

Impact Survey:
**Covid-19 and
UK Youth Circus**

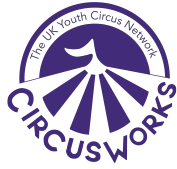
Report 2
10th June 2020

Compiled and Edited by Leah Carroll



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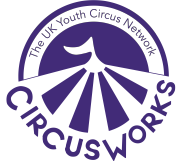
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



Impact Survey Report 2

Index

About this Report.....	3
Thanks To.....	5
Finances.....	6
Staff.....	17
Young People.....	23
Working Remotely.....	28
Reopening.....	35
Afterword.....	42



About this Report

Background

This is CircusWorks second Impact Survey Report into the effects that the on-going Covid-19 crisis is having on UK youth circus.

At the end of March 2020, when we published our first Impact Survey Report, youth circuses had suddenly closed. For 74% of them, their income had disappeared entirely, and their immediate concern was short-term survival, as many did not believe they would survive this crisis.

Two and a half months on, in this our second Impact Survey, some of the main questions we set out to answer include:

- How the situation has changed;
- If youth circuses have the financial support they need to survive short-term, and if any have fallen through the gaps;
- What mid- and long-term issues youth circuses are facing, and what further support is needed;
- What work youth circuses are doing during this crisis;
- How and when youth circuses are planning to reopen, and what support they need to do so.

Our most important function as an organisation is to support the youth circus sector, so the ideas youth circuses have shared in this survey will be used to shape our actions going forward.

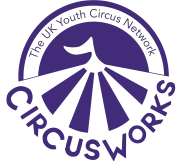
Process

Participation

37 youth circuses from across the UK participated in this survey; their names are included in the 'Thanks To' section of this report.

Analysis and Comparison

In some sections of this report, we compare data from this survey to our first Impact Survey from March 2020, to understand how the situation has changed in that time. There are issues with comparing these two surveys: the first survey was anonymous, so we have no way of knowing if the data that



Impact Survey Report 2

we are comparing is from different youth circuses. Additionally, a greater number of youth circuses responded to this survey than to the first.

Sections of this survey focus on youth circus staff and young people. We are aware that asking youth circuses to talk on behalf of these groups is not necessarily as effective as contacting them directly, however surveying staff and young people directly would simply be too large an undertaking for us at this time.

Timescale

Our online survey was launched on May 18th, 2020. This report contains the responses we received in 10 days; the last submission was collected on May 27th, 2020.

Editing

Information in this report has been altered to protect anonymity, to correct spelling and grammar, and for clarity.

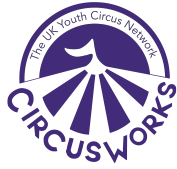
Questions are presented here in the same wording as they are in the survey. Some charts present information from multiple questions.

For some questions, youth circuses could select multiple responses. Charts that present data from these questions are marked as 'multi-option'.

At the end of each section of this report, there is a summary of the main points that youth circuses raised in their written comments.

If you have time, please read the Supplement to this report: it contains all of the written answers by youth circuses, in their own words, and is an illuminating and emotive illustration of the circumstances that youth circuses are facing.

DATA ANALYSIS AND ADDITIONAL NOTES ARE SHOWN IN RED.



Impact Survey Report 2

Thanks To

We like to extend our sincerest thanks to the thirty-seven youth circuses that contributed to the survey: their names are listed below. We also would like to thank Arts Council England and the National Lottery, for funding and supporting this project.

Thank you.

Aerial Allsorts	Circus Stars Frome	Organised Kaos
Aerial Days	CircusMASH	Salisbury
Aircraft Circus	Citrus Pips	Community Circus
Academy	<i>(Citrus Arts)</i>	<i>(Buzz Action</i>
Airhedz Youth	Concrete Circus	<i>Foundation CIO)</i>
Circus	Five Ring Youth	School of Larks
<i>(Airheadz Aerial</i>	Circus	Skylight Circus Arts
<i>Training)</i>	<i>(Circus Central)</i>	Sweet Circus
And Circus	GEMS Circus Arts	Take Flight
Belfast Community	School	<i>(Scarabeus Aerial</i>
Circus School	Greentop	<i>Theatre)</i>
Circo Kernow	Community Circus	The Circus House
<i>(Swamp Circus)</i>	Centre	The Oak Circus
Circomedia Youth	In Your Space Circus	Centre
Circus	School	Top Banana Circus
CircoPyro Youth	Mimbre Youth	Tuyo Circus Arts
Circus	Programme	The Circus Project
<i>(CircoArts)</i>	Modo – Circus with	Wookey Hole Circus
Circus Eruption	a Purpose	
Circus Glory	My Aerial Home	
Circus Hub	NoFit State Circus	

This report was compiled and edited by Leah Carroll.

Finances

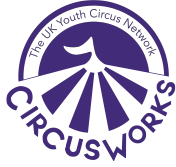
Brief Summary

"Short term we can cope with lockdown. A long closure will mean the loss of young people and savings that will be sufficient to end the youth circus."

The majority of youth circuses have seen 50% or more of their revenue disappear due to this crisis, while many have lost their entire income. Having taken this financial hit, the majority still have on-going outgoings at this time.

Nearly half of youth circuses have received some external funding in response to this crisis, which seems to have alleviated some of the short-term fears they expressed in our first Impact Survey. Much of this funding has come from Arts Council England (ACE), and youth circuses have had a high success rate bidding for ACE funding at this time. There is, however, a significant minority of youth circuses that have not bid for any external funding to help support them through this crisis. The majority of the governmental support that youth circuses are receiving at this time is in the form of the Job Retention Scheme (Furlough Scheme), and the Self Employed Income Support Scheme.

While more youth circuses believe they are likely to survive this crisis than they did in our first Impact Survey, the majority see the future as unknown. Funding will support them short-term, however many youth circuses are now concerned about the period of time between external funding running out and activity going back to normal (whenever that will be). It is unclear when youth circuses will be allowed to restart physical classes: even with external funding, some youth circuses do not expect to survive if activity does not go back to normal within the next few months.



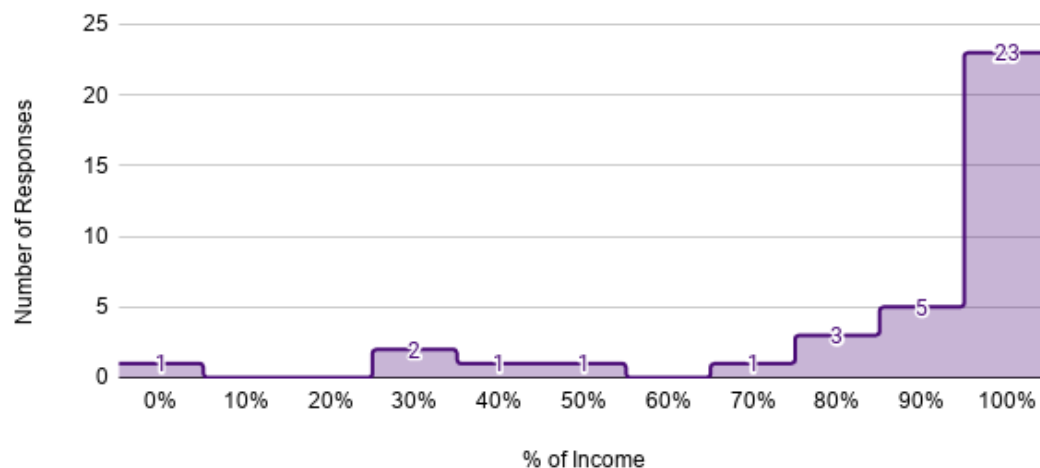
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Charts

Financial Impact

"What percentage of income from your youth circus has now gone due to the Covid-19 crisis?"

Number of Responses: 37



62% OF YOUTH CIRCUSES THAT RESPONDED TO THIS QUESTION REPORT THAT 100% OF THEIR INCOME HAS GONE DUE TO COVID-19.

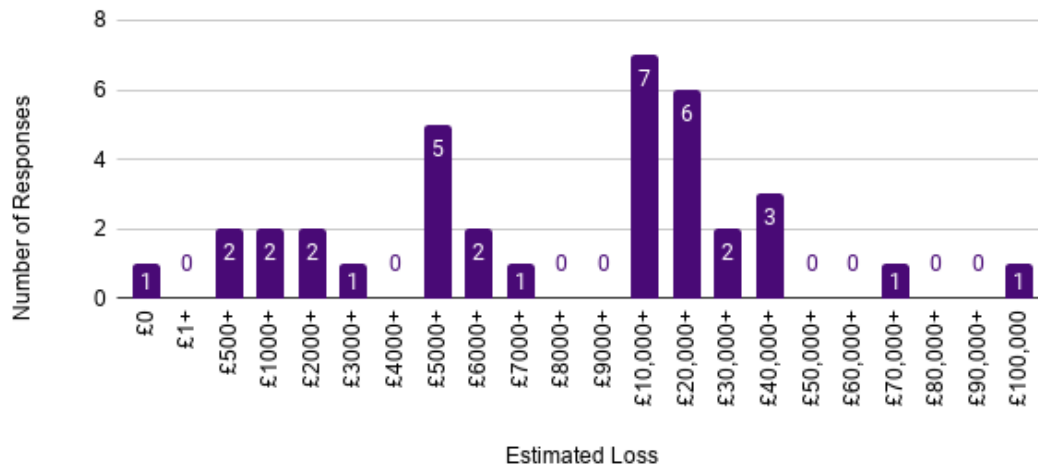
89% REPORT THAT 50% OR MORE OF THEIR INCOME HAS GONE.

