeguard young people and in related areas of sports, culture and the arts, which are included in or make use of facilities for youth activities.

This guidance is intended to support councils, local voluntary providers, leaders, volunteers and young people to remain safe when engaging in youth sector activities. This guidance must be used in conjunction with your existing safeguarding and welfare policies and procedures.

It is important to recognise that this guidance only sets out the steps required to operate safely. If local providers/centres/units have any concerns about the health and safety, care towards young people/staff or reputational risk, then keeping provision closed is the responsible course of action recommended by the NYA.



We expect that this document will be updated over time. This version is up-to-date as of 01 April 2022. You can check for updates at www.nya.org.uk

If you have any questions or feedback for us, please email guidance@nya.org.uk

2.0 How to use this guide

This document is intended to support the youth sector's response as COVID-19 risk change. It is recognised that the level of readiness will vary over time and by location if local restrictions are applied. To support youth sector organisations when reacting to these changes a readiness framework and level is provided. Changes are published weekly on the [NYA's website](#) and provides guidance as to the nature and capacity of activity recommended at each level.

At all times, youth sector organisations must follow current UK health Protection Agency and Health and Safety Executive advice. Organisations should follow the current permitted activity guidance on the NYA website. Please note, there will be a deliberate delay between the government easing restrictions and the NYA updating our website. This is to allow organisations time to prepare, assess risks and safely manage any needed changes. Organisations should follow the latest statement on our website at all times.

Alongside adhering to the framework's guidance, all proposed activities and changes must be subject to a risk assessment, which should be enhanced when physical spaces/buildings /land are to be used.



All providers of youth provisions and services must complete a COVID-19 action plan (see details below). These plans are intended to ensure that you have considered all reasonable aspects of activities before opening provision at a local level.



More information to support your plans with check lists and templates can be found at <https://youthworksupport.co.uk>. The templates can be adapted to fit your context and are provided as best practice tools.

If you wish to learn of changes and amendments to our guidance and local lockdowns, we recommend joining the NYA Network. The network is free and gives all members access to the NYA's resources library and regular newsletters. Join here: <https://nya.org.uk/register/>

3.0 Limitations of this guide

The youth sector is diverse and includes statutory and voluntary services, professionally qualified and volunteer youth workers/leaders and a wide range of approaches to the delivery of youth services and activities with young people. It is not possible for this guide to capture all nuanced types of practice; therefore, this document should be used as a guide to inform local decision making.

The Department for Education publishes separate guidance for out of school settings. This guidance is for providers that fall within the government's definition of an out-of-school setting. The NYA guidance aligns to the DfE's guidance for out-of-school settings; however, this guidance has been specifically designed to support the diverse youth sector. The NYA guidance also aims to align where practical with other sectors guidance.

Professional and risk-informed judgements must be used to design your local COVID-19 action plans. Employers, supervisors, volunteer leaders and trustees must be satisfied that any provision proposed is safe for all involved and ensure that its authorisation to continue is subject to continual review as behaviours, needs or national guidance changes.

The templates provided are intended to support this process and keep at its core the broad consideration of the local need, the risks of providing and not providing services, the places and spaces used for service delivery, the additional health and safety steps and the safeguarding for all activity, from online to group work.



The NYA will always seek to allow the maximum safe level of youth sector activity at any given time. At the time of publication UK COVID-19 rates are among the highest ever. Whilst legal restrictions have been removed by the government the youth sector is strongly advised to continue following COVID Responsible measures detailed in this guidance.

4.0 National associations

If your group is affiliated with a national association (uniformed, etc.), you should check what additional guidance or requirements they have put in place to safeguard young people. They may have developed additional specific guidance for you to consider or actions required prior to commencing delivery.

National associations may ask you to follow their own additional measures they have deemed appropriate. The NYA fully supports the self-determination of national associations to add additional measures.

5.0 Equality

Equality is at the heart of the youth sector. We work to highlight and tackle the inequalities that exist in society and recognise that different groups and individuals experience discrimination and disadvantage that needs to be challenged. Therefore, it is important to ensure we create spaces, services and opportunities that enable everyone to engage equally.

This often requires adjustments to our working practices and approaches to ensure that everyone benefits fairly. Your organisation's equality and diversity policy should be considered at all times and especially when making decisions and judgements related to the impact on individuals and groups with protected characteristics.

When applying this guidance, organisations should be mindful of the particular needs of different groups of workers and individuals.

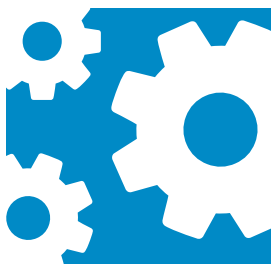
It is breaking the law to discriminate, directly or indirectly, against anyone because of a protected characteristic, such as age, sex, race or disability.

