



# YOUTH CENTRES

## For children and teenagers aged 10-16 (grades 5-10)

Reykjavík City's Department of Education and Youth operates four recreational centres within the city. These centres oversee the management of the city's youth centres that are located close to every school in the city. Information regarding location, phone numbers and websites for all Reykjavík youth centres can be found on [the city's website](#). Opening hours of youth centres are after school hours or in the afternoon, for both 10-12 years old and 13-16 years old, but also in the evenings for 13-16 years old. Since youth centres are usually located within walking distance from the homes of children it is not considered unusual in Iceland that adolescents go to the youth centres from 19.30-22.00 several evenings at week. Information regarding a specific youth centre's opening hours, programmes, activities and employees can be found on the relevant youth centre's website or social media.

### What is a youth centre?

Youth centres offer children and teenagers aged 10-16 the chance to take part in recreational activities that are adjusted to their relevant age and maturity. These activities are focused on safeguarding their wellbeing, development and education. Taking part in recreational activities which are overseen by professionals within a safe environment can provide a platform to get to know other children of a similar age, make new friends, learn Icelandic through interacting with peers and employees, strengthening the child's self-image and developing communication skills. Research has shown that participating in organised recreational activities has a positive influence on teenagers' educational progress and encourages them to make healthier lifestyle choices.

Children and teenagers have a need for feeling that they belong within a group; somewhere where they can spend time together and communicate with their peers. Youth centres offer children and teenagers the chance to take part in a variety of tasks and projects that are meant to encourage participation, initiative and creativity.

### What do you do at a youth centre?

**Open Activities:** A variety of recreational activities that are open to all. During opening hours, children and teenagers are free to make use of the youth centre's facilities. Open Activities are a great way for children and teenagers to bond with one another, as well as for employees to communicate with and establish trust among the youth centre's clientele. Open Activities may include special events that are open to all who wish to participate. These events originate with the children and teenagers themselves and are organised by them. Open Activities give children and teenagers the chance to offer their own ideas and then implement and organise those ideas with the help of the youth centre's staff. This process can be very informative and empowering. Youth centres provide children and teenagers with a neutral safe space that they can attend on their own terms. There, they can choose the extent of their participation in the various activities supervised by the youth centre's staff.

**Group Activities** (often referred to as club activities; e.g. when a club is formed around a mutual hobby): Gives children and teenagers the chance to work together on their mutual hobbies within smaller groups and under the supervision of a member of the youth centre's staff. It is extremely important for young people to develop a sense of self. However, sometimes there is so much emphasis placed on the importance of developing a personal identity that the importance of children and teenagers getting the chance to develop a group identity is pushed to the side. It must not be forgotten that learning how to bond with others within a group of your peers is also an important part of children and teenagers' development. During Group Activities, children and teenagers get the chance to establish more personal relationships with one another. Group Activities also give children and teenagers the opportunity to inform themselves on a variety of subjects and provide them with direct and indirect learning experiences.

**Seminars and workshops:** These are by and large meant for children aged 10-12. During the summer and winter months, many youth centres offer seminars or workshops with a set number of participants for this age group. These events may be scheduled in a variety of ways; in single or repeated sessions

of 1-2 hours at a time. Seminars and workshops give staff and children the chance to work in smaller groups within a set subject; placing an emphasis on specific learning or empowering goals; e.g. self-image building, creativity, outdoor activities or social skills.

**Open to all:** Children who need special assistance can take part in all activities in youth centers and will get the assistance they need from staff members.

## Alcohol, tobacco and other substances

The use of alcohol or other narcotic or addictive substances is strictly forbidden during all youth centre activities. The same applies to the use of tobacco; e.g. cigarettes, snuff, snus, electronic cigarettes and artificial tobacco substitutes. Any use of the above-mentioned substances will immediately be reported to the child's guardian.

## Specialized youth centre activities for children with disabilities (ages 10-16)

The Department of Education and Youth operates four youth centres that provide specialized services for children and teenagers with disabilities who are in grades 5-10 within the general school system. These specialized youth centres are: Höllin, for children and teenagers in Grafarvogur; Hellirinn, for children and teenagers in Breiðholt, Grafarholt, Árbær and Norðlingaholt; and Hofið, for children who live on the west side of the Elliðaá river. Children and teenagers who attend Klettaskóli Elementary School can attend the youth centre Askja. Applications for these youth centres are made through [Vala frístund](#). A digital certificate or an "IceKey" is needed for registration. A fee is incurred for the services provided by these specialized youth centres (see **fee rates**).

Parents of children who have moved to Iceland in the last 12 months, are not born in Iceland and have another first language than Icelandic, can apply for three months free of charge in an after school program or a youth center for children with disabilities. For more information, please contact your after school program or youth center's director.

The specialized youth centres are open to children with disabilities on weekdays from the end of their school day and until 5 pm. The centres are also open from 8 am – 5 pm during all school holidays except the winter break. The centres are open during Easter, Christmas and summer holidays as well as during days when normal school activities are suspended due to staff work days or parent teacher meetings.

Our goal is to combine youth centre activities with those recreational activities already on offer for this age group within their districts.

## How much does it cost to attend a youth centre?

In most cases, children and teenagers can take part in youth centre activities free of charge. In some cases, a fee may be incurred; e.g. for specific events. In such instances, said fee will be kept at a minimum. However, the service provided by the specialized youth centres is subject to a set fee. This fee is set according to fee rates as they stand at any given time.

## The recreation card (Frístundastyrkur)

Children aged 6-18 with a registered address in Reykjavík receive a yearly stipend—the so-called Leisure Card. Parents can use this stipend as a down payment for after school center fees and/or other after school activities. More information here: [The recreation card](#)