THIS REPRESENTS A SLIGHT IMPROVEMENT FROM THE FIRST SURVEY: ORIGINALLY 74% RESPONDED THAT 100% OF THEIR INCOME HAD GONE, AND 94% REPORTED THAT 50% OR MORE OF THEIR INCOME HAD GONE.

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"Please estimate the financial impact that this crisis has had so far on your youth circus."

Number of Responses: 36

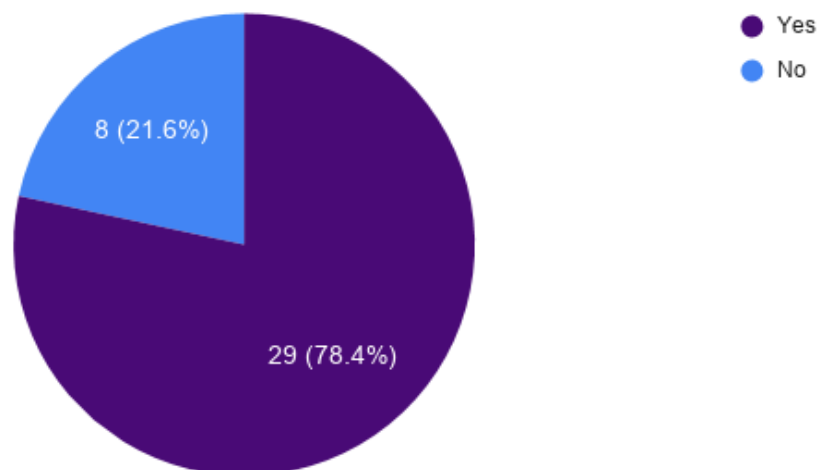


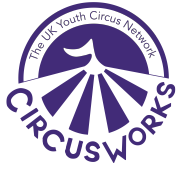
ACCORDING TO THEIR OWN ESTIMATES, THE 36 YOUTH CIRCUSES THAT RESPONDED TO THIS QUESTION HAVE LOST A TOTAL OF £625,572.00 DUE TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS.

THIS IS A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE FROM THE ESTIMATED LOSS OF £188,199.00 THAT YOUTH CIRCUSES REPORTED IN OUR FIRST SURVEY AT THE END OF MARCH 2020. IT MUST BE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT ONLY 27 YOUTH CIRCUSES RESPONDED TO THIS QUESTION IN THE FIRST SURVEY: 9 LESS THAN IN THE SECOND.

"Does your youth circus have any on-going outgoings during this time (e.g. rent on premises)?"

Number of Responses: 37

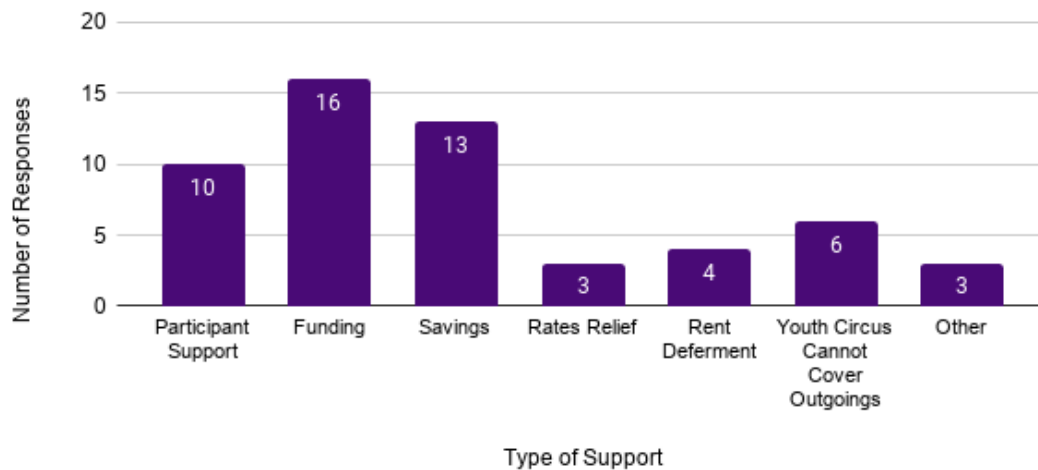




Impact Survey Report 2

"Is your youth circus currently able to cover its outgoings? If so, how?"

Number of Responses: 29 (multi-option)



Category labels shortened for chart. For full categories, see footnote.¹

'Other' Answers

"We have taken a bounce back loan."

"The director is paying remaining outgoings, despite having no income herself or being eligible for any support apart from loans."

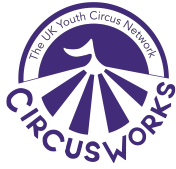
"We are still negotiating with our landlord."

11% OF YOUTH CIRCUSES THAT RESPONDED TO THIS QUESTION REPORT THAT THEY CANNOT COVER THEIR OUTGOINGS AT THIS TIME.

24% REPORT THAT THEY ARE PAYING OUTGOINGS FROM RESERVES OR SAVINGS (LESS THAN THE 18% THAT ARE USING FEES OR DONATIONS FROM PARTICIPANTS).

29% ARE RELYING ON EXTERNAL FUNDING/GRANTS TO PAY THEIR OUTGOINGS: MORE THAN ANY OTHER CATEGORY.

¹ Support or fees from members / participants / parents - External funding/ grants - Savings/Reserves - Rates Relief - Arrangement with landlord to defer rent; - No, the youth circus cannot cover its outgoings; - Other



Impact Survey Report 2

Financial Support

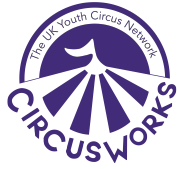
"Has your youth circus received any external funding during this crisis?"

Number of Responses: 37



IT IS ENCOURAGING TO SEE THAT 43% OF YOUTH CIRCUSES HAVE RECEIVED EXTERNAL FUNDING, AND THAT MOST YOUTH CIRCUS FUNDING APPLICATIONS SEEM TO BE SUCCESSFUL AT THIS TIME.

WE ARE CONCERNED, HOWEVER, THAT A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF YOUTH CIRCUSES (27%) HAVE NOT BID FOR ANY FUNDING AT ALL, AT A TIME WHEN INCOME HAS FALLEN SO DRASTICALLY ACROSS THE SECTOR.



Impact Survey Report 2

Arts Council Support

The following charts focus on the support that youth circuses are receiving from Arts Council England, Arts Council of Wales, Creative Scotland, and Arts Council of Northern Ireland.

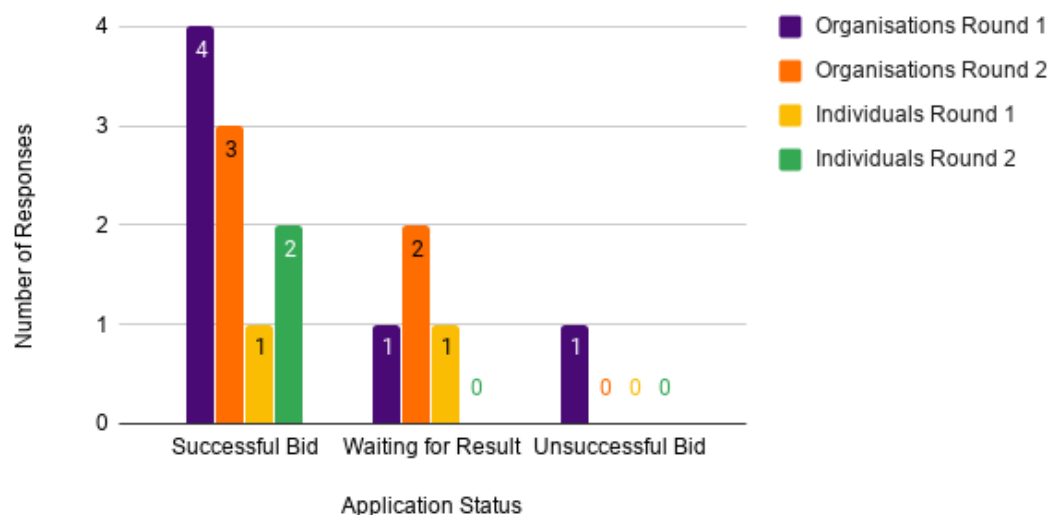
"Where is your youth circus based?"

Number of Responses: 37

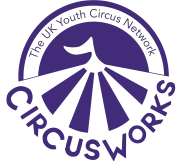


Arts Council England Emergency Support

(Multi-option)



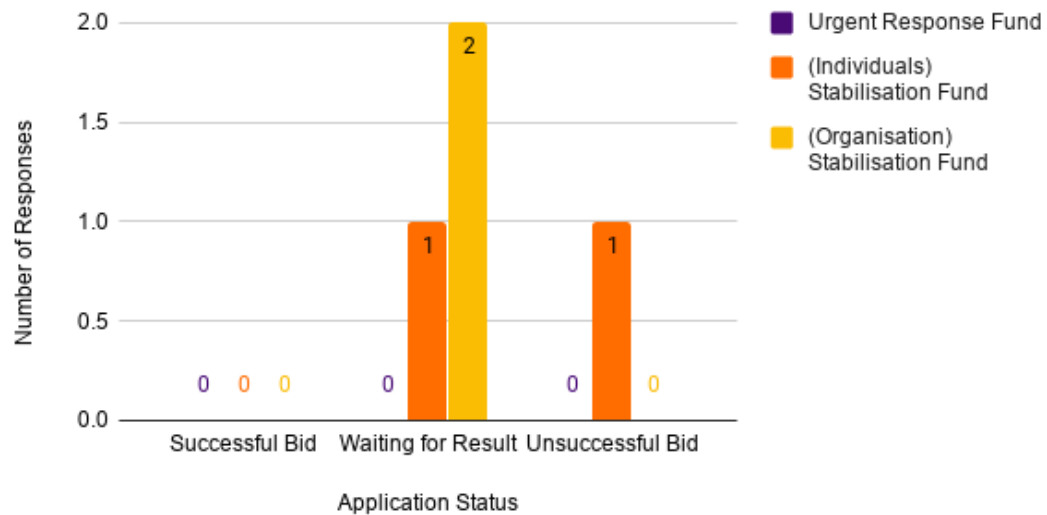
OVERALL, THE SUCCESS RATE OF YOUTH CIRCUS APPLICATIONS TO ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND IS VERY POSITIVE. UPTAKE IS LESS ENCOURAGING HOWEVER. OF THE 28 YOUTH CIRCUSES BASED IN ENGLAND THAT RESPONDED TO THIS SURVEY, LESS THAN HALF (46%, OR 13) HAVE APPLIED FOR SOME FORM OF ARTS COUNCIL FUNDING.



