UK YOUTH

A guide to delivering

Digital youth work

A response to delivering high quality digital youth work during the COVID-19 public health crisis and beyond.

#StandWithYouth

Welcome

Welcome to this guide on delivering digital youth work. We've put this together to help organisations, youth workers and volunteers to deliver high quality youth work using digital technology during the coronavirus pandemic and beyond. This guide provides guidance, templates and resources that will help you to get set up and provide reassurance if you're already delivering online. Please remember that all existing, organisational policies should remain in place and for up to date UK guidance on the coronavirus including social distancing measures, please visit the gov.uk website.

UK Youth, NYA and The Mix have partnered to bring together relevant advice, guidance, support and tools for youth workers, young people and organisations during the COVID 19 pandemic, for further information please visit the Youth Work Support webpage

Thank you to the following organisations for sharing your resources and guidance and contributing to this guide; Young Somerset, Proud Trust, Onside and Leap CC. We know this is a fast-moving situation and new resources are being created daily so please do get in touch if you have information to add to this document: movement@ukyouth.org

Last updated: May 2020

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Getting set up

If you are new to delivering digital youth work and online meetings, it is important to do your research. There are lots of platforms available and lots of support and resources to help you get started.

Do's

Use a fit-for-purpose system that your organisation has approved. See section below on 'Choosing the Right Software/ Technology'.

Test your setup is working before you meet young people online by delivering a practice session with a colleague or friend.

Close all other apps, tabs and windows on your device before a session, especially programs that use a lot of memory or data, or docs with sensitive information, as accidental screen-sharing can happen.

If connection is not performing well, request others on the same connection not to use high data applications, such as video streaming or gaming.

Use headphones or earphones to reduce audio-clipping.

Ensure you have a private, confidential space, free from background distractions or noise-disturbances.

Have a clear procedure in place for dropped connections – e.g. phone call immediately.

Consider in advance what materials a client might need to be sent via email before the session.

Don'ts

Avoid using 4G data connections as they lead to poorer quality audio and video.

Avoid having lots of apps or internet tabs open, as this may slow down your device and/or internet connection.

Avoid letting many people use the same internet connection for high bandwidth apps like video streaming and gaming during sessions.

Avoid using speakers to hear young people, as this will lead to audio clipping and make it harder to listen and reduce relational depth.

Avoid interruptions during the session by requesting all people in the building do not disturb you.

Avoid having notifications on your device as this will create audio-visual distractions and reduce relational depth.

Avoid having sources of light such as windows behind you, as this will reduce image clarity for your client.

Avoid not having a back-up plan for when internet connect fails.

Avoid trying to figure out how to use a software feature during a client's session or use a client's time to send information needed during the session.

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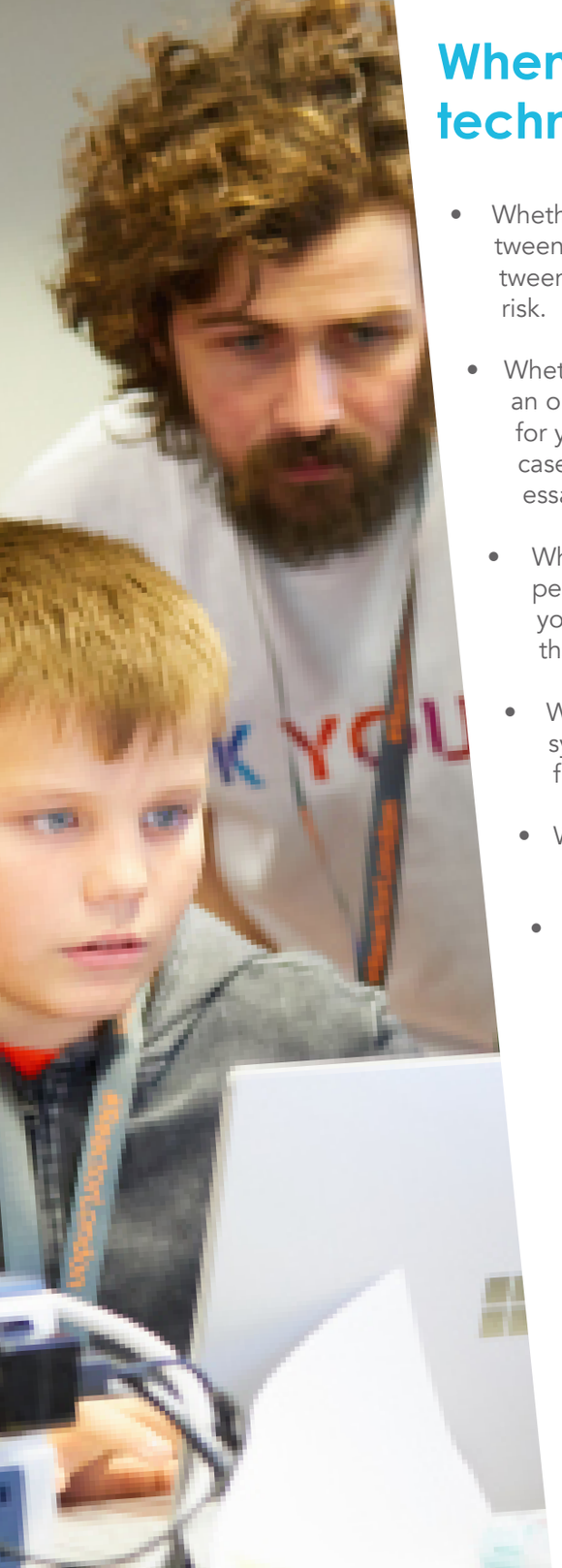