Employers and organisations (voluntary or otherwise) also have additional responsibilities towards disabled individuals and those who are new or expectant mothers.

6.0 The basics of COVID responsible

This guidance document will help you ensure you are COVID Responsible. Although all legal restrictions have been removed by the government, the youth sector is strongly advised to remain COVID Responsible and adhere to the following. These are the basics, but please ensure you read all of this document to understand the detail:

The following COVID Responsible measures are still required and recommended.



**Action plan
in place**
(roles and responsibilities)



**Risk Assessments
are up-to-date**



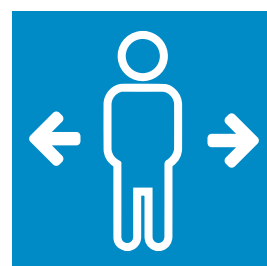
**Hygiene is robust –
handwashing etc**



**Venue is clean and
kept clean**



**Face coverings are
optional indoors**



**Social distancing is
advised in poorly
ventilated spaces**

7.0 Youth sector readiness framework

The readiness framework aligns with the NYA's published readiness level, which is updated in line with government guidance and is available on the NYA's website.

The readiness level is GREEN.

The readiness level will change as and when government advice changes. For this reason, youth sector organisations and groups are advised to monitor the readiness level on a weekly basis and cross reference this level with the guidance provided on the permitted youth sector activity. **The NYA readiness framework only applies to England.**

If the readiness level falls, this will signal that more face-to-face youth sector activity will be recommended. If the readiness level increases (due to increased levels of the virus), youth sector activity will be recommended to reduce in line with the framework and changes to the law. Existing online or digital youth sector provision can continue to take place at any level of the readiness system.

You can check the current readiness level here: <https://nya.org.uk>

The objective of the NYA's readiness level is to enable as much youth sector activity as possible to take place at each level as and when it is safe to do so and to allow youth sector leaders to make plans in accordance with the status of COVID-19 in the community.

Organisations must make their own judgements and undertake comprehensive risk assessments to decide if it is possible to comply with the guidance provided in this document. These judgements should not be informal or lightly taken decisions, rather they should be within your organisation's health and safety framework/policy and show due consideration to national guidance and insurance regulations.

The following must be in place:

- Assessment that the risk to workers, young people and the community can be safely managed
- Effective safeguarding arrangements
- All children and young people should be safeguarded
- Enhanced cleaning arrangements are in place
- Ability to ensure hygiene levels are maintained, including for frequent hand washing/cleansing with alcohol gel
- The risk to workers, young people and the community being safely managed
- Whether the most vulnerable in society can be effectively safeguarded

If you feel your local situation cannot be managed in a safe way, you should not re-open until you have put sufficient measures in place. This is essential for avoiding unnecessary risks to your staff, young people and the community.

The framework provided explains the types of activities that are expected to be allowed at each level as the national restrictions are eased or tightened. These exist to support providers of youth sector activities to prepare for the next level up or down. It takes time to develop action plans, risk assessments, staff training and prepare venues so the framework is provided as a guide to what you can prepare for next.

The NYA as the professional statutory regulatory body for the youth sector also applies our own technical judgement when developing our guidance.

You should follow the week's readiness level and the permitted activity advice provided on the NYA website. This will show the current alert level and the exact permitted activity within the law.

Prior to changing your activities in line with the alert level, you must review, amend, and update your action plan and risk assessments. These should be approved in line with your national association's policy on implementing the readiness framework, where this is applicable. NYA will seek to provide national associations with advanced notice of planned changes to the readiness level.



Readiness framework

The framework below is used to guide the youth sectors activities during COVID-19.

Readiness Level	Permitted Activity Expected
RED	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Online and digital youth services• Detached/outdoor local youth services• 1-2-1 sessions with high-need young people (indoors)• Small group work sessions indoors with high need young people (consistent with social distancing guidelines)
AMBER	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Online and digital youth services• Detached/outdoor local youth services (consistent with social distancing guidelines)• 1-2-1 sessions with young people• Group sessions delivered indoors
YELLOW	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Online and digital youth services• Detached/outdoor local youth services (consistent with social distancing guidelines)• 1-2-1 sessions with young people• Group sessions delivered indoors (consistent with social distancing guidelines)• Camping and overnight residential
GREEN	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• International travel allowed within Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice

From the 01 April 2022 the readiness level is GREEN.

All young people will be able to attend indoor or outdoor activities. Youth provision for young people of all ages, both under and over 18 years of age, have the same requirements.