Impact Survey Report 2

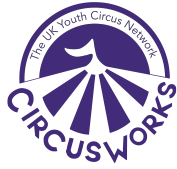
Arts Council of Wales Emergency Support

(Multi-option)



4 OF THE 5 WELSH YOUTH CIRCUSES THAT RESPONDED TO THIS SURVEY HAVE APPLIED FOR SOME FORM OF ARTS COUNCIL FUNDING. THE SUCCESS RATE IN WALES IS LESS ENCOURAGING THAN THAT OF ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND, HOWEVER THIS MAY BE BECAUSE THE MAJORITY ARE CURRENTLY WAITING FOR A RESULT.

NO YOUTH CIRCUSES REPORT THAT THEY HAVE APPLIED FOR FUNDING FROM CREATIVE SCOTLAND OR THE ARTS COUNCIL OF NORTHERN IRELAND AT THIS TIME.

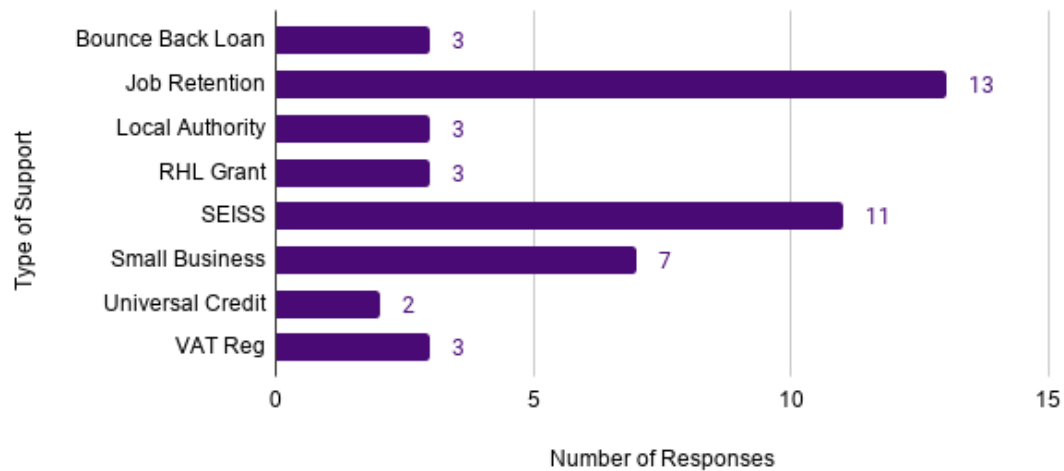


Impact Survey Report 2

Other Support

"UK Government Support: have you or your youth circus received support from any of the following during this crisis:"

Number of Responses: 27 (multi-option)

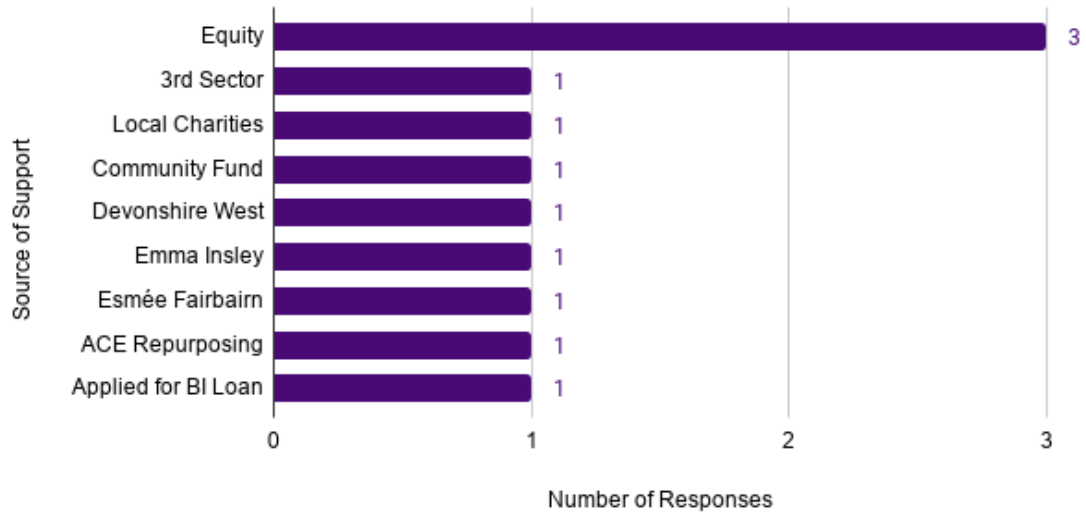


Category labels shortened for chart. For full categories, see footnote.²

² Coronavirus Bounce Back Loan - Job Retention Scheme (Furlough Scheme) - Local Authority Discretionary Grants – Retail, Hospitality, Leisure Grant - Self Employed Income Support Scheme - Small Business Grant Fund - Universal Credit / ESA / Benefits - VAT Reg Deferment

Other Support

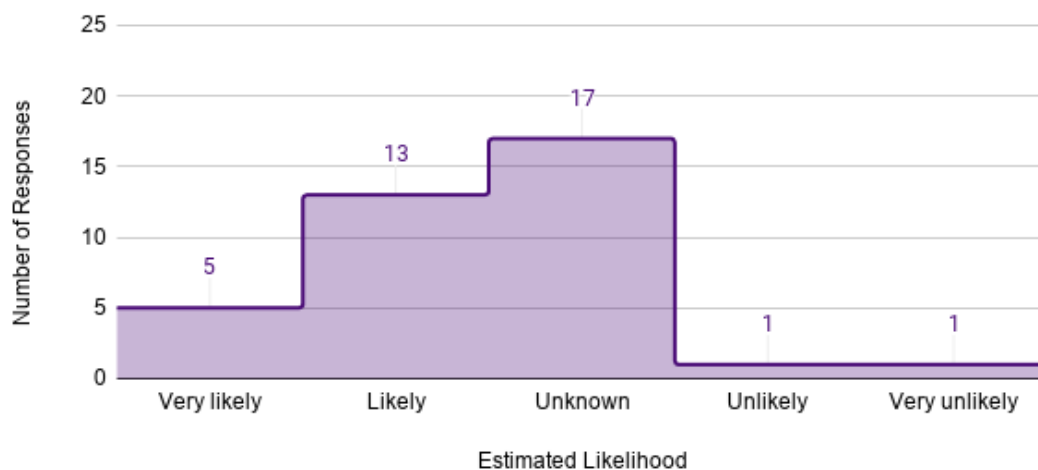
Number of Responses: 10 (multi-option)



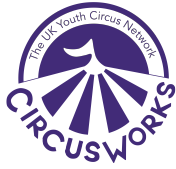
Category labels shortened for chart. For full categories, see footnote.³

"With your current level of income and financial support, how likely is it that your youth circus will survive this crisis?"

Number of Responses: 37



³ Equity UK Benevolent Fund - Third Sector Resilience Fund - Local Charities - Community Fund Northern Ireland - Devonshire West Big Local - Emma Insley, Just Be Creative Fund - Esmée Fairbairn - Re-Purposing of Arts Council England Project Funds - Applied for Business Interruption Loan



Impact Survey Report 2

48% BELIEVE THAT THEIR YOUTH CIRCUS IS LIKELY OR VERY LIKELY TO SURVIVE THIS CRISIS, WHILE ONLY 6% BELIEVE THEY ARE UNLIKELY OR VERY UNLIKELY TO SURVIVE. THE MAJORITY OF YOUTH CIRCUSES (46%) RESPONDED THAT CHANCES OF SURVIVAL ARE 'UNKNOWN'.

WHILE NOT ENTIRELY SATISFACTORY, THIS IS A SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT FROM OUR FIRST SURVEY, IN WHICH 44% OF YOUTH CIRCUSES BELIEVED THAT THEIR CHANCES OF SURVIVAL WERE 20% OR LESS.

Summary of Written Comments

In their written comments, youth circuses seem less concerned with short-term survival than they did in our initial survey, and much more concerned with their chances of survival mid to long-term.

Short-Term Funding

In our first Impact Survey, youth circuses were concerned about having little to no short-term income, as their usual income streams from class fees, performances, outreach work etc. had all been impacted by the current crisis.

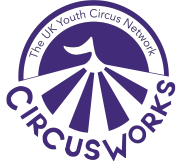
Some youth circuses are still really struggling to survive, and have experienced a wide variety of issues applying for funding. Many have now received funding however, from Arts Council England and elsewhere, which has granted them some short-term stability.

Mid to Long-Term Issues

"It's not the short term that is the issue, but the mid to long term."

One youth circus reports that, while they received significant support, they risk going under by October if activity is not back to a near-normal level by then. Another forecasts that they will run out of funds in three to four months, while many seem to share the mentality that:

"Until social distancing and cleaning restrictions are lifted, the future of our organisation is unknown."