When choosing a software/ technology, think about:

- Whether it allows private communication between youth workers and young people, or between young people – this can be a safeguarding risk.
- Whether it requires young people to have an online account – this may be an issue for young people below the age of 13 in which case parental or carer involvement will be necessary.
- Whether it needs to be installed on young people's devices – this may be an issue for young people without administrative rights to their devices.
- Whether it works on multiple operating systems and web browsers and whether it is free to use.
- What is the limit on the number of attendees?
- What is the time limit on the length of the session?

Do

Be familiar with software features that you may need to use during the session, such as screen sharing, before you begin the session with a client.

Aim to have the main light source facing you, as this will aid camera brightness, reduce glare, and allow the client to see your face clearly, helping to establish relational depth.

Managing risks and safeguarding

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) require risk assessments to be carried out every time there are new procedures which could lead to new hazards; therefore, it is imperative that given these new circumstances your organisation carries out its own risk assessment. Furthermore, most insurance companies will require this. All risk assessments should be signed off by senior managers, or in line with your organisational procedures on managing risk. You can see an example **risk assessment here.**

We have a firm commitment to safeguarding. We believe that no child, young person or vulnerable adult should ever experience abuse of any kind. We all have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children, young people and vulnerable adults and to keep them safe.

How can you ensure safeguarding in your online sessions?
Interacting with young people online in any form can raise safeguarding issues that you need to be aware of:

- Ensure that young people have their parents'/guardians' consent to take part in the online session and request that parents/guardians are present whenever possible.
- If your young person is below the age of 13, then almost all online platforms will require their parents/guardians to sign in on their behalf or authorise their accounts.
- You should only run online sessions if you have enough youth workers in each virtual environment depending on numbers of young people involved.
- Avoid using personal social media to engage in remote sessions and do not share personal details with young people over any communication platform.

Consent processes

Getting consent is just as important when young people are accessing support services remotely. The risks are different for internet-based communications. You should gather consent before any support provision, in the same way you would for face-to-face support. Below is some suggested wording:

We take appropriate steps to make sure that any information you give us during virtual communications is private and secure, but no internet-based communications are completely secure. There is an increased security risk that your conversations may be intercepted or disclosed to third parties when using video or audio communication tools.

To help us keep your information safe and secure:

- **Understand that video calls, text messages, private messages through social media, and social messaging e.g. WhatsApp are not secure in the same way as a face-to-face conversation.**
- **Use a private computer/device – avoid public computers e.g. libraries.**
- **Use private accounts and make sure your passwords are strong.**
- **Make sure you log out of devices and accounts once you've finished using them.**
- **Use a secure internet connection – avoid public or guest WiFi as this is much more susceptible to interception.**

If you are worried about using virtual communications, you can speak to [your youth worker/appropriate staff member] for advice on how to stay safe.
By using virtual communication tools, you will also agree to the terms and conditions of the relevant platforms, for example Jitsi or Big Blue Button. These are updated regularly and are available through your account settings.