All youth provision may meet indoors or outdoors without limitations on group size. The NYA no longer require youth sector providers to operate bubbles or limit group sizes to a maximum number of attendees outside of measures usually in place for safe working practices

However, the NYA requires providers to review their Action Plans and Risk Assessments and take steps to reduce the risk of community transmission. For example, consider how to manage groups of young people to a manageable number to minimise the risk of transmission.

Online/digital, detached/outdoor and 1-2-1 youth sector provision will remain available to all young people.

Trips and visits are permitted. Travel by minibus, taxi, public transport, or private car (subject to safeguarding) are permitted. The youth sector's goal at all times should be to minimise the risk of COVID transmission.

Overnight and residential experiences are permitted. No group size restrictions apply to the youth sector. The same measures apply to all age groups.

For more detail on leading residential and overnight events please see section below for more detail.

International travel is **permitted** in line with Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office travel advice.

You should speak to either your visit provider, commercial insurance company, or the Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA) to assess the protection available. Independent advice on insurance cover and options can be sought from the British Insurance Brokers' Association (BIBA) or Association of British Insurers (ABI).

If you feel your local situation cannot be managed in a safe way, you should not re-open until you have put sufficient measures in place. This is essential for avoiding unnecessary risks to your staff, young people and the community.

8.0 Delivering Residential Educational Experiences Safely

The youth sector is permitted to provide overnight and residential experiences.

1. There are no restrictions on group sizes for residentials in England. An unlimited number of young people (of all ages) plus staff and support workers are permitted.
2. Multiple groups are possible and may interact with each other.
3. There are no restrictions on travel arrangements due to COVID. Providers standard transportation safeguarding, and risk management must be in place.
4. Following COVID responsible measures is recommended. Measures such as social distancing and good hygiene practices are all sensible (see social distancing section) to minimise the risk of infection and need to isolate.
5. Activity staff, catering and welfare staff are permitted.

NB: From 01 April 2022 there is no requirement to undertake COVID-19 testing prior or during events. However, the NYA highly recommends that while COVID-19 rates in England are high groups test using lateral flow tests every 48-72hrs, this includes leaders/staff. Free Lateral Flow Tests have been withdrawn but can be purchased commercially where needed.

Youth sector providers must carry out a thorough risk assessment for the educational visit in line with existing general and COVID-19 specific guidance and the following conditions:

- Residentials may take place in England with groups of any size (including staff and carers).
- There is no need to operate consistent groups during your residential and groups from different projects, locations and settings may mix.
- Asymptomatic testing is highly recommended where COVID-19 rates are high. You should consider encouraging staff and children to engage in asymptomatic testing before and after the residential visit.
 - Where a participant (young person or adult) has had COVID-19 within the last 90 days and in line with NHS guidance there is no requirement to test. This is because the within 90 days of infection the dead virus cells can create a false positive test result.
 - If an individual who has not been tested becomes unwell (for any cold/flu type symptoms) they should isolate immediately (vaccinated or following past infection) and follow NHS Covid advice to take a lateral flow test, or PCR test if negative.

- Ensure that there are clear contingency plans in place to respond immediately to:
 - A child/ staff member testing positive
 - A child/ staff member needing to self-isolate due to being identified as a close contact
 - A child / staff member becoming symptomatic during the visit

Risk Assessments

Youth sector providers should undertake full and thorough risk assessments in relation to all educational visits to ensure they can be undertaken safely. You should implement the DfE health and safety [guidance on educational visits and the Health and safety Executives \(HSE\)](#)

Your risk assessment and extra planning should reflect the public health restrictions in place and your residential visit provider should be able to provide you with the evidence to demonstrate how their centre meets the requirements set out in [Hotels and other guest accommodation - Working safely during COVID-19](#). You should request this information prior to any visit and pay particular attention to how the centre will manage any COVID-19 outbreaks during your stay and what arrangements you will need to have in place should a member of staff or child/ young person become symptomatic.

You will also need to ensure that you have carefully considered the system of controls section of this guidance. For example, if operating in poorly ventilated spaces consider relocating outdoors or the use of face coverings (these remain a personal choice).

It is worth noting that consideration should be given to spending as much time as possible outdoors as this reduces the rate of transmission of the virus.

Accommodation

You should familiarise yourself and your staff members with the [Hotels and other guest accommodation - Working safely during COVID-19](#).

You should check in advance that the provider has assessed the risk of COVID-19 and implemented appropriate control measures. In particular, you should ask the accommodation provider to confirm that they:

- have assessed overnight sleeping arrangements in line with the size of the group that will be expected to share rooms and/or dormitories.
- ensure appropriate ventilation at all times, particularly during overnight sleeping arrangements. Good ventilation reduces the concentration of the virus in the air, which reduces the risks from airborne transmission.
- measures are in place to ensure that sanitising and cleaning of any shared facilities such as:
 - bathroom
 - kitchen/dinning
 - or any potentially shared equipment/communal facilities

If a young person or staff member is symptomatic, tests positive for COVID-19, or is in close contact of someone who tests positive for COVID-19.