Impact Survey Report 2

Funding

Future funding is another concern, as one youth circus predicts that by the end of the year, everyone will be bidding for the same project funds, while another is concerned about what youth circuses will be able to apply for funding **for**.

Smaller Class Sizes

When they do reopen, youth circuses predict financial issues implementing social distancing requirements, as they will need to run much smaller classes in order to keep everyone spaced out.

Less Demand

This will be covered in greater detail later in the report, but there is a perception from youth circuses that less young people will return to youth circuses than the numbers that left.

Youth circuses also predict that there will be less demand for other work such as outreach activity, due to economic issues and perceived risk.

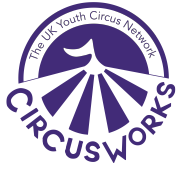
The Unknown

Overall, the main concern youth circuses have is the uncertain nature of the situation. There is a lack of clear government guidance regarding what activity is allowed, and how to keep participants safe. It is also unclear how the present crisis will affect insurance policies.

Loans

"It is upsetting that we had to take a bounce back loan and get into debt."

Some youth circuses are looking at loans as an option if they run out of funds in the mid-term. At least three have already taken loans out due to the crisis.



Staff

Brief Summary

"Many entire households rely on income from our organisation. One adult might be employed on the staff team, part-time, and top up their income through freelance performance work etc. The other adult in the household might be 100% freelance, with much of their work coming through our organisation. As a result, there are entire households that have lost the vast majority of their income."

The issues facing workers in the youth circus sector have not changed substantially since our first Impact Survey. For self-employed workers, who make up the majority of staff in the sector, most still have no work in youth circus and are depending on the Self Employed Income Support Scheme or Universal Credit to survive. Some have had to seek other work, leading to fears in the sector that some workers will not be able to return once this crisis has passed. Our 2018-2019 Youth Circus Survey showed that youth circuses struggled to find skilled tutors before this crisis began, and we expect this issue to worsen.

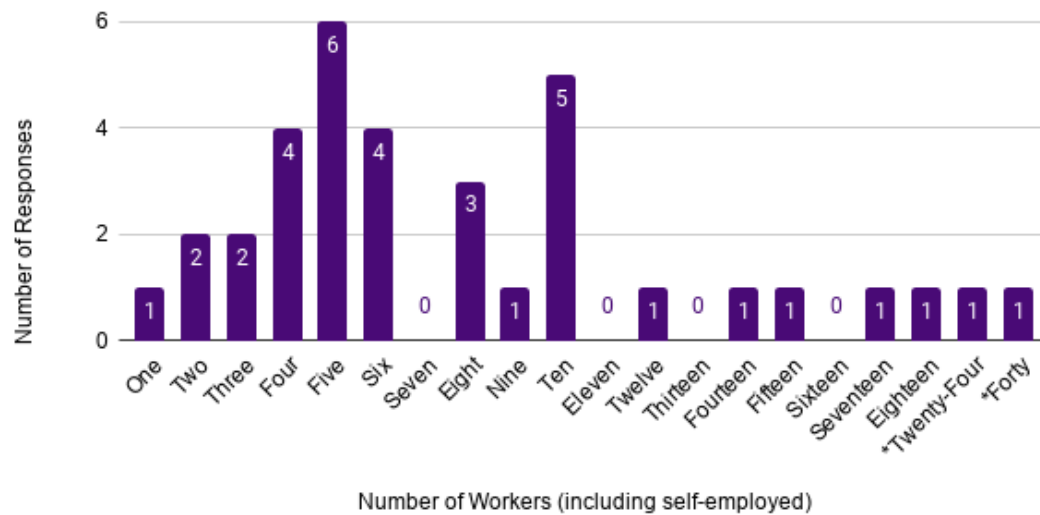
Youth circuses are trying to generate work for their self-employed staff, however the amount that they can offer is minimal. Many are seriously concerned about the effect this crisis will have on the mental health and wellbeing of youth circus workers.

Employed staff are, for the most part, protected by the furlough scheme, however it is unclear how long this will be the case. In some cases, youth circus directors have also seen their personal income disappear: particularly those who are self-employed sole traders, or who paid themselves through dividends.

Charts

"How many people does your youth circus regularly employ?"

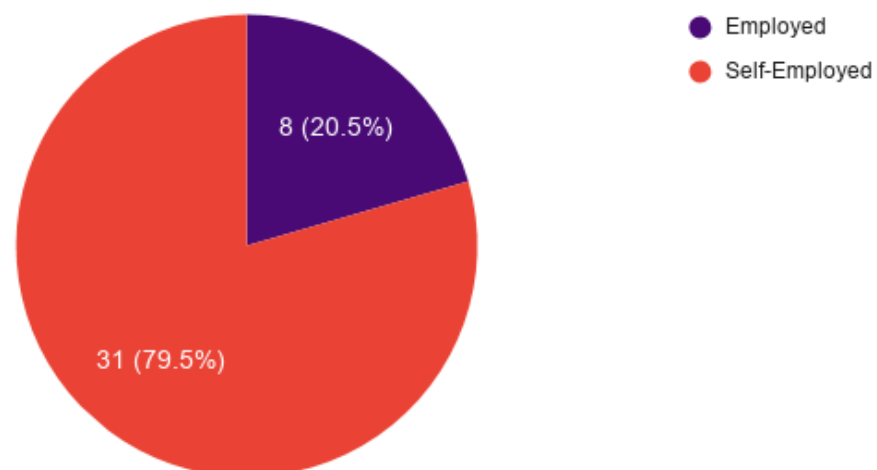
Number of Responses: 35



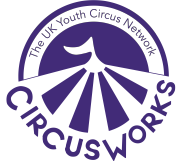
THE 35 YOUTH CIRCUSES THAT RESPONDED TO THIS QUESTION REGULARLY EMPLOY A TOTAL OF 304 STAFF.

"How are the majority of your staff (including teachers) employed?"

Number of Responses: 37



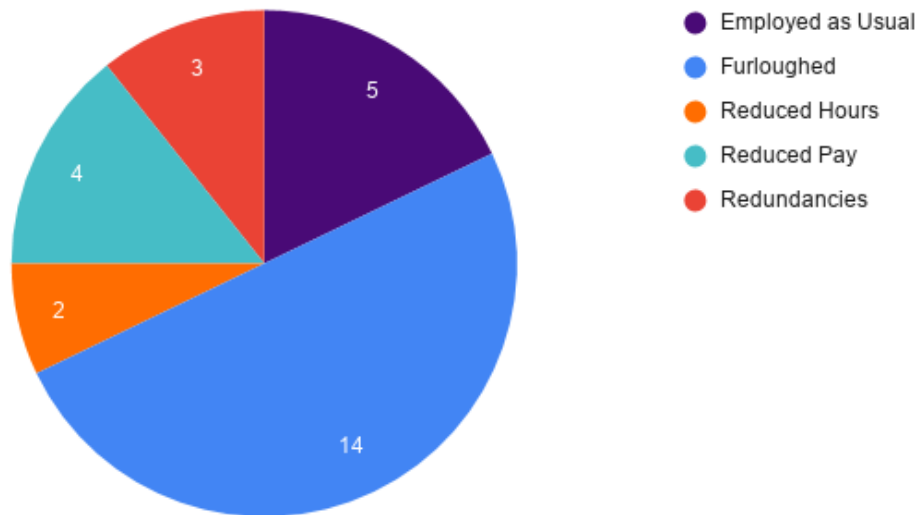
79.5% OF YOUTH CIRCUSES THAT RESPONDED TO THIS QUESTION REPORT THAT THE MAJORITY OF THEIR STAFF ARE SELF-EMPLOYED.



Impact Survey Report 2

"What impact has this crisis had on your employed staff?"

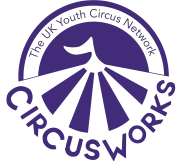
Number of Responses: 21 (multi-option)



24% (5) OF THE YOUTH CIRCUSES THAT RESPONDED TO THIS QUESTION HAVE (AT LEAST SOME) STAFF EMPLOYED AS USUAL. THIS IS AN INCREASE FROM THE FIRST SURVEY, IN WHICH NO YOUTH CIRCUSES HAD ANY STAFF EMPLOYED AS USUAL.

67% (14) OF YOUTH CIRCUSES THAT RESPONDED TO THIS QUESTION HAVE FURLOUGHED STAFF, WHILE 29% (6) HAVE HAD TO REDUCE STAFF HOURS OR PAY, AND 14% (3) HAVE MADE STAFF REDUNDANT.

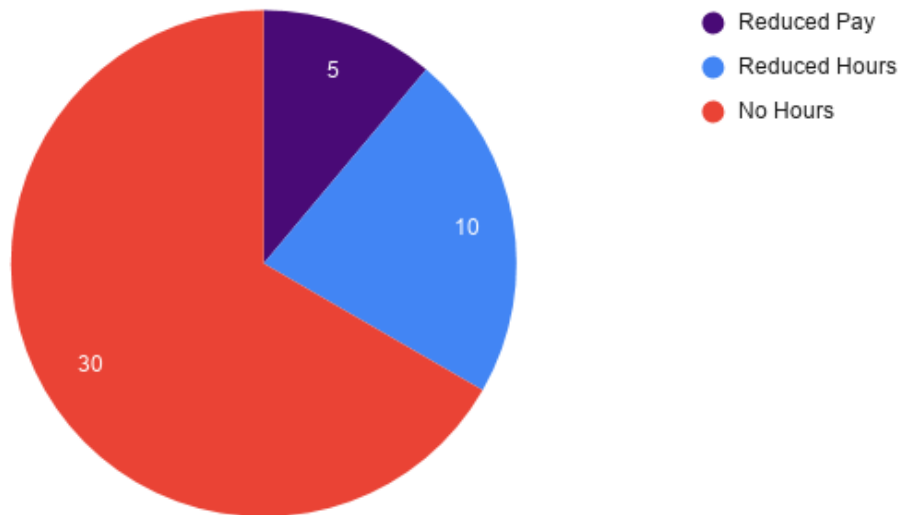
IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT THIS WAS A MULTI-OPTION QUESTION, SO YOUTH CIRCUSES MAY HAVE A COMBINATION OF ALL OF THESE CATEGORIES (E.G. SOME STAFF FURLOUGHED, SOME ON REDUCED HOURS ETC.).