Things to consider

Essentially risk and safeguarding online should be managed in the same way as face to face sessions, you should continue to follow your organisations safeguarding policy.

Appropriate support information, such as crisis information or 24-hour support, should be made easily available to young people.

Try to confirm the young person's location (e.g. are they at home, in school a friend's house) at the beginning of the session, so that if urgent risk arises, ther emergency services can be dipatched to the right location.

Have a plan in place if a young person were to indicate an intention to significantly harm themselves and cut-off sessions.

Ensure you have in advance the young person's consent to send information such as crisis support, and where you can send this information safely.

Delivering digital youth work

It's suggested to limit group work to 90 minutes and one-to-one work to 30 minutes to protect young people's health and well-being.

Communicate clearly with young people, parents/guardians and volunteers.
Let young people, parents/guardians and volunteers know that the session will be held online. Ensure parental or carer consent has been given where necessary. Share the link to your online session, ensure it is password protected so only those invited can attend.

Provide clear instructions needed to join (this will depend on how you design your session). Young people should be offered a brief phone call or sent an introduction email to help them set up for an online session.

Beginning & ending online sessions

Ensure everyone is comfortable with the link, and that they can communicate with you either through audio or the messaging function and that they can see or hear you OK. Be sure to recommend that if the connection is not clear that;

- They can tell you and ask you to say things again, if needed.
- They can request others reduce their use of the connection by, for example, turning off streaming or gaming apps.
- If the connection is really bad, they can switch to phone or reschedule.

You should also;

- Communicate clear confidentiality guidelines.
- Ensure all young people have provided consent, to support, and via video format.
- Follow any normal procedures for recording the session, if you are going to do so.

At the end of the session, check out with participants to see how they have found the session. Remind all participants they can request a one to one over the phone or online if needed. Provide some positive feedback about the session. Close by informing participants of when the next session is, what other resources they can access in the meantime and any other support available to them.

Top tips for hosting virtual meetings and sessions

- **If you're leading the meeting, announce this at the start.**
- It's useful to have a second person available to admit people into the meeting and take notes.
- **Attendees should be asked to mute their microphone if they're not talking, which ensures people are not distracted by other noise.**
- Explain the purpose of the meeting, any agenda, and how the meeting will run including the length of the meeting, how and when people will be asked to talk/ contribute and how long will be spent on each item.
- It's useful to use the chat function if available – encourage people to introduce themselves using this if it's a large meeting and to ask questions.
- **Verbally summarise key issues and decisions throughout the meeting and check for clarity by asking participants to post onto the text function.**
- Announce when the meeting is halfway through and again with ten minutes left until the end.
- **Set the date for any future meetings if needed at the end of the meeting.**

Things to consider

Be aware of what's behind you; busy backgrounds and cluttered rooms can be distracting, and windows can cause glare or make your face too dark to see.

Don't make assumptions about things that may seem obvious to you; instead, spell out the obvious. Describe exactly what you mean, even if you think you're repeating yourself. Do not assume that everyone has the same information you do.

Check for understanding, ask an explicit question. For example, "Is that clear?" "Is there anything I'm not adding here that you think is relevant?" "Does anyone else have anything to add?" These will help ensure everyone's on the same page.

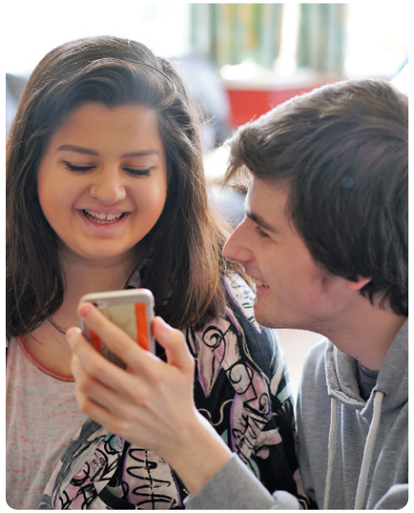
Top tip

We send up to 10,000 non-verbal cues per minute in face-to-face interactions. Turning on your camera is an essential part of effectively communicating.

Group work

- Keep group work to longer than 90 minutes on 15 minutes of a subject then move to the next subject/activity to keep momentum.
- Be creative – use quizzes, short clips, text functions to create stories, poems and prose, use word games, introducing pets and family, group singing using displayed lyrics.