Before undertaking a residential visit or overnight stay, you should discuss these procedures with the accommodation provider to ensure you are familiar with the steps that should be taken if a staff member or young person in your youth group becomes symptomatic or tests positive.

If possible, the child, young person or staff member should return home to self-isolate. If they choose to return home, they should use private transport. In the case of a staff member falling ill or needing to self-isolate, and there is insufficient staff to continue the event safely the group will also need to return home.

If a child, young person or staff member cannot reasonably return home (for example, because a child's parents are unable to collect them or they are too unwell), their circumstances should be discussed with an appropriate health care professional and, if necessary, the local authority.

Insurance

You should make sure that you have an appropriate level of insurance cover whilst on an educational visit. If unsure, you are advised to check with your insurance company or the [Risk Protection Arrangement \(RPA\)](#) for information on the level of cover/protection available especially in the event of a COVID related cancellation.

For new bookings, whilst there are still gaps in the traditional insurance market regarding COVID-19 cancellation cover, youth sector providers should be able to secure appropriate travel insurance for other aspects of their visit. Given the absence or changes to COVID-19 (cancellation) insurance, you should check that any new bookings have adequate financial protection in place.

9.0 Social distancing

From the 19th July 2021 social distancing became optional, but is recommended in crowded or poorly ventilated spaces. The one metre plus rule no longer applies for all ages and settings.

The NYA, highly recommends (but doesn't require) the use of appropriate distancing in some circumstances, in order to protect people and minimise transmission.

If operating in poorly ventilated spaces or in close contact with others, then the use of face coverings may be appropriate, but is entirely voluntary. Youth providers should continue to deliver as much youth sector activity outdoors or in well ventilated spaces.

Mitigating actions (dependent on local infection rates) may include:

- Further increasing the frequency of hand washing and surface cleaning.
- If you can deliver your activities outdoors do.
- Keeping the activity time involved as short as possible.
- Where possible using activities where maintaining distancing is simpler.
- Avoid any activities which risk sustained close contact or 'huddles' of young people.
- Reducing the number of people each person has contact with (so each person works with only a few others).
- Staggered arrival and departure times for workers/volunteers and young people should be in place to reduce crowding in and out of the locations, while also considering the impact on those with protected characteristics.
- Travel to and from your venue/activities should be considered. Can staff, volunteers and young people travel safely? If not, you should consider any steps that can be taken to mitigate these risks (e.g. online virtual delivery).
- Regulating use of high traffic areas or pinch points including corridors, lifts, turnstiles and walkways to maintain social distancing.
- Signage could be displayed in public areas to help people maintain social distancing and handwashing/hygiene.
- Reconfiguring seating and tables to optimise spacing and reduce face-to-face interactions.

10.0 Group sizes management

Youth sector provision for young people is no longer subject to controlled bubble/support group sizes (indoors or outdoors) for sessional activities and overnight residential experiences.

The NYA recommends the guidance below continues to be followed where appropriate to minimise the risk of COVID-19 virus transmission. The goal remains to minimise the amount of mixing between different groups of children and young people where at all possible. This should not stop any youth sector activities from taking place and is only recommended where practical and not detrimental to young people's personal and social development.

It will be possible for multiple groups (from different projects or sites) to convene in your venue, if all the practices stated in this document are implemented. To ensure that participants remain safe, strict adherence to the following measures is required:

- Upon arrival/departure, participants should wash their hands or use hand sanitiser.
- Should any member become unwell and test positive on Lateral Flow or PCR, all members in close contact should take a lateral flow test.
- Social distancing is recommended (but not required) in poorly ventilated spaces.
- Organisers should be aware of attendees who are clinically vulnerable or clinically extremely vulnerable and should prepare their risk assessment accordingly.

11.0 COVID-19 Responsible Venues

This guidance has been amended from to support the youth sector to provide COVID-19 responsible venues.

If you comply with NYA guidance your venue is considered COVID Responsible. The NYA recognises that many young people under 12yrs will not be vaccinated under current Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation guidance. As such, the NYA recommends youth sector providers and venues continue to implement appropriate measures to minimise the risk of spreading COVID-19.

The NYA recommends the following measures are considered if appropriate:

- As the risk of transmission is lower outdoors, activities should take place outdoors as often as possible and when it is safe to do so.
- All young people, staff and carers should wash their hands and use hand sanitiser at regular intervals.
- Shared spaces such as sports halls, kitchens, etc. must be deep cleaned thoroughly And regularly.
- Enhanced regular cleaning of commonly used surfaces, such as equipment and door handles, should be ensured.
- Please consider safeguarding concerns when planning and preparing your risk assessments.