Impact Survey Report 2

"What impact has this crisis had on your self-employed staff?"

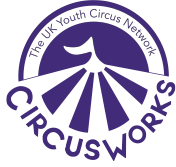
Number of Responses: 35 (multi-option)



86% (30) OF THE YOUTH CIRCUSES THAT RESPONDED TO THIS QUESTION HAVE NO HOURS FOR SELF-EMPLOYED STAFF.

THERE WAS ALSO A 'USUAL HOURS' OPTION ON THE SURVEY, HOWEVER THIS HAD 0 RESPONSES.

AS WITH THE LAST CHART, THIS WAS A MULTI-OPTION QUESTION, SO YOUTH CIRCUSES MAY HAVE A COMBINATION OF ALL OF THESE CATEGORIES (E.G. REDUCED HOURS FOR SOME STAFF, NO HOURS FOR OTHERS.)



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Summary of Written Comments

Effect on Self-Employed Workers

As detailed in the previous charts, nearly 80% of youth circus workers are self-employed, and 86% of that number currently have no youth circus work.

Youth circuses are very concerned about how this crisis is affecting self-employed staff:

- Because the crisis has impacted the whole circus sector, many youth circus tutors who supplement their income through, for instance, performance work, have seen all of their income streams disappear
- What hours are available for self employed workers through youth circuses are very minimal/reduced
- Some self employed workers have claimed through the Self Employment Income Support Scheme, some are not eligible for the scheme, some are on Universal Credit, and some have been forced to seek work elsewhere

Youth Circus Support for Self-Employed Workers

From written commentaries, it is obvious that many youth circuses are making an effort to generate as much work as possible for self-employed workers, but their ability to do this is very limited. Examples include:

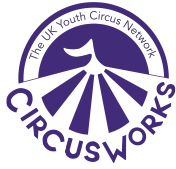
- Paying them to teach online
- Commissioning tutorial videos
- In one case, splitting the money from a project that did not go ahead between self-employed workers
- Engaging them with grant funding
- Signposting available support

Effect on Employed Staff

Most employed youth circus staff are currently furloughed. Retaining them depends on the mid to long-term issues detailed in the 'Finances' section of this report. One youth circus raised the issue that the furlough scheme only pays 80% of wages, and they cannot currently afford to pay the remaining 20%.

Long-Term Issues

Many youth circuses have expressed concern about the mental health and wellbeing of their staff:



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"The impact on the mental health and wellbeing of our team is a real concern. They are facing real financial hardship, and having the ability to prioritise their own needs and those of their families while trying to develop 'creative project proposals' for funding is very difficult. [...]"

Needing to navigate the multiple layers of uncertainty detailed above permeates all areas of life... For many this is worsened still by the lack of a sense of purpose, and real hardship."

Some youth circuses expect that their staff might not be able to return: either because they have had to find other work to support themselves and their families, or due to the impact of the crisis on their mental health and physical fitness.

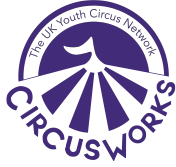
Effect on Directors

"I am a limited company paying myself dividends. If the Government does not approve of such fiscal arrangements it should not offer the product."

Some youth circus directors, particularly of smaller youth circuses, have seen their personal income disappear due to this crisis:

- As quoted above, there is no support for directors paying themselves through dividends;
- Some have had to seek other work, and might not be able to return to youth circus because of this;
- For one, being eligible for the Self Employment Income Support Scheme disqualified them from Arts Council of Wales grants;
- Directors that are self-employed sole traders are particularly vulnerable.

"I found it difficult trying to support staff, as a sole director without income who is not eligible for most forms of support. I had to take work elsewhere to live and didn't have time to work for the company."



Young People

Brief Summary

"There are many young people who benefit from our Youth Circus in ways that they do not benefit from other activities. The inclusive, non-competitive environment offers all young people a real and meaningful opportunity to be themselves, to be creative, to connect - this is particularly true for those who are vulnerable, have additional needs and/or struggle to communicate/feel isolated. It is these young people who we are most mindful of at this time."

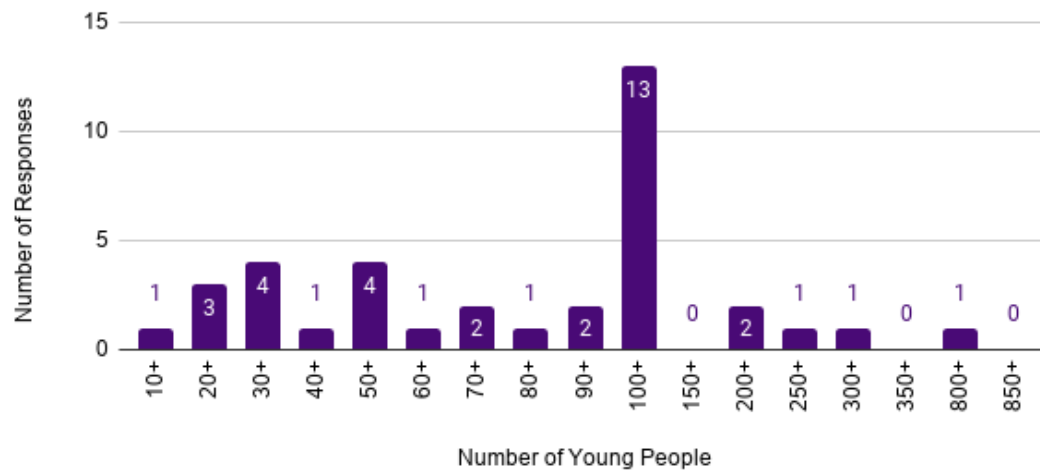
There are many roles youth circuses play in the lives of the young people who attend them. Friendship groups form naturally among young people who learn and perform together, and many youth circuses are tightknit communities. Circus can act as an outlet for creative and emotional expression, a way of learning new skills and developing confidence, as well as a source of regular exercise and physical development. For some young people it is a vocation and passion. For some it provides a safe space and a support network. It is unsurprising then that youth circuses are reporting that the loss of regular youth circus sessions, in addition to all of the other pressures of this crisis, is already having an impact on young people's mental health and wellbeing.

While youth circuses are working hard to keep young people engaged with resources online, they have not been able to keep in touch with all of their participants, and in many cases the most vulnerable young people they teach have been the hardest to keep engaged. It is also difficult for them to gauge the wellbeing of participants without seeing them in person.

Charts

"Prior to this crisis, how many young people did you regularly teach in your youth circus (e.g. on a weekly basis?)"

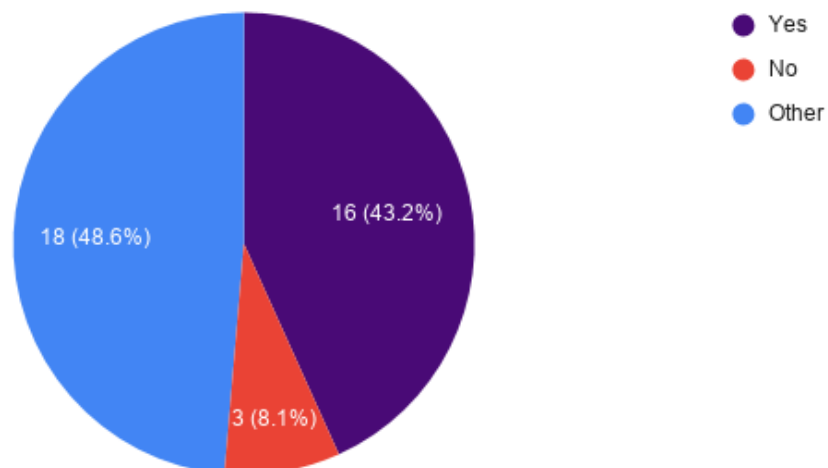
Number of Responses: 37



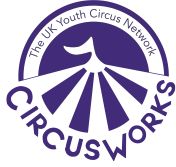
THE 37 YOUTH CIRCUSES THAT RESPONDED TO THIS QUESTION REGULARLY TEACH A TOTAL OF 4233 YOUNG PEOPLE.

"Is your youth circus still in regular contact with these young people?"

Number of Responses: 37



OVERALL, THE MAJORITY OF 'OTHER' RESPONSES POINT TO YOUTH CIRCUSES BEING IN CONTACT WITH SOME, BUT NOT ALL, OF THEIR PARTICIPANTS.



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ONLY 3 YOUTH CIRCUSES REPORT NOT BEING IN CONTACT WITH PARTICIPANTS AT ALL.

Selection of 'Other' Responses

"We have made contact with parents, but we have not heard back from many of the students."

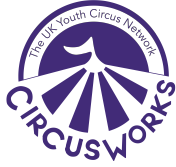
"We run two online classes a week for our performance group (stretch/condition and juggling). I have been in intermittent contact with other parents, sending through useful videos to try and keep them engaged."

