

Questionnaire

UK COVID-19 Inquiry: Module 2 - Rule 9 Request to UK Youth

Reference: M2/R9R/UKY/TJS

Please provide the following information:

1. A brief overview of the history, legal status and aims of the organisation or body.

Please explain whether the work of the organisation or body is UK wide, or is instead confined to England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland only.

Working across the country for over a century, UK Youth is a leading charity, committed to providing access to appropriate, high quality youth work services in every community. We want to ensure that young people are empowered to build bright futures, regardless of their background or circumstances. Young people with complex needs and those from disadvantaged backgrounds are being hardest hit by rising inequality and cuts to local services.

UK Youth is a Company Limited by Guarantee, registered in England and Wales, governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association dated 16 March 2005 as amended on 7 December 2016. It is registered as a charity with the Charity Commission in England and Wales

2. A brief description of the group(s) which the organisation or body supports or represents.

Through the UK Youth Movement, we build capacity, unlock funding and develop a sense of connection with young people and the youth workers who support them. Together we reach 1.6 million young people, offering support, training and access to high quality services.

3. A brief overview of the work of the organisation or body in supporting or representing the relevant group(s) between January 2020 and Spring 2022 as it relates to the response to Covid-19 of (a) the UK Government; (b) the Scottish Government; (c) the Welsh Government; and/or (d) the Northern Ireland Executive.

The pandemic turned 2020-21 into a very difficult year for young people, particularly those from underserved communities. All the restrictions made it extremely difficult to provide them with services.

But UK Youth still delivered, supporting thousands of young people and we are proud to say, that across our programmes, we had an incredible impact.

- Youth workers play a crucial role in supporting young people's mental health and wellbeing. The intensity of this work has only increased over the course of the pandemic. Over the last two years, we distributed nearly £2m of emergency funding to the youth sector. Youth organisations told us that they were seeing a significant increase in the number of young people presenting with mental health problems and going without support. In 2022, we partnered with the Julia and Hans Rausing Trust and the Westminster Foundation to launch the 'Thriving Minds' fund. Over three years this will see £11m invested in youth organisations to support them to improve young people's mental health and well being.
- Through the programme, we will also offer youth workers specialist mental health training and capacity building - supporting them to strengthen their relationships with other mental health providers from across the statutory and voluntary sectors.

Immediately after the outbreak hit, we undertook a survey with the UK Youth Movement to gain immediate insights into the support they would need most. We received 252 responses, representing 1,848 organisations who supported 608,700 young people in 2019. Our findings are available [here](#).

- Lockdown also made it difficult for young people to socialise, which led to increased loneliness. To combat this and increase social interaction, we supported youth workers to deliver some of our group programmes online. From 2020 to 2021 our "Belong Collective" supported and engaged 388 youth workers and practitioners to connect and tackle youth loneliness.
- We set up the UK Youth Fund was launched to address the devastating impact that the Covid-19 pandemic is having on young people and their youth services. We were hearing that many organisations were fighting for survival, whilst still trying to support the young people who need their help. The UK Youth Fund was launched with an initial commitment of funding from Pears Foundation and the Paul Hamlyn Foundation (thanks to match funding from DCMS through the Community Match Challenge). 118 organisations were awarded a grant from the initial funding pot, and the total funding awarded was £1,839,652.
- Youth Covid-19 Support Fund - We worked to help support this with PWC, providing support to the sector through twice weekly webinars, Q&As and responding to enquiries by email. Over 500 organisations directly engaged with us to help them understand and interpret the application process.

4. A list of any articles or reports the organisation or body has published or contributed to, and/or evidence it has given (for example to Parliamentary Select Committees) regarding the impact on the group(s) which the organisation or body supports or represents of the response to Covid-19 by (a) the UK Government; (b) the Scottish Government; (c) the Welsh Government; and/or (d) the Northern Ireland Executive. Please include links to those documents where possible.

- Please find here a link to our Impact Report for 2020/21 to gain more information.
- This report focuses on the impact to the youth organisations.

- This report looks at the impact on young people and the wider youth sector.
- Please also find here our UK Youth Review submission to DCMS consultation on out of school support for young people

5. The view of the organisation or body as to whether the group(s) it supports or represents was adequately considered when decisions about the response to Covid-19 were made by (a) the UK Government; (b) the Scottish Government; (c) the Welsh Government; and/or (d) the Northern Ireland Executive. Please also explain the reasons for the view expressed by the organisation or body in this respect.

We believe there was a lack of consideration to the groups we represent during the crisis:

- The lack of coordination in government around young people and youth policy is detrimental to good policy at the best of times and hugely detrimental to young people at the worst of times and made communication over the pandemic very difficult. This is why we believe there must be one role with responsibility for young people in government, for example a return to a Minister for Youth.
- Young people themselves were not consulted on the major decisions that impacted them throughout the pandemic, or given any agency in life changing policies such as the closure of schools.
- When these decisions were made there was no attempt to ensure cross sector partnerships to alleviate the impact. For example with the closure of schools there was a lack of consideration of educational disruption and how youth workers could support vulnerable young people who could no longer attend schools/ how to manage risks facing young people when not attending school during the day.
- The issue of youth workers being recognised as essential workers was also an acute one. In May/June 2020, youth work was not named in initial guidance so it was very unclear what youth orgs and sector leaders were able to do to support young people and this took concerted lobbying by UK Youth and the Back Youth Alliance to change, ensuring youth workers were deemed essential workers.
- There was very little youth club appropriate guidance around safe opening – originally youth orgs needed to cross reference between the schools guidance and then community centre guidance, none of which quite fit.

6. Whether the organisation or body raised any concerns about the consideration being given to the group(s) which it supports or represents with (a) the UK Government; (b) the Scottish Government; (c) the Welsh Government; and/or (d) the Northern Ireland Executive, when the Government(s) and/or Executive were making decisions about their response to Covid-19. Please provide a list of any such correspondence or meetings with the UK Government, Scottish Government, Welsh Government and/or the Northern Ireland Executive, including the dates on which the body or organisation

wrote or such meetings were held, to whom the correspondence was addressed or with whom the meeting was held, and any response received from the UK Government, Scottish Government, Welsh Government and/or Northern Ireland Executive addressing such concerns.

We had regular meetings with officials in DCMS, both as an individual organisation but also as a member of the Back Youth Alliance. While these meetings did eventually result in Youth Workers being listed as essential workers, we felt overall there was little remit for the Department to change the policy issues impacting us and the sector we represent.

7. A brief summary of the views of the organisation or body as to any lessons, if any, that can be learned from any consideration which was given to the group(s) that the organisation or body supports or represents by (a) the UK Government; (b) the Scottish Government; (c) the Welsh Government; and/or (d) the Northern Ireland Executive when they were making decisions about their response to Covid-19.

Lessons learnt; these are focused on our sector and organisational response:

- The range of provision and responsibility spread over a number of Departments makes its very hard to coordinate, and this is why we believe there needs to be a return of a Minister for Youth role in government.
- The lack of recognition at a systemic level of this profession that provides billions to the economy has real world impact particularly during a crisis.
- The financial impact that the crisis had on youth organisations was so serious that many have still not recovered. Youth organisations desperately need financial support to continue operating, rebuild their workforce and adapt their services in order to support young people through and beyond the pandemic. For more information please see our reports (as listed in the response to Q4) [here](#) and [here](#).
- The impact of not recognising youth work has an impact on the ability of organisations to support young people. We know now many young people have simply not returned to school or dropped out of services and mental and physical health issues were higher than ever recorded as a result of this lack of support.