The use of private dwellings (including trusted adults homes and gardens) for the delivery of youth sector activity is not permitted. Home visits to vulnerable young people is permitted following appropriate safeguarding practice.

12.0 Travel

Youth sector activities often include travel to events, youth voice meetings or educational venues. It is recommended to ideally walk and cycle if you can. Where this is not possible, use public transport, minibuses, taxis or cars is allowed (subject to safeguarding requirements).

You should not travel at all if experiencing any [coronavirus symptoms](#).

Face coverings could still be used as a protective measure, but this is advisory. The NYA recommends the use of face coverings in poorly ventilated spaces (such as a bus or train).

If using a mini-bus or coach all the seats can be used to transport young people.

Help keep yourself, other passengers and transport staff safe by taking the following precautions:

If using a mini-bus or coach all the seats can be used to transport young people.

Help keep yourself, other passengers and transport staff safe by taking the following precautions:

- limit the number of people that you come into contact with, for example avoid peak travel where possible
- wash or sanitise your hands regularly
- avoid touching your face
- cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or the inside of your elbow when coughing or sneezing
- travel side by side or behind other people, rather than facing them, where seating arrangements allow
- touch as few surfaces as possible
- stay outdoors, rather than indoors, where possible
- minimise the time spent close to other people, where possible
- dispose of waste safely, including items such as used disposable face coverings
- be prepared to queue or take a different entrance or exit at stations
- wait for passengers to get off first before you board
- respect other people's space while travelling
- be aware of pregnant, older and disabled people who may require a seat or extra space
- be aware that not all disability is visible

Seek assistance if you need it

If you require assistance when travelling, contact your transport operator as you would normally do.

If any problems arise or you feel ill during your journey, speak to a member of transport staff. In the case of an emergency, contact the emergency services as you normally would.

If you need help, try to [keep a suitable distance from members of staff](#). If this isn't possible, try to avoid physical contact and keep the time you spend near staff as short as possible.

13.0 Understanding risk

Everyone needs to assess and manage the risks of COVID-19. As a service provider or employer (voluntary or paid), you have a legal responsibility to protect workers, young people and others from risks to their health, safety and wellbeing. This means you need to think about the risks they face and do everything that is reasonably practicable to minimise them, recognising you cannot completely eliminate the risk of COVID-19.

A youth organisation may deliver a range of activities and types of provision, including local projects and services. We advise that each project/centre/unit completes a risk assessment and action plan document. The action plan will ensure that you have considered all reasonable points ahead of changing your delivery levels. This will also help you to identify the actions and steps you need to put in place to ensure appropriate and safe provision.

The action plan includes a risk assessment and will consider the wider organisational policies that must continue to govern your practice, including safeguarding, equality and health and safety policies. You should also check with your insurer that they will continue to cover your planned activities.

Your plan is required to be as simple or complex as your organisation's activities and plans. The NYA, UK Youth and the Federation for Detached Youth Work have provided templates, checklists and examples of action plans that are kept updated; go to <https://youthworksupport.co.uk>.

If your work is overseen by a national association (uniformed, etc.), then you should also follow their required actions and complementary advice. If your services are contracted by a local authority, you should also follow their required actions, advice and guidance. Additionally, each upper tier local authority has a duty to support young people and the local youth offer/service may be able to provide support for your work.

You must keep your plan under constant review and make responsive amendments to reflect the NYA's published **readiness level**. Be ready to react if the readiness level changes week-to-week, and ensure you communicate changes to young people, staff, parents/carers and other stakeholders. Your action plan should include clear information about how your service can and will respond to different readiness levels to minimise risk.

You must make sure that the risk assessment for your provision addresses the risks of COVID-19 and that this guidance is used to inform your decisions and control measures. A risk assessment is not about creating huge amounts of paperwork, rather it is about identifying sensible measures to control the risks in your setting. Your risk assessment will help you decide if you have done everything you need to.

Youth sector organisations have a duty to consult their staff members (paid or voluntary) on health and safety issues. We would also advise engaging young people in developing your plans and risk assessments and in the discussions about the impact on themselves, their peers/families and their significant others. You can do this by listening and talking to them about the planned work and how you will manage risks from COVID-19. The people who do the work are often the best people to understand the risks in the workplace, and they will have a view on how to work safely. Involving them in making decisions shows that you take their health and safety seriously.

As is normal practice, staff, volunteers and young people should be involved in assessing workplace risks and in the development and review of workplace health and safety policies in partnership with your organisation.