"Yes with at least some of our Friday and Saturday youth circus participants, but not really with the work we were doing in schools and with community groups. We are a bit in touch with the schools themselves."

"A bit with the paid classes through an equipment loan we have set up, none with the in-school participants."

"Mixed - we are posting weekly on Facebook and issuing challenges by email periodically. We know these do not reach our most vulnerable groups."

"I have emailed, shared on social media, and am now thinking of ways to contact directly – by sending something special in the post perhaps. I've felt uncertain about how to connect and what to say."



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Summary of Written Comments

"A part of their lives is missing."

Physicality

Youth circuses expect young people to lose muscle tone, strength, flexibility, physical confidence and be less fit overall as a result of this crisis, as well as suffering a gradual depletion of their (circus) skill set.

They report that the more 'serious' young people they teach – those who are older, and looking to study or have a career in circus – are particularly concerned about being unable to maintain their fitness levels during this time.

Loss of Social Life

"The socialising in particular, the aerial for certain, have been particularly missed."

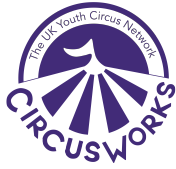
Online, youth circuses are struggling to recreate the social nature of their normal classes. Many are concerned about what effect missing friends is having on their young people, and report that they are "experiencing a loss of confidence in themselves and their social bonds with the people they'd normally only see at Circus".

Mental Health

"I'm really worried that we have a bomb ticking in terms of both physical and mental health."

The knock on effect of young people losing a major part of their social life, their weekly exercise and a creative outlet, as well as all of the wider pressures of the pandemic, is that many young people are already suffering mental health issues. In their written comments, youth circuses describe that:

- Young people are frustrated, scared, bored, isolated, lonely and despondent
- The youngest participants are becoming easily moved to tears and anger
- The potentially 'indefinite' nature of social distancing is causing the most anxiety for young people and their parents
- Many young people are increasingly demotivated or disengaged



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"[...] the bulk of participants seem to be despondent."

General Loss

Circus is more than a physical outlet; it is an outlet for creative expression. Youth circuses report that, beyond physical and social loss, young people are suffering from the "loss of doing something they love".

Vulnerable Young People

Many youth circuses report that the young people they are most struggling to engage with at this time are those who are the most vulnerable.

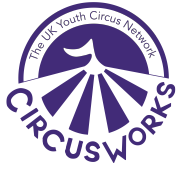
Possible reasons for this will be covered in the next section on Remote Activity, but it is worth noting that many youth circuses are seriously concerned about the effect this crisis is having on young people with additional needs, those from disadvantaged backgrounds, and young people who are otherwise vulnerable.

"I do hope that the young people coming from the poorest backgrounds will have managed to find activities to help them stay sane throughout the crisis."

Unknown

As many youth circuses pointed out, it is difficult to accurately gauge the effect this crisis and the subsequent loss of youth circus activity has had on young people without seeing them in person. In online (group) classes it not possible to have a quiet chat with a young person, and they might find it difficult to express their feelings in front of a group. As one youth circus wrote:

"One parent said that their son was struggling with the lockdown - struggling to sleep and not keeping to much of a routine. When we see that young person he seems to be his usual self."



Working Remotely

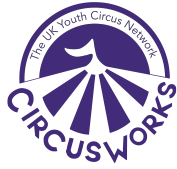
Brief Summary

"Yesterday (Sunday) evening four families climbed hills around our town to signal to each other, using smoke canisters at a pre-arranged time. We provided the canisters, safety training, and geo-location information as a project for young people to lead with parents/carers supporting them. We plan to keep developing this practise as an on-going "Beacons" project to connect people with the hillside places they can walk to."

Youth circuses across the UK are creating a huge volume of online resources during this crisis. 73% of youth circuses are providing remote or online activities, including regular classes via Zoom (or equivalent), video tutorials, opportunities for young people to socialise remotely, projects, challenges and competitions, and more. Many have given out circus equipment to young people so they can practice at home, and some are encouraging their young people to help vulnerable people in their communities.

They are encountering difficulties keeping young people engaged via online content, and younger children, young people with additional needs, and young people from vulnerable or disadvantaged backgrounds have been particularly difficult to reach at this time. There are also limits to what youth circuses are able to do online. The skills they can teach are restricted by safety concerns, as well as what space and equipment young people have available at home. Youth circuses are struggling to recreate the social nature of youth circus online, and cannot give the young people many opportunities to perform. Creating online content also requires an entirely new skill set, which comes with its own challenges, and some youth circuses do not have the technology necessary.

While there are issues with the medium, the online work that youth circuses are producing allows young people an opportunity to socialise, exercise, have fun and focus on something creative in midst of the pandemic. The worth of these resources for young people at such a difficult time is inestimable.

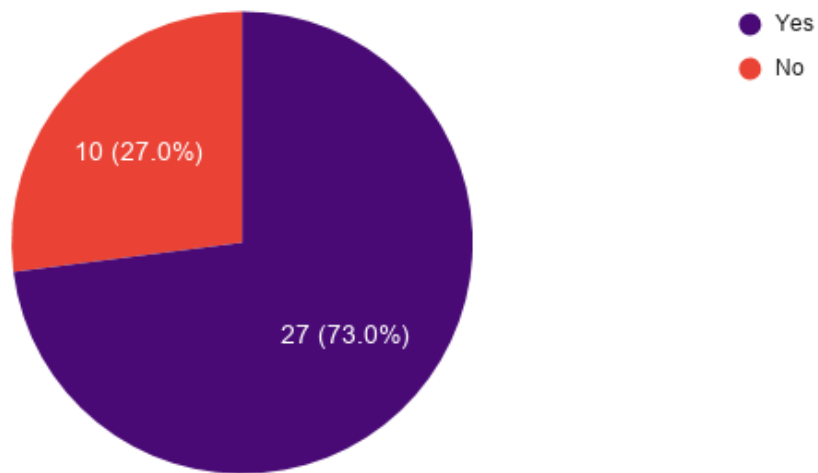


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Chart

"Is your youth circus currently providing any remote or online activities?"

Number of Responses: 37



Summary of Written Comments

Online Resources

Videos

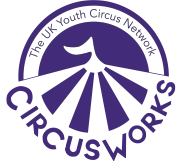
These include regular classes, tutorials with varying levels of difficulty and equipment, and 'how to' videos.

At least one youth circus has created a library of online tutorials that students can dip in and out of.

Video Call Classes

Many youth circuses are conducting classes via Zoom and similar platforms, often weekly or multiple times a week.

The regularity of these classes, teaching style and skills offered vary widely.



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Bespoke Classes

Some youth circuses are offering one-to-one support for young people

At least one is running bespoke activities for vulnerable children.

Performance Work

While in-person performances are not currently possible, youth circuses are making an effort to keep young people performing. These efforts include creating video performances and running a virtual showcase.

Competitions and Challenges

Some youth circuses are keeping young people and their families engaged through online competitions and

Social Opportunities

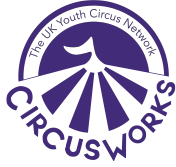
Social opportunities that youth circuses are creating for their young people include chat groups, video call meet ups and quizzes.

Circus at Home Kits

Several youth circuses have lent or given away equipment to young people so they can practice at home.

Difficulties with Engagement

While some youth circuses report high levels of participation with their online activity, others are really struggling to keep young people engaged. Generally, young people are less likely to attend online circus classes than adult participants.



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Young Children

A few youth circuses have noted that remote activity seems to work better for older students than with younger children. Attention span seems to be one issue. Another is that participation for young children is very dependant on the level of engagement and technological ability of their parents.

“For under 12's, the young people's engagement with the online material is so dependant on the digital literacy of the parents and what they have at home in terms of laptops, smartphones and computers. If parents are not there to adjust camera angle, help with unmuting etc. it makes a massive difference in how much feedback and interaction we can give and how much the kids can get out of the session.”

Young People from Disadvantaged Backgrounds

“There is a clear discrepancy between take-up from low income families for the online classes, compared with our normal demographic. We're not reaching young people from low income backgrounds at all.”

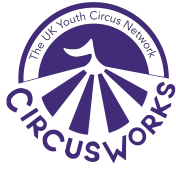
Youth circuses are seeing low levels of engagement from young people from vulnerable or disadvantaged backgrounds. In some cases, this is because families do not have the technology, or cannot afford the physical space, time, or equipment necessary to participate.

“We cannot get into the complexities of individuals, but for many vulnerable young people it is quite a serious loss and has a negative impact.”

Whatever the reason, youth circuses are struggling to engage some of their most vulnerable participants, and also find it difficult to gauge the wellbeing of vulnerable young people via video calls.

Schools

Youth circuses that taught in schools cannot now keep in touch with their participants, and the school was their point of contact. In some cases, as in the quote below, this is the reason that youth circuses are struggling to keep in contact with young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.



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"We do not have many young people who come from severely deprived backgrounds, except for some of the school students, but our contact with them is always through the school."

Young People with Additional Needs

"None of our young people with additional needs have taken up the online classes."

Youth circuses are also finding it hard to engage some of their participants with additional needs. For some of these young people, the online format is simply not accessible.

"We know it has been particularly difficult for the families of the SEN group (special educational needs), and that parents have said online classes are not suitable for these children. We are more worried about them as their capacity to do activities is now even more limited."

Online Saturation

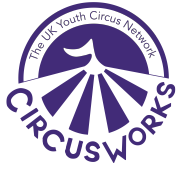
Young people can feel saturated by online learning, particularly as schooling is currently online. Additionally, some children particularly struggle with video calls, or feel too shy to engage with them.

"we have been engaging with them as best we can but there is a limit to online learning when every activity a child does from school to violin lessons is suddenly having to be done via a screen."

The Limits of Online Content

There are a few issues that youth circuses have flagged about teaching circus online. As previously mentioned, it can be hard to recreate the social nature of youth circus via a screen, and tutors have found it difficult to accurately gauge the wellbeing of young people. Some youth circuses also have concerns about online safety and equality.

"It is good to have but it will never be a substitute for the face to face and physical contact that forms part of circus."



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Practical Limitations

Since youth circuses are now teaching young people in their homes, circus skills that youth circuses can teach are limited – due to lack of equipment, space, and safety concerns. Aerial, for instance, is almost impossible to teach online. Additionally, in most cases, young people can no longer perform, and some youth circuses have reported the disappointment that missed performances have caused.

Other Limitations

“the suitability of translating many art forms into a digital format is also a cause for concern. As is the (in some cases inevitable) reduction in quality. Across the sector there is also a lack of competency, skill and confidence in working on new platforms with limited ability to train/learn easily.”

There are technical issues that are impeding youth circus work online: including a lack of training in the skills required to work on online platforms, and in some cases a lack of suitable technology (e.g. slow internet connection).

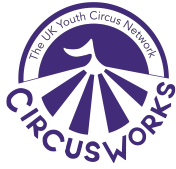
Some youth circus leaders are also resistant to online work for various personal reasons, including low self-confidence, and larger value judgements on the suitability of the Internet as a medium for circus tuition.

“This struggle is because circus is based on the sharing of the same space, the empathy of the coach to the student, and physical connection between peers. Online coaching also flags up concerns for safety and has equality issues. I feel strongly that as an artist and coach, I should not allow circus to fall into the void of the big wide web when everything else is also.”

Positive Outcomes

*“**Parent:** “[My child] ended up doing one of the previous midi classes in YouTube and loved it. Honestly she’d had a grumpy day and this really cheered her up and put a smile on her face!””*

While online activity may not be able to provide everything that young people can gain from normal youth circus classes, there is a lot of evidence



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that the classes and online content that youth circuses are producing in this time is an incredibly valuable resource for many young people.

Health and Fitness

Youth circuses are producing a huge variety of online content, much of which is free or donation only. The feedback they are receiving from parents speaks of the positive effects this work is having on young people at such a difficult time. Young people are being motivated to keep fit and healthy, and in some cases youth circus activities and challenges are keeping whole families active.

Schoolwork

"Another note about our kids: a parent got in touch, whose child has been at risk of being a young offender, and reported that their child hadn't done any homework until after one of our circus Zoom classes."

There is evidence that youth circus activity is helping young people to engage with schoolwork and other aspects of their lives. Youth circus videos are also being used in some schools to teach key workers children.

"**Parent:** "They're both enjoying the classes and went on to choreograph a longer dance later that evening with their sister, incorporating their new moves! I think you guys are doing a great job of delivering the classes in these circumstances, so thank you all!"

Other Outcomes

Online circus resources are giving young people something to focus on in a time of crisis, and encouraging them to create projects at home. Youth circuses are also encouraging their young people to engage with helping their wider communities.

"We share our training space with an OAPs group, so I'm pleased to say that most of the chat amongst the group has been about how we can help them."

Connections

As physical location is no longer an issue, some youth circuses are using this crisis as a way to form connections with other youth circuses, and enable their young people to train with tutors and resources they would otherwise not have access to.

Reopening

Brief Summary

"As circus has no governing body, identifying on what basis a centre should open is falling on individual locations. Guidance/recommendation from CircusWorks based on practice in the UK and internationally would be helpful in supporting the decision making of individual circus centres."

Overwhelmingly, youth circuses do not believe that it is currently safe to reopen. Many have some expectation that they will restart physical classes in September, however most are uncertain, as they lack clear guidance from central government about when it will be safe to reopen, and how to do so safely. Many are also unsure when or if their insurance will cover them to reopen.

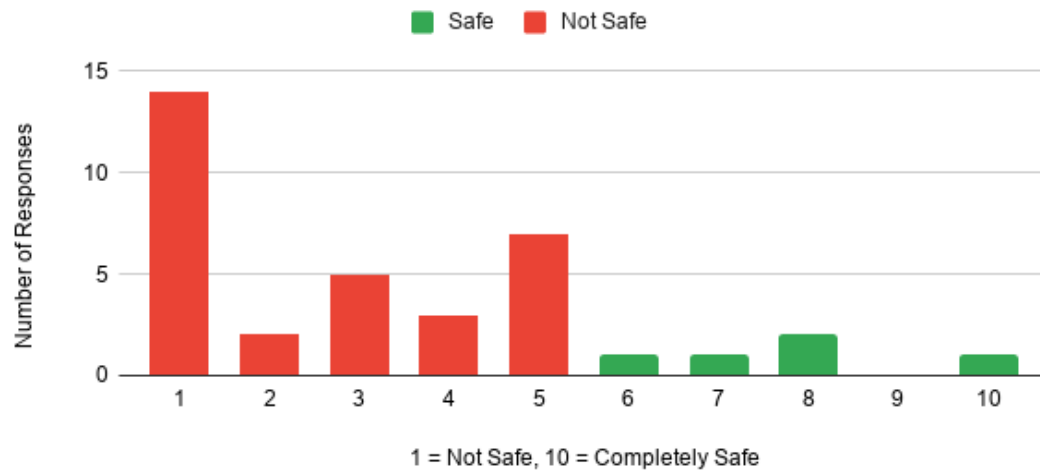
Due to social distancing, class sizes will need to be smaller when youth circuses reopen, and many expect that participation will decrease anyway. This crisis will therefore have a long-term economic impact even after youth circuses restart physical classes. There is also a chance that some tutors and staff will not return.

The safety measures that youth circuses intend to implement if and when they reopen show some commonality, however the details of these measures differ greatly between organisations. This is partly because of the lack of clear guidance, and partly due to the differing resources that different youth circuses have available to react to this crisis.

Charts

"How confident are you that it is safe to resume physical classes now?"

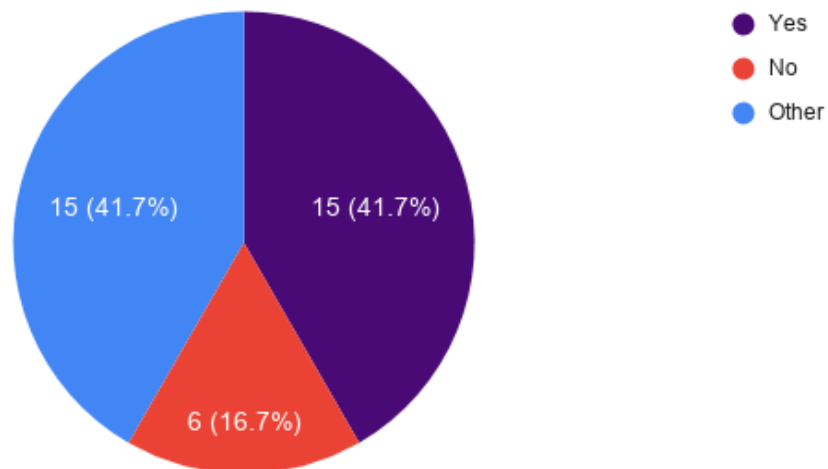
Number of Responses: 36

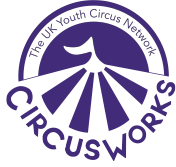


75% OF YOUTH CIRCUSES THINK IT IS TO SOME DEGREE NOT CURRENTLY SAFE TO RESUME PHYSICAL CLASSES, WHILE 29% BELIEVE IT IS NOT SAFE AT ALL (NO.1 ON SCALE). ONLY ONE YOUTH CIRCUS THINKS IT IS COMPLETELY SAFE TO RESUME PHYSICAL CLASSES AT THE PRESENT TIME.

"Do you have any plans to resume physical classes in the near future?"

Number of Responses: 36





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83% OF YOUTH CIRCUSES DO HAVE PLANS TO RESUME PHYSICAL CLASSES. HOWEVER, AS WE CAN SEE IN WRITTEN ANSWERS IN THIS SECTION, MANY OF THESE PLANS ARE SPECULATIVE, AS YOUTH CIRCUSES WAIT FOR THE SITUATION TO DEVELOP.

'Other' Answers:

Youth circuses that answered 'Other' in the previous chart are generally either waiting for guidance on when it is safe to resume, or are hoping to return soon but are uncertain if they will be able to. Some examples of 'other' answers are included below:

"I think it is too soon to call a date for recovery period and activities."

"I am waiting to hear from the Trustees of the community centre where I teach."

"Currently waiting on guidance from the Government and PHE to see if we run our Summer Camp in late July. We are also planning for a blend of online and outdoor social distance learning."

"We will follow Government advice on School/Gym reopening and look at what other schools are doing."

"I am hoping to be able to offer one-to-one classes from June when one of our venues re-opens - still can't fathom however how to keep Aerialists safe at a 2m distance. Also, how to make it affordable."

"Currently looking at a September start if lock down allows."

