

# NYA

## National Youth Agency

### Youth charities are 'running on empty'

November 2020

Loss of funding and job cuts will see the closure of youth services through the winter, just when young people need them most.

With youth services and centres set to close their doors under the new national lockdown, some youth charities won't survive the winter and young people<sup>1</sup> will miss out on vital youth services.

In the previous national lockdown from March, many youth clubs and services closed or moved online. [Over one million young people went off the radar<sup>2</sup>](#). Since September many youth services re-opened, recognised as essential services and able to operate even in Tier 3 areas<sup>3</sup>. Under guidance for the national lockdown, one-to-one contact and small group activities can still take place where these support vulnerable young people. Many youth sector activities have closed.

There has been some additional funding for children and youth charities as part of the £750m coronavirus fund for charities<sup>4</sup>. Other funding has been committed for schools and employment initiatives<sup>5</sup>. However, the government's £500m youth investment fund due to start from April 2020, to help transform and increase capacity of the youth sector, has yet to be spent<sup>6</sup>. [Delayed funding risks a lost year for young people, disproportionately impacted by COVID-19](#).

Youth services simply do not have the capacity or enough funding to meet young people's vastly increased needs<sup>7</sup>. [Many youth charities are 'running on empty' with depleted reserves and income slashed by half or more<sup>8</sup>](#):

- 1 in 4 youth charities will not be able to meet their running costs, in the run up to Christmas
- 3 in 4 will have run down their reserves in that time, almost all said their reserves are at risk
- 2 in 3 will not be able to meet costs by March, leading to a major round of redundancies being made in the next 3 months
- 1 in 2 will not be able to meet operational costs within 12 months
- 7 in 10 have lost staff capacity; with 1 in 3 set to make staff redundant this year
- 3 in 4 have lost volunteer capacity

Larger, national youth charities face a financial crisis and fall-away in income and from fundraising. Redundancies and sale of any assets may secure their survival, but at great cost in lost capacity and services for young people. The way that the support schemes are structured also means it is likely that part-time workers - which are a large part of the youth sector - will also lose their positions, or have severely reduced hours. The risk to smaller youth charities is more pronounced with furlough or redundancy not an option for much of the workforce, either on casual employment or as volunteers.

The scale of the loss of youth services is therefore far greater than that shown in redundancy figures alone.

- **Without staff support and resources, the volunteer-base will fall away.**
- **For every job lost, hundreds of young people will lose their trusted adult youth worker.**
- **As shown previously under national lockdown, when youth services were cut back over one million young people were left vulnerable with little or no support.**

**A further round of major cuts is also predicted from local authority youth services.** The loss of local authority run or commissioned youth services has a knock-on effect for youth charities, losing the scale of funding, training and resources that help support charities too. Left unprotected by government, youth services have already been cut by over 70% in less than a decade.

- For every £16 cut on local services, £1 falls on youth work<sup>9</sup>.
- That is the equivalent of over £1bn annual expenditure cut from youth service budgets.

Such local authority cuts also place greater pressure on the voluntary and community sector to try to fill the gaps to meet local needs. Yet the government has suspended the requirement on local authorities to report on its spending on local youth services. This means there will not be spending figures released until 2022.

**NYA is calling for:**

**An urgent package of support to mobilise and deploy youth workers through the winter, sustained throughout national lockdown and any regional tier emergency measures.**

1. **Early release of youth investment funds** to training youth workers and up-skill volunteers to support vulnerable young people now and to prepare the ground for 2021, through COVID-19 and beyond.
2. **Additional funding for youth charities** to secure front line services and their capacity to meet young people's needs, amplified by COVID-19 extended over time.
3. **Strengthened guidance and ring-fenced funding** for local authorities, to invest in youth services – recognised as essential services which transform young people's lives.
4. **The inclusion of young people with their voices heard** in the evidence, decision-making and response to COVID-19, to be treated fairly and ambitious for their future.



Leigh Middleton, NYA Chief Executive:

“Youth work transforms young people’s lives. Never has this been more important, through the pandemic and the challenges of the global recession. By not taking immediate action, we risk a lost year for our young people, for which we all will pay the price.

We need to invest in frontline services to support vulnerable young people right now and to put the youth sector on a surer footing, able to grow with young people and transform lives as we rebuild the country together.”

NYA is the national body for youth work in England (Professional, Statutory & Regulatory Body). For more information visit [www.nya.org.uk](http://www.nya.org.uk)

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## Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Youth services typically support young people 11-19 years of age, and up to 24 years for those with learning difficulties, though youth services are regularly accessed from ages 8, aligned to other children's services. See NYA Guidance for local authorities on providing youth services, Oct. 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Youth Sector Standard: Centre for Youth Impact (CYI) coordinated a survey of 177 youth organisations April to mid-June 2020; published by National Youth Agency, July 2020

<sup>3</sup> National Youth Agency (NYA): Managing youth sector activities and spaces during COVID-19; guidance published as the Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) for youth work in England

<sup>4</sup> In April 2020, the Chancellor announced a £750m package of support for frontline charities across the UK, including hospices and those supporting domestic abuse victims also; including a £200m Coronavirus Community Support Fund for small and medium sized charities through the National Lottery Community Fund, which supported some charities for children and young people.

<sup>5</sup> The Kickstart scheme provides funding to employers to create job placements for 16 to 24 year olds on Universal Credit. The schools' Catch-up Premium is a one-off fund for 2020-21 to ensure schools have the support they need to make up for lost teaching time; alongside a national tutoring programme for targeted support.

<sup>6</sup> The Youth Investment Fund (YIF) of £500m over 5 years was first announced in September. 2019 and confirmed as a 2019 manifesto commitment, due to start in 2020-21, from April 2020.

<sup>7</sup> NYA: Out of Sight? – vulnerable young people, April 2020, estimated a three-fold increase vulnerabilities through COVID-19, rising to 3 million vulnerable young people (8-19 year olds)

<sup>8</sup> Youth Sector Standard: CYI coordinated a survey of 85 youth organisations from 9 July to 1<sup>st</sup> Sept. 2020

## Local services for young people

<sup>9</sup> In assessing local authority spending patterns over the past decade we focus on services for which councils' responsibilities have remained generally consistent since 2010; social care, housing, culture, environment and regulation, planning and development, and central and other services.

According to the Institute for Fiscal Studies, since 2010 there has been a significant fall in the revenues available to councils to fund these local services, with councils' budgets suggesting that fiscal revenues will have fallen by £11.4 billion (18%) by 2019-20

Over that same period youth services have been cut by £0.685bn, each year on average; this shows that for every £16 cut for local services, £1 has been cut from youth services.

Adjusted for inflation this reveals an annual loss of over £1 billion on local youth services.


Sources:-

i. Local authorities submit statements on planned and actual expenditure on education and children's social care, under Section 251 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

ii. Institute for Fiscal Studies, English Local Government Funding: Trends and Challenges in 2019 and Beyond (2019)

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