If your staff have access to external representation, such as a trade union, you should ensure they have suitable opportunities to support this process. Some members of your team may have more than one role (paid or voluntary) and consideration should be given to the risks they may experience and how these could impact their capacity to safely work for your organisation. Additional supportive measures may be appropriate to support their welfare.

14.0 Managing risk

Organisations have a duty to reduce risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level by taking preventative measures. Organisations must work with all other employers and contractors (e.g. nurseries) sharing the delivery location or workplace so everyone's health and safety is protected. A collective agreement should be put in place for shared spaces to outline each party's role and responsibilities. In the context of COVID-19, this means working through these steps in order:

1. Increasing the frequency of handwashing and surface cleaning in every delivery location or workplace. Where handwashing facilities are not available, ensure adequate provision of hand sanitiser.
2. Consider the security implications of any changes you intend to make to your operations and practices in response to COVID-19 as any revisions may present new or altered security risks that could need mitigation.

Further mitigating actions include:

- Keeping the activity time as short as possible.
- Deliver activity outdoors; whilst preparing premises for future use, when it is safe and practical to do so.
- Using screens as barriers to separate people from each other.
- Using back-to-back or side-to-side working (rather than face-to-face) whenever possible – primarily in office environments.
- Reducing the number of people each person has contact with by using 'fixed teams or partnering' (so each person works with only a few others).
- If sharing equipment between individuals, routine cleaning steps should be considered before the next person uses the item(s).

No-one is obliged to work or engage in youth activities in an unsafe work environment. You should ensure that your staff and service users are encouraged to raise concerns about safety and that they feel comfortable doing so.

In your risk assessment, you should have particular regard for whether the people doing the work are especially vulnerable to COVID-19 or if they are supporting people who might be.

If you have not already done so, you should carry out an assessment of the risks posed by COVID-19 in your delivery location as soon as possible. If you are currently operating, you are likely to have gone through a lot of this thinking already. We recommend that you use this document to identify any further improvements you should make. You should continually monitor, review and update your risk assessments with your local stakeholders (workers/volunteers, trade unions, young people and parents/carers and other appropriate parties).

15.0 Sharing the results of your risk assessment

You should share the results of your risk assessment with your stakeholders. If possible, you should consider publishing the results on your website (and we would expect all employers with over 50 workers to do so).

16.0 How to raise a concern

There may be occasions where concerns persist, such as concerns about unsafe practices, safeguarding, risk management, behaviour and social distancing (please note this is not an exhaustive list). You should be able to find support via the following routes:

- Contact your line manager, an employee representative or your organisations volunteer support team.
- Contact your national association or body.
- Contact the board of trustees or executive for your organisation.
- Contact your trade union if you have one.
- Use the HSE form available at <https://www.hse.gov.uk/contact/concerns.htm>.
- Contact HSE by phone on 0300 003 1647.

Things to consider

- Understanding and considering the particular circumstances of those with different protected characteristics.
- Involving and communicating appropriately with staff and young people whose protected characteristics or needs (SEND, BAME, young carers, etc.) might expose them to a different degree of risk or might make any steps you are thinking about taking inappropriate or challenging for them.
- Deciding if you need to put any particular measures or adjustments in place to fulfil your duties under the equality's legislation.
- Making reasonable adjustments to avoid disabled staff and young people being put at a disadvantage and assessing the health and safety risks for new or expectant mothers.
- Making sure that the steps you take do not have an unjustifiable negative impact on some groups compared to others, for example, those with caring responsibilities or those with religious commitments.

17.0 Accidents, security and other incidents

It is essential to prioritise safety during incidents and to follow your standard health and safety policies and procedures.

Things to consider

- In an emergency, for example, an accident, provision of first aid, a fire or a break-in, people do not have to stay socially distanced if it would be unsafe. If giving first aid or assistance to someone suspected of COVID-19, the first-aider should be encouraged to contact the NHS test and trace service.
- RIDDOR reporting advice should be followed for the reporting of relevant COVID-19 information.
- People involved in the provision of assistance to others should pay particular attention to sanitation measures immediately afterwards, including washing their hands.
- Reviewing your incident and emergency procedures to ensure they reflect the social distancing principles as much as possible.
- Organisations should keep a log of near misses and incidents and review this log to continually improve practices locally.
- Should a worker/volunteer or young person become unwell during a session, standard welfare measures should apply. If you suspect covid-19, they should return home and take a lateral flow test, then follow all NHS advice.
- When preparing an action plan and risk assessment, organisations should consider the behavioural and welfare needs of young people. A clear process/plan to address any risks should be communicated to all staff/leaders within sessions.

18.0 Managing people

All youth sector organisations need to take the requirement to minimise the contact resulting from visits to centres/units seriously. Sessions should only open when your action plan and risk assessments mean you are satisfied that you can safely minimise risk to vulnerable groups. The youth work support website has templates and checklists to support your decision-making process.

Things to consider

- Encouraging staff and young people to use hand sanitiser or handwashing to reduce the risk of transmission.
- Looking at how people walk through your premises and how you could adjust this to reduce congestion and contact between staff and young people, e.g. queue management or a one-way flow where possible.
- Ensuring any changes to entries and exits and any queue management systems to outdoor locations and facilities and to consider reasonable adjustments for those who need them, including disabled staff, young people and visitors.
- Managing outside queues to ensure they do not cause a risk to individuals or other businesses.
- Individuals who are advised to stay at home do not physically come to work/sessions. This includes individuals who have symptoms of COVID-19 as well as those who have tested positive, or live in a household with someone who has symptoms and they are not vaccinated and aged over 18.
- Employers must not knowingly require or encourage someone who is being required to self-isolate to come to work.

19.0 Cleaning

Before opening, make sure that any site or location that has been closed or partially operated is clean and ready to restart, including:

- An assessment for all sites, or parts of sites, that have been closed before restarting work.
- Cleaning procedures and/or providing hand sanitiser before restarting activity.
- Completing a deep clean if the premises have been closed for a long duration.
- Considering risks from legionella and taking precautions.

Keeping the workplace clean is essential for preventing transmission via contaminated surfaces. If your premises are shared with other organisations/contractors, a collective agreement should be put in place to outline each party's role and responsibilities.

Things to consider

- Frequent cleaning of work areas and equipment between uses using your usual cleaning products.
- Frequent cleaning of objects and surfaces that are touched regularly, e.g. kitchens and sports and ICT equipment.
- Clearing workspaces and removing waste and belongings from the work area at the end of a session.

If you are cleaning after a known or suspected case of COVID-19, refer to the specific guidance.

Organisations will need to ensure good levels of hygiene are maintained, this includes handwashing, sanitation facilities and toilets.

Things to consider

- Using signs and posters to build awareness of good handwashing technique, the need to increase handwashing frequency, avoiding touching your face and coughing and sneezing into a tissue that is binned safely or into your arm if a tissue is not available.
- Providing regular reminders and signage to maintain hygiene standards.
- Providing hand sanitiser in multiple locations in addition to washrooms.
- Setting clear use and cleaning guidance for toilets to ensure they are kept clean and that social distancing is achieved as much as possible.
- Enhancing cleaning for busy areas.
- Providing hand drying facilities with either paper towels or electrical dryers.

20.0 Communications and training

It is essential to make sure all staff, volunteers, young people and visitors understand the COVID-19-related safety procedures put in place. The decisions made during the creation of the local action plan and risk assessment need to be communicated. This must be done in an easily understandable way that will be understood by all in attendance.

Things to consider

- Providing clear, consistent and regular communication to improve understanding and the consistency in ways of working.
- Engaging with staff, volunteers and young people through existing communication routes to explain any changes in working arrangements.
- Ideally develop clear communication and training materials for workers prior to them returning to site, especially regarding any new procedures for arriving at work.
- Awareness and focus on the importance of mental health at times of uncertainty. The government has published guidance on the mental health and wellbeing aspects of coronavirus (COVID-19).
- Explaining guidelines using images and clear language that considers groups for whom English may not be their first language.
- Using visual communications, e.g. whiteboards and signage, to explain changes to programmes, activities or opening times to reduce the need for face-to-face communications.
- You will need to recognise that materials may need to be provided in different languages and formats to support accessibility. Also, those with additional needs may need support to access information. This should be provided.
- Ensure all staff and volunteers have been inducted and trained in any new procedures or requirements following your risk assessment. Keep this under continual review.

21.0 Waste disposal

When disposing of face coverings and PPE, people should do so in a 'black bag' waste bin or litter bin. Face coverings or PPE should not be put in a recycling bin or dropped as litter.

Organisations should provide extra bins for staff and customers to dispose of single-use face coverings and PPE and should ensure that staff and customers do not use a recycling bin.

People who are self-isolating, and members of their household, should double bag face coverings and items of PPE, these should be stored for 72 hours before being disposed of in a 'black bag' waste bin.

Note: The key points of the waste disposal guidance that your updates should reflect are:

- People should dispose of face coverings and PPE in a 'black bag' waste bin or litter bin. People should not put face coverings or PPE in a recycling bin or drop them as litter.
- People who are self-isolating, and members of their household, should double bag face coverings and items of PPE to be disposed of, and store them for 72 hours before putting them in a 'black bag' waste bin.
- Businesses should provide extra bins for staff and customers to throw away face coverings and PPE and should ensure that staff and customers do not use a recycling bin.

Appendix 1. Definitions

Vulnerable young people

There are two groups of vulnerable young people. The first is defined by the Department for Education as any young person or child in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, any young person with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) under the Children and Families Act 2014 or any child or young person who has been assessed as otherwise vulnerable by educational providers or local authorities.

The second group has a broader definition, with the focus being on supporting and safeguarding vulnerable young people, particularly 8–19-year-olds, through adolescence and the key stages of transitioning to adulthood. They are understood to be children and young people living in vulnerable family situations and includes those not known to formal or statutory services.

We recognise that young people have other vulnerabilities and difficulties, and some may have needs that have been amplified by COVID-19. This can result in risky behaviours and crisis points in their lives. Support for the vulnerable young people who are most in need should be a priority consideration for services and support during the COVID-19 pandemic. See the NYA's 'Out of Sight?' report for examples.

Risk and safeguarding assessment

Before commencing delivery, a comprehensive risk assessment must be completed that should, at the minimum, ask:

- Is there a need for this activity to take place? Could this work happen through other means?
- How will the proposed activity be managed safely? What are the ratios of staff/young people? How will disclosures be managed?
- How will social distancing guidelines be applied?
- Are there health risks to young people or staff/trusted adults that should be considered?
- Is PPE appropriate or needed (for personal care reasons, etc.)?
- Will the activities proposed ensure safe practice?

Enhanced risk assessment

An enhanced risk assessment builds on the risk and safeguarding assessment and also factors in the physical premises involved and any additional risks they may pose to the staff or public.

Safe spaces

Safe spaces are locations or premises where youth sector activities can take place. This will often be the buildings used to house your projects or activities. Safe spaces can also be outdoor spaces, such as camp sites and residential centres.

Recommended PPE

For most youth activities, PPE will not be required except for staff working in close contact for welfare or safeguarding reasons. This advice may change at any time. PPE should be used in line with UK Health Security Agency's guidance.

Hand sanitation

Handwashing facilities must be available. Additionally, hand sanitising gel can be provided.

Clinically extremely vulnerable

Clinically extremely vulnerable people will have received a letter telling them they are in this group or will have been told by their GP. Guidance on who is in this group can be found [here](#).

Clinically vulnerable people

Clinically vulnerable people include those aged 70 years or over and those with certain underlying health conditions. All members of this group are listed in the 'clinically vulnerable' section [here](#).

Detached youth activity

Activity which takes place away from traditional youth sector premises that is informal in nature. Youth workers visiting the local park or shops to engage with young people on their own terms.

Appendix 2.

Where to find support

The following websites may provide additional support:

The NYA has teamed up with UK Youth and the Federation for Detached Youth Work to provide further support, tools, checklists and model risk assessments: <https://youthworksupport.co.uk>

UK Government coronavirus website: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

Health and Safety Executive (HSE) general COVID-19 website: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/coronavirus.htm>

Staying secure during COVID-19 <https://www.cpni.gov.uk/staying-secure-during-covid-19-0>

National Council for Voluntary Organisations coronavirus webpage: <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/practical-support/information/coronavirus?carousel>

Coronavirus: your rights at work from Unison <https://www.unison.org.uk/coronavirus-rights-work/>

Appendix 3. Legal statement

The National Youth Agency (NYA) does not provide this document to the sector in anything less than 'guidance'. NYA takes no responsibility for how users of this document interpret or apply the guidance. Users of this guide must ensure they operate within the law, social distancing guidelines and meet their specific duties and responsibilities to stakeholders. It is for each organisational unit to make its own local decisions on how to apply the advice included. NYA cannot be held accountable for local decisions reached based on this guidance. Organisations must ensure they have suitable action plans, risk assessments and be self-satisfied that they have considered all reasonable actions to protect the welfare, health and safety of staff, volunteers, employees and service users.

This guidance does not supersede any legal obligations relating to health and safety, employment or equalities and it is important that as an organisation, charity, local authority or an employer you continue to comply with your existing obligations, including those relating to individuals with protected characteristics. This document contains non-statutory guidance to consider when complying with these obligations.

When considering how to apply this guidance, consider agency workers, contractors and other people, as well as your employees and service users/young people. To help you decide which actions to take, you need to carry out an appropriate COVID-19 risk assessment, just as you would for other health and safety hazards. This risk assessment must be done in consultation with unions or workers.

This guidance document has been drafted with the support of UK Health Security Agency and the Health and Safety Executive. Users should ensure they are using the most up- to-date version of this document and can check this at any time via the NYA website.


www.nya.org.uk

This guidance document has been provided to allow the youth sector to draw its own conclusions as to the nature of safe youth activity and appropriate levels and types of activities at any given time.



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