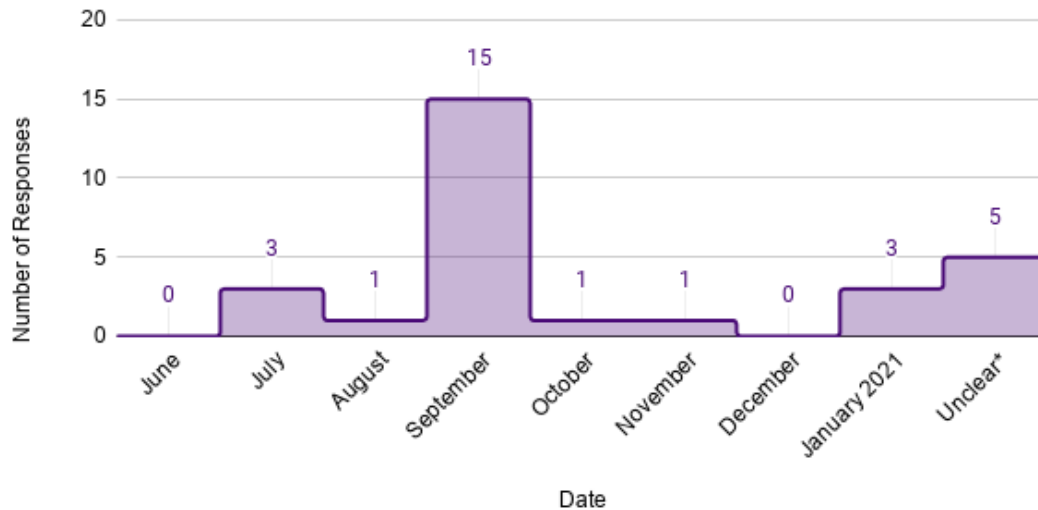
"We will as soon as we are allowed to, Scotland is currently still on full lockdown."

"Not until we have safe guidance."

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"When do you expect your youth circus to reopen?"

Number of Responses: 29



THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF YOUTH CIRCUSES THAT RESPONDED TO THIS QUESTION EXPECT TO REOPEN IN SEPTEMBER 2020.

***'UNCLEAR' ANSWERS: OF THE 29 RESPONSES TO THIS QUESTION, IN 5 CASES IT WAS UNCLEAR IF THE DATE WAS WRITTEN IN BRITISH FORMAT (DAY/MONTH/YEAR), OR AMERICAN FORMAT (MONTH/DAY/YEAR).**

Summary of Written Comments

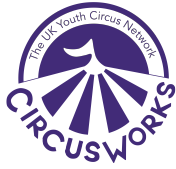
Timeframe

Expectations about reopening range from plans to reopen in the next few weeks, to the conviction that it will not be safe to return before 2021.

Guidance

"Clear guidance would be really useful whenever it is possible. This government is being particularly vague!"

It is difficult for youth circuses to plan reopening without clear guidance – from central government or elsewhere. Many youth circuses have commented on how confusing or vague the government's current guidelines are, and are therefore uncertain when it will be safe to reopen, and how to operate safely once they do so. Because of this, youth circuses are having to play the situation "by ear, and by gut".



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Some youth circuses are contacting each other to discuss logistics; some are looking to when schools, gyms or theatres reopen. There is demand, in lieu of governmental guidance, for industry standard guidelines to be developed.

"It would be great to know what other schools are putting in place and develop an industry standard we can all adhere to so we're all doing the same thing."

Insurance

There is a danger that insurance companies will see youth circus as a high-risk activity in light of the Covid-19 crisis, and might raise premiums, or refuse to insure them entirely. Some youth circuses are already having issues with insurers.

"If permitted, I'll teach private households/one-to-ones on my rig in the garden, but at present, this is not permitted or covered by insurance."

Participation

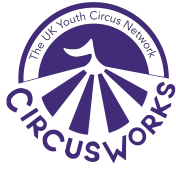
Youth circuses are already fighting the decreased engagement this crisis has created (as discussed in the previous section of this report). They are therefore expecting decreased numbers when they return, which will be compounded by public caution about engaging in social activities while Covid-19 is still a danger. Added to this, class sizes will need to be much smaller to accommodate social distancing, and several youth circuses have expressed concern that reopening will not be financially viable. Some youth circus staff, particularly those that are self-employed, might not return either; because they have had to find other work to support themselves and their families, or because they have suffered physically or mentally in the lockdown.

Preparation

There are many different safety procedures that youth circuses are implementing in response to this crisis. All youth circuses generally agree on the areas that will need new safety measures implementing, however, what those measures will be varies greatly between organisations.

Administration

"We are aware of the potential pitfalls but hope to risk assess the whatsits out of it!"



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Students or parents in many youth circuses will need to sign waivers to agree to the risks and safety measures involved in participating under the current crisis.

There will also need to be new policies, procedures and risk assessments written in response to Covid-19.

Class Structure

While there is a general consensus that classes will need to be smaller to accommodate social distancing, there are different opinions on how to structure classes once youth circuses start to reopen. Ideas include:

- A phased approach: starting with one-to-one sessions, then small groups, and then normal classes;
- Outdoor teaching;
- Private classes for people from the same house or family;
- Small classes, with extra sessions;
- One-to-one classes outdoors;
- Using a different physical layout in space to allow for social distancing;
- One-to-one classes indoors;
- Always teaching the same few people together, with no cross overs;
- Not allowing extra people (e.g. parents) into the space during classes;
- Staggered arrivals/leaving times (so parents don't cluster at the beginning and end of classes);

"classes will need to have gaps between them to allow for cleaning and safe arrivals and departures"

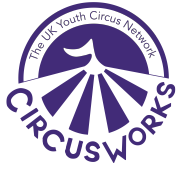
Activities

Social distancing makes it difficult to teach certain circus skills, for instance acrobalance and aerial.

While some youth circuses are limiting the activities they offer, others are attempting to adapt skills to fit them to social distancing guidelines.

Aerial

Teaching aerial under Covid-19 is a big issue: it is one of the most difficult skills to teach in a socially distanced way (as tutors often have to spot young people while they learn new tricks), the equipment is not easy to disinfect, and it is also one of the most popular circus skills to learn: many youth circuses specialize in teaching aerial.



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While some youth circuses are buying extra aerial equipment, to keep sharing to a minimum, many cannot afford to do this.

Many youth circuses are discussing reducing spotting time, with aerial and other skills, or avoiding the need to spot at all, by only teaching tricks that students are already confident with, so they don't need to be spotted. Other youth circuses are concerned that not spotting students is itself a safety risk.

Equipment

Many larger youth circuses are planning to increase the amount of equipment they have, to allow cleaning and quarantine time between uses, and preclude the need to share. Some youth circuses cannot afford to do so.

Cleaning and Quarantine

While many youth circuses have discussed the need to clean or quarantine equipment, there are various opinions on what this means. Some youth circuses will require several days equipment quarantine between sessions, others allow 20 minutes cleaning time between classes. Some have discussed putting dance floor down on mats so they can be easily wiped down, while others expect students to clean mats and crash mats at the end of each session.

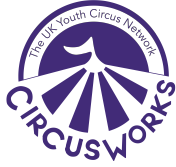
Further Measures

Other measures that youth circus intend to implement consist of including hand washing as a part of classes, spacing students and equipment out, not sharing chalk, rosin or water, and expecting participants to bring hand gel and wear clean clothes.

Differences in Provision

"We have rejigged the space fully, from the lobby area to the "waiting" area. We have added foot peddle drinking fountains and hand wash sinks to the main training area. We have removed bottleneck areas – everything is 2 meters apart including warm up spaces."

It was obvious in the written comments how much Covid-19 safety measures in different youth circuses will be shaped by the size and resources each youth circus has. Some have completely refurbished their buildings in response to this crisis, or bought new equipment so participants will not need to share. Others have no control over the space they use, as they rent their spaces on a temporary basis, and cannot afford new equipment.



Afterword

The results of this survey will be used to inform our on-going work to support the UK youth circus sector. Some of the actions we plan to undertake, to address key issues youth circuses are facing, are detailed here.

Fundraising and Advocacy

We will continue to lobby arts councils, central government and other funding bodies to recognise and support the incredible work that youth circuses do. This report will be circulated publically and among funding bodies, to raise awareness of the challenges that youth circuses are facing.

In our upcoming 'un-conference', we intend to fundraise, to create a pot of money that youth circuses can apply for to help cover the costs of reopening.

We are looking into applying for funding to target specific issues raised in this survey: for instance, we expect that youth circus classes will become more expensive when they reopen, as class sizes will be smaller. We are therefore looking into fundraising to pay fees for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

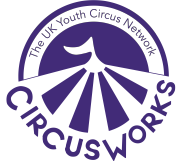
Finally, we will continue to keep youth circuses updated about available funding and support.

Un-Conference

Beginning in July 2020, our online 'Un-Conference' will include a range of discussions, speakers and workshops on topics relevant to the current crisis, including funding applications, how to teach skills and play games while social distancing, and creating engaging online content. The full programme is yet to be announced – details will be online in the coming weeks (www.circusworks.org).

Resources

In this survey, one youth circus asked if CircusWorks intended to act as a hub for online resources: yes, we do. We have already been doing this to a certain degree via our social media pages, particularly Facebook, where we have been regularly sharing information and resources for youth circuses. We are currently redeveloping our website to act as a formalised index of online



Impact Survey Report 2

resources for youth circuses, young people and parents. The website will also contain a teacher database, to help youth circus teachers find work.

Reboot the Sector Toolkit

In consultation with youth circuses across the UK and Europe, CircusWorks is currently developing a toolkit to help youth circuses restart. This will include guidelines on how to teach safely during the Covid-19 crisis, cleaning and quarantining procedures, and examples of best practice.

Research and Conversations

CircusWorks research into the impact this crisis is having on youth circus is on-going, and we will continue to monitor the sector until activity has returned to normal. Our next step will be to collect case studies on how individual youth circuses are adapting to the situation.

We are part of numerous on-going conversations nationally and internationally about how to adapt to this crisis, and we are also in conversation with insurers about how insurance policies are likely to change. We will continue to keep youth circuses informed, as these conversations develop.

Thank you for reading this report.

Thank you to all of the youth circuses working to help young people through this crisis.

We hope you stay safe and happy.