Group check in:



- The group check-in is where the name game, pronouns, and ice breaker question are asked.
- The Code of Conduct should be shared at the beginning of the session.
- A positive news sharing circle can be used at the beginning of the session where young people share good/ positive/interesting news with each other.
- Youth workers will need to ensure they are supportive, have high-energy levels, create a safe and enabling space for the group.
- Ask young people to use the text function, to post any items that are concerning them, that they want the group to focus on; this will need to be closely moderated by the youth worker to ensure it is kept in a solution focused framework.
- Consider how you might evaluate the session; creating online forms, using tools such as Mentimetre and Kahoot can help to capture feedback and learning. Posting questions in the chat function if available is also a good tool. This will signal the close of session and encourage the young people to reflect and think about what they have learnt and got out of the session.

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Think about the structure of your session:

- Let attendees know in advance what you are planning for them to do.
- Plan an icebreaker activity for the start of the session. This could be as simple as asking young people to say 'hi' and share with others an interesting fact about them.
- Share the correct links with young people, parents/guardians and volunteers in advance.
- Decide if you want to run sessions for specific groups of young people by age, programming language, or level of support needed. Some online video conferencing tools have a function to create separate breakout rooms, or you can create multiple meetings to accommodate different groups.
- If possible, facilitate a showcase at the end of the session so that all learners can show off their work.

Other helpful tips

- ★ Provide detailed instructions for young people, parents/guardians and volunteers.
- ★ Start by asking everyone about their setup and skill level.
- ★ Have at least two youth workers that are moderators in each virtual environment.
- ★ Give space for pauses in online sessions.
- ★ Advise to use headphones.
- ★ Share the session rules and platform instruction in advance.

One-to-one

You may be have previously delivered one to one support to young people, providing mentoring, counselling or advice & guidance support. Or you may have started to deliver this now because of the current crisis. We recommend taking the following steps:

- Organisational policies around lone-working are continued to be followed – these may need amending to include virtual meetings.
- Record your meetings in line with your organisational policies and procedures and continue to follow your organisational safeguarding policies.
- One to ones need to be arranged outside of other scheduled group work activity.
- Only offer one to ones at specific times.
- Where possible limit individual's one to one workload, involve other teams if they have contracted hours to use.
- Record all contact with young people on your contact management system/ database.

Remind all staff that if they are working with a young person who is in crisis and/or they need additional support, they should contact their line manager or safeguarding lead and if need be dial 999. Further resources and support are available at the end of the guide.

Please refer to further guidance in this document.

Live streaming

You might want to offer a regular programme of activity-based sessions to young people in order to strengthen feelings of connection, support young people to structure their time and develop a routine, and provide access to activities and exercise. This can be done using live streaming.

- Sessions would not be interactive, but a live stream that young people can rewatch.
- Sessions would be programmed at set times, so they know when to log in and watch them.
- Sessions should last no longer than 30 minutes
- Sessions could be directive activities (such as breathing exercises or an art activity or vogue moves, where young people watch and try to copy at home), or they could be listening sessions (such as giving a talk on an interesting subject or a reading of a book e.g. Alien Nation.
- These would be open to all young people if they wished to watch.

Supporting young people

All the news about #coronavirus right now can be daunting - particularly for children and young people who might find it difficult to understand what they're seeing online or on TV so talk about #COVID19 in a way that's comforting - and not scary. Start by inviting children and young people to talk about the issue. Find out how much they already know and follow their lead. There is useful advice here. Take the chance to remind them about good hygiene practices without introducing new fears.

All young people should be encouraged to talk freely. Drawing, stories and other activities may help to open a discussion. Most importantly, don't minimize or avoid their concerns. Be sure to acknowledge their feelings and assure them that it's natural to feel scared about these things.

Demonstrate that you're listening by giving them your full attention and make sure they understand that they can talk to you. Remind them that you care. Encourage them to seek reliable sources of information about the virus. Social media at this time can be very unreliable. Instead identify reliable news and information sources and recommend these to young people.

Encourage young people to socially distance, but if they would like to help their local community, encourage them to sign up to local volunteer schemes through the local authority hubs and NHS responder scheme.

Be aware that the feelings of young people (and yourself/ staff) around the virus will probably reflect the stages of grief: shock, denial, anger/blame (including blaming self), bargaining, depression, looking for solutions and acceptance. It is possible (hopefully unlikely) that a close family member of the young people you support could get very sick or die and this might even take place in their homes. Regular checking-in is key, and creative thinking alongside them will help.

Provide information on whether the organisation will be providing practical support to one another and/or young people. e.g. getting shopping for those isolated. If this is the case, it will need to be discussed, risk assessed and a safety plan for such activities will be agreed. In these circumstances, advice should be clear around staff 'putting on their own oxygen mask first'.

Supporting staff

It's important to remember that this is a confusing, stressful time for everyone. We know that it's important to consider the well-being of youth workers, front line practitioners and volunteers who are supporting young people and leaders of youth organisations. Here's some top tips for supporting positive health and wellbeing with staff:

Work space at home:
The environment you set up for yourself can have a huge impact on your happiness and productivity when you're working remotely. Set up an environment that is as ergonomically friendly as you can. This might mean bringing your mouse and/or keyboard from the office and clearing off a table at your house to work.

Set expectations with your family and housemates:
Share your working hours with them and make sure they know when they shouldn't interrupt. Consider setting a Do Not Disturb schedule. If you have caring responsibilities for children consider organising alongside other parents or family members in the household with consideration given to when their work needs to be carried out.

Self-Care:
Remember to take care of yourself! Whether it's the coronavirus or any illness, we encourage everyone to take time off if they need to and rest up before returning to work.
This is a stressful time for everyone and it's important to recognise that everyone deals with stress in different ways.

Set work boundaries:
When you work from home it can be hard to "turn off" because your physical space doesn't change. It's tempting to work from the most comfortable spot in your house (your couch, bed) but try to avoid it if you can. Make sure you're able to relax and unwind at the end of the workday, having dedicated "work-free" spaces like couches and beds can be instrumental in helping you differentiate working from resting and recharging.

Create a work routine:
A strong work routine can help you stay on track and set work boundaries that prevent burnout. Think about creating a new routine that works for you that includes start and end times for work every day, negotiate this with your line manager and communicate this to your team(s). Match your Do Not Disturb schedule to this. Build in time to cook and eat. Take breaks and walk around your home or outside to stretch and give your eyes a break.

Dress appropriately:
Make sure to change out of your pyjamas and wear appropriate clothing for any virtual calls using video.

Resources and support

Some ideas for youth work sessions!

Creative and arts:

- Zine making - topics chosen or suggested beforehand, 30 minutes to start zines together. Take photos to share.
- Drawing challenges: Make a 3-word story and try to draw it - send your pictures to celebrate and share!
- Theatre making workshop - make a storyboard of a plot, make tableaux using your body and items from your room, make your own costume.

Education:

- Interesting expert talks on particular subjects e.g. science or philosophy or TED talks

Mental health:

- Mindfulness - walkthrough meditation, open to all and inclusive of those with religious faiths.

Life skills:

- Cooking sessions - easy simple meals, basic nutrition advice, store cupboard meals on a budget.
- Physical activity - dance/zumba inspired movement fitness sessions, circuits, vogue and runway basics.
- Online safety

For further support and resources check out the Youth Work Support website

Looking to join the UK Youth Movement? Sign up here.

Digital Support

- Be Internet Citizens have created a community toolkit which is a great resource, inlcuding modules such as misinformation, fake news and online emotional manipulation.
- Digital youth work training materials.
- How to teach from home using Google Hangout and how to start using Google Hangout.
- Digital youth work, tips and ideas.
- Effective Therapy Top Tips.
- Third Sector Lab: weekly Zoom sessions with 100 other charities sharing experiences of online support.
- A Comprehensive Review and a Meta-Analysis of the Effectiveness of Internet-Based Psychotherapeutic Interventions
- Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO): a free 15-minute chat with a digital expert to help charities get started with remote working.
- Efficacy of synchronous telepsychology interventions for people with anxiety, depression, PTSD and adjustment disorder: A rapid evidence assessment.
- The Proud Trust suite of documents.
- Free Microsoft teams resources.

For tips on how to look after mental health and wellbeing visit Mental Health Foundation, Mind, Young Minds, and the NHS website.

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UK Youth London Office,
Kings Building, 16 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HQ

Kayleigh Wainwright
Head of Engagement and Advocacy
Email: kayleigh.wainwright@ukyouth.org

Find us on: