

The NYA Guide to Youth Work in England

'the Government's view [is] that high quality youth work, delivered by third and statutory sectors, is central to delivering our ambition of increasing the number of young people on the path to success and an important function of integrated youth support services.' **Aiming high for young people**, HM Treasury/DCSF 2007.

Youth work in brief

Youth work helps young people learn about themselves, others and society through activities that combine enjoyment, challenge, learning and achievement. It is a developmental process that starts in places and at times when young people themselves are ready to engage, learn and make use of it. The relationship between youth worker and young person is central to this process.

Youth work happens in youth centres, schools and colleges, parks, streets and shopping precincts – wherever young people gather. Youth work methods include support for individuals, work with small groups and learning through experience. Youth work offers young people safe spaces to explore their identity, experience decision-making, increase their confidence, develop inter-personal skills and think through the consequences of their actions. This leads to better informed choices, changes in activity and improved outcomes for young people.

Youth work contributes to the government's vision for young people – that they should enjoy happy, healthy and safe teenage years that prepare them well for adult life and enable them to reach their full potential. From January 2007, local authorities have been required to secure 'positive activities', including youth work, for young people in their area. These activities should be shaped by what young people say they want, and should help put them on the 'path to success'.

So what is youth work?

Youth work helps young people learn about themselves, others and society, through informal educational activities which combine enjoyment, challenge and learning. Youth workers work primarily with young people aged between 13 and 19, but may in some cases extend this to younger age groups and those aged up to 24. Their work seeks to promote young people's personal and social development and enable them to have a voice, influence and place in their communities and society as a whole.

Youth work is underpinned by a clear set of values. These include young people choosing to take part; starting with young people's view of the world; treating young people with respect; seeking to develop young people's skills and attitudes rather than remedy 'problem behaviours'; helping young people develop stronger relationships and collective identities; respecting and valuing differences; and promoting the voice of young people. This is considered in more detail in the National Youth Agency statement of principals and values, *Ethical Conduct in Youth Work*.

Youth work has its origins in the clubs and projects set up by voluntary organisations – often with a religious intent - in the 19th century. Many of these, such as the Boys' Brigade and the Young Women's Christian Association, still exist today as national voluntary youth organisations. State recognition for youth work dates from the outbreak of war in 1939. Since then, youth services have developed as a complex network of providers including community groups, voluntary organisations and local authorities.

Services which provide youth work are currently changing, as a result of the government's focus on delivering 'joined up' provision for children and young people. Local authorities, of which there are 150 in England, are responsible for securing youth work in their areas, and youth services now normally form part of their children and young people's services. Each of these local authorities is required to develop a plan which covers all provision for children and young people and shows how it meets government priorities. By April 2008, they are expected

to secure provision through integrated youth support and development services delivered through children's trusts (which bring together local authority children's services with a range of other partners). Youth work will form an important part of these integrated services, which have three main elements:

- universal services for all young people;
- targeted support for young people who need it most; and
- information, advice, guidance and counselling.

Funding for services to young people comes mainly from central and local government. While the government sets notional levels of expenditure, local authorities have the scope to vary these, either up or down. The level of funding therefore varies widely between authorities, as The NYA has highlighted in its series of annual 'youth service audits'. Its audit for 2005-06 found that local authorities spent a total of £452 million on youth services.

The 2005-06 audit also found that local authority youth services in England employed over 4,000 professional youth workers and over 17,000 youth support workers (see 'Becoming Qualified' for information on different youth work roles). Nearly 900 people were employed in managerial positions. Voluntary youth organisations also employ a significant number of youth work staff, as do faith organisations. While there are no absolute figures for the number of volunteer youth workers, it is estimated that there may be over 500,000 volunteers, mainly in the voluntary, community and faith sectors.

The quality of children's services and youth services are currently monitored and evaluated by a body known as Ofsted – the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. By December 2008, Ofsted will have carried out joint area reviews - which judge the contribution that a council and its partners are making to improving outcomes for children and young people - in all 150 local authorities in England. These reviews include enhanced coverage of youth work in authorities where youth services have not been inspected since 2005.

The policy context

The government's 'Every Child Matters: Change for Children' programme seeks to provide a new approach to the well-being of children and young people from birth to 19. It aims for every child and young person, whatever their background or circumstances, to have the support they need to:

- Be healthy;
- Stay safe;
- Enjoy and achieve;
- Make a positive contribution; and
- Achieve economic well-being

These five 'ECM outcomes' underpin all aspects of government policy relating to children and young people. Policy specifically relating to young people was set out in *Youth Matters* (2005), and *Youth Matters: next steps* (2006), which developed proposals for a 'radical reshaping of universal services for teenagers – with targeted support for those who need it most'.

Since January 2007 there has been a statutory duty on local authorities, working in partnership with the voluntary and private sectors, to promote the well-being of young people aged 13 to 19 (up to 25 for those with learning difficulties) through securing access to educational and recreational leisure-time activities (referred to as 'positive activities'). This duty was set out in Clause Six of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, which gives effect to the proposals contained in *Youth Matters*. *Youth Matters* stated that the government would provide statutory guidance for local authorities setting out a new set of national standards for positive activities.

This would include:

- Access to two hours per week of sporting activity including formal and informal team sports and other activities such as outdoor adventure, aerobics and dance.
- Two hours per week of constructive activities in clubs, youth groups and classes. These might include young people's own hobbies and interests; personal, social and spiritual development activities; study support; activities encouraging creativity, innovation and enterprise; and residential opportunities.
- Opportunities to make a positive contribution through volunteering, including taking a lead on campaigning and fundraising.
- A wide range of other recreational, cultural and sporting and enriching experiences.
- Safe and enjoyable places to spend time, including socialising with friends.

This combination of opportunities is often referred to as the 'local youth offer'.

In July 2007, the government published *Aiming high for young people*, which sets out a ten-year strategy for positive activities. It proposes a range of initiatives under three main headings:

- **Empowerment:** giving young people and communities real influence;
- **Access:** attracting and engaging every young person; and
- **Quality:** effective services delivered by a skilled workforce.

The strategy has a particular stress on improving local youth facilities, increasing young people's influence over activities and provision (including direct control of some budgets) and developing the youth workforce. The *Children's Plan*, which set out the government's vision for children, young people and families based on putting their needs at the centre of integrated services, was published in December 2007. This identified three areas in which it wanted to strengthen the commitments made in *Aiming high for young people*:

- setting a clear goal that all young people will participate in positive activities and access a broad range of experiences;
- making further investment to improve places to go in every community; and
- exploring ways of improving information about things to do and places to go.

How is youth work carried out?

Youth work is carried out in different situations and locations, using a range of approaches. However, some common factors underpin good youth work, whatever the setting. HM Treasury's policy review on children and young people highlights seven factors which need to be in place to improve outcomes for young people. These are:

- Providing opportunities to build the skills of young people;
- Developing young people's personal effectiveness through building their ability to arrive at their own choices and solutions to problems;
- Making links between the different aspects of young people's lives;
- Setting and demonstrating appropriate standards of behaviour;
- Keeping young people safe from physical and mental harm;
- Putting proper supervision in place, through which adults provide clear, appropriate and consistent rules and expectations; and
- Sustaining young people's involvement over time.

Youth work settings include:

- Youth clubs and centres provided by local authorities or by voluntary and community organisations. These may cater solely for young people, or may incorporate provision for young people within broader community facilities.
- Other building-based settings including libraries, churches and mosques, or hospitals and GPs' surgeries.
- Detached or street work: meeting and developing purposeful relationships with young people in public spaces, such as parks, bus shelters, shopping centres or on the street.
- Mobiles: converted buses or other vehicles taken to particular localities, offering young people opportunities to meet together, take part in structured programmes and gain access to resources, information and advice.
- Schools and FE colleges: youth work contributes to formal education, particularly through PSHE (personal, social and health education) and citizenship education, as well as non-formal provision during and outside school hours. By 2010 all schools are expected to be 'extended schools', offering additional services including a varied range of activities.
- Sports and arts organisations providing access to specialist skills, training, equipment, and practice and performance space.
- Youth councils and other initiatives through which young people engage in local democratic and regeneration processes and have a say in the development of policies and services.
- Information, advice and counselling projects: providing a range of services from information about local facilities to long-term support for individual or groups of young people.
- Specialist projects: targeting particular groups of young people, for instance young people leaving care, young women or lesbian, gay and bisexual young people, or focusing on specific activities such as arts, volunteering or motor projects.
- Cross-community and international work: bringing together young people from different backgrounds on joint projects.

Youth services have traditionally provided a mix of 'open access' or universal youth work, intended for all young people in an area, and work which targets particular groups of young people, usually those who are disadvantaged or socially excluded. Similarly, integrated youth support and development services are expected to offer a broad and balanced range of activities open to all young people, within which young people who are experiencing difficulties will be offered services tailored to their specific needs.

What Ofsted says about youth work provision ...

Detached youth work, award schemes, outdoor pursuits, residential activities, international exchanges and youth councils are used effectively in their own right as well as to augment youth club programmes. Hampshire 2007.

The youth service has been very effective in its role across the council in developing the voice and influence of children and young people. There has been a great deal of activity, from local involvement of youth groups in redevelopment projects, such as skateboard parks and recreational spaces, to large scale conferences. Bristol 2007.

The exciting range of music technology equipment, internet café areas, sports and cooking facilities has attracted a wider range of young people to get involved. Hillingdon 2006.

Imaginative use of the mobile provision, with partners, to offer a combination of advice, information and SRE [sex and relationships education] work is also proving effective at local level. Dudley, 2007.

The service is well resourced and provides good quality equipment and specialist resources such as rock climbing facilities, musical instruments, motor vehicles and workshops for young people. Lewisham, 2007.

Sheffield Futures continues to support the exemplary work of Football Unites Racism Divides (FURD), where effective youth work is delivered through a varied programme of football coaching, peer education and youth volunteering. Sheffield 2006.

Those attending open access provision, many of whom exhibit challenging behaviour, value the safe environment that youth centres provide and are making reasonable progress in developing their levels of self-confidence and social skills. Hartlepool, 2007.

The service is responsive to young people's needs. For example, in Whitley Bay it worked effectively with the police and neighbourhood wardens supporting young people to build a shelter where they could meet their friends and engage with youth workers. North Tyneside 2007.

The Berwick Voluntary Youth Project is based in an outstanding purpose built block which includes a large café bar, accommodation for six young people and spacious well designed, attractive facilities for providing information and advice. Northumberland, 2007.

In Hastings detached workers supported local skaters to gain access to funding to extend skateboarding facilities in the town. East Sussex, 2007.

The understanding of those with different backgrounds and from different communities is effectively encouraged through displaying positive images, bringing together different groups and implementing specific learning programmes. Doncaster 2006.

Multi-agency work

The current move towards bringing together services for young people has major implications for the delivery of youth work. With the focus on integrated youth support and development services, youth workers are increasingly likely to work in locality-based teams bringing together staff from a range of disciplines.

This, however, is not a new role for youth workers. Many youth services have a track record of working in partnership with other agencies – such as social work settings, schools, housing, community safety initiatives, leisure and health - to develop and improve provision for young people. Working within multi-disciplinary teams, youth workers transfer and apply their skills in different contexts, for instance working alongside social workers in youth offending teams, teachers in schools and health workers in primary care trusts and hospitals. Experience has shown that this multi-agency approach works best when the distinctive contribution of each profession is recognised.

In particular, youth work has played a key role in the development and delivery of Connexions, the government service providing information, advice and guidance to young people aged 13 to 19 in England. Connexions offers young people access to a personal adviser, who work in a range of settings and come from a range of occupational backgrounds, including youth work. Youth workers have been particularly important in helping Connexions reach and support young people who are vulnerable or at risk.

What Ofsted says about partnership work ...

In conjunction with Connexions, the recently developed Youth Support Team offers integrated specialist support on housing and independent living, substance misuse, and careers advice and guidance. It runs targeted programmes aimed at re-integrating the most disaffected young people into education, employment and training. Buckinghamshire, 2006.

There are some examples of highly effective partnership working. For example, Base KS where workers negotiated direct access to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services for young people with acute mental ill health. Birmingham, 2007.

Detached youth workers, working in partnership with community development officers and the police, have been successful in providing a programme which supports community cohesion. Calderdale, 2006.

The SHADOW (Sexual Health and Drugs Outreach Work) programme and similar work provided by school youth work teams contribute substantially to the personal, social and health education of many young people. Coventry, 2006.

The location of youth work alongside Connexions, sports development and teenage pregnancy/health initiatives ensures an extensive and coherent range of high quality provision which meets the needs of young people, promotes inclusion and tackles disadvantage. Kensington and Chelsea, 2007.

Staff work well with other professionals, for instance drawing in expertise from the Drugs and Alcohol Team within sessions on alcohol abuse and setting up innovative complementary health-practitioner sessions to foster well being. North Somerset, 2006.

The skills and imagination of youth workers are valued highly by many of the partner agencies with whom they work. Lincolnshire, 2007.

Ten health clinics for young people are well integrated into provision. Youth workers and health professionals work together to provide a very good range of locally accessible services on sexual health, contraception and wider health matters. Doncaster, 2006.

The service works well in partnership with social services, the police and other agencies to support young women at risk of sexual exploitation to change their lives through the 'Risky Business' project. Rotherham, 2006.

A productive partnership with the Neighbourhood Road Safety Initiative has resulted in young people's involvement in a range of imaginative projects to reduce the incidence of road accidents, which is a key strategic priority. Wigan, 2006.

The partnership with the primary care trust has been beneficial in providing health services to a wide range of young people, for example through the Big Deal project on substance misuse in schools. Havering, 2007.

What do young people gain from youth work?

'The best services provide wide ranging activities and targeted projects, and involve young people fully in the design of services. This approach increases the opportunities for enjoyable activities, and develops personal qualities, self-esteem and useful skills. In particular, the best services are successful in involving some of the most vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups.' (Ofsted annual report, 2006-07)

Young people choose to use youth work provision. They do so for many reasons - to meet friends, to have fun, to spend time in a safe space, to take part in specific activities, to develop projects with other young people, to build relationships with adults, or to get help and advice. In turn, youth workers develop a programme of activities which promote young people's development, are enjoyable, educational and challenging, and encourage young people to work together as a group.

Youth work therefore offers young people a wide range of activities and opportunities. In many cases these will be developed and carried out by youth support workers, supported and guided by professional staff or more highly qualified youth support workers. Activities such as music or drama, volunteering or sport and outdoor activities and programmes such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award give young people opportunities to enjoy and achieve. Project work offers young people opportunities to explore the issues that matter to them, such as drugs, sexual health or bullying. Information, advice, guidance and counselling services help young people make sense of their lives, offering varying levels of support according to their needs. Residential events provide a different and challenging learning environment outside familiar surroundings. Programmes of visits and exchanges (in the UK and abroad) offer opportunities for young people to meet others from different racial, cultural and religious backgrounds - to increase their understanding of others and, in some cases, explore and resolve conflicts between different groups.

These activities and the relationships that underpin them, promote young people's personal and social development in various ways. Young people:

- increase confidence and self-esteem while socialising with peers in a safe environment;
- develop new skills and interests through taking part in activities;
- develop planning, organisation and teamwork skills through active participation and decision-making;
- increase their knowledge and understanding of issues affecting their lives;
- learn how to make use of services and information to make informed choices about their lives; and
- gain access to non-formal learning opportunities which help them fulfil their potential.

Many of these skills, such as communication and teamwork, are seen as particularly important by employers, while personal and social skills such as self-awareness, problem-solving and negotiation increase the likelihood of young people making a successful transition to adulthood.

In all activities, youth workers encourage and support young people to take decisions and to exercise responsibility, both within their centre or project and in the wider community. This interplay between participation and volunteering forms an increasingly important part of the youth work 'menu'. As young people become more confident and experienced, they may begin to run activities for themselves and other young people, for instance educating other young people about particular issues – an approach known as peer education - or sharing their skills in sports or arts. They may also help manage their youth centre or project. In some cases, young people who have adopted these leadership roles decide they want to become youth workers themselves.

Youth work also offers young people opportunities to get involved and take action in the wider community – from creating murals which brighten up a drab area to campaigning on issues they feel strongly about. Youth workers play a key role in ensuring that young people have a voice in their communities and are involved in decisions that affect them. Indeed, Ofsted has noted that this is an area where youth services often take the lead across the whole authority. In many areas youth workers support groups such as youth forums or councils which relate to local authorities' formal decision-making structures.

Youth workers also help young people have a voice in other ways, from making videos about facilities on a local estate to feed into regeneration processes, to helping develop the local teenage pregnancy strategy. Initiatives such as YouthBank and the Youth Opportunity and Capital Funds have given young people, supported by youth workers, a direct role in funding youth provision in their area - an approach which the government is committed to developing further. *Aiming high for young people* states that young people should control 25 per cent of spending on positive activities by 2018.

In all these different aspects of youth work, youth workers encourage young people to reflect on what they are doing and learning and how they can build on their experience in other areas of their lives. They also work with young people to ensure that their learning and achievements are recorded. This may be at an informal level, for instance through local certificates, an entry in a student progress file or through workers' professional notes, or more formally through recognised accreditation systems.

What Ofsted says about young people's achievement ...

A group of young women attending 'What's Out There', a project for looked after young people, were engaged in a task which developed their decision-making skills and used their

ideas and gaps in knowledge to understand issues relating to puberty, sex and relationships. There was much fun and laughter in the group and the young people were able to explain, with great confidence, how this project had helped them to feel more valued members of their local community. Hounslow, 2006.

Achievement was outstanding at the Special Needs Activities Project where young people enjoyed creative sessions designed carefully to meet their diverse interests and abilities. Members spoke with pride about making an anti-bullying video, performing in a talent show and composing their own poems and music. With support from youth workers, they contributed regularly to planning and evaluation and kept their own records of achievement. Somerset, 2007.

In a high proportion of settings, young volunteers take responsibility for planning and overseeing activities, willingly and to good effect. A combination of simple but well-designed recording systems, training events and good youth work practice have assisted young volunteers in articulating what they gain from such involvement. Devon 2006.

The service works well with challenging students through alternative curriculum projects or in-school support. Those attending Fasst in Havant and Teenzone in Gosport are developing key social skills of listening, communication, anger management and co-operation. In some cases, these projects represent the only link students have with education or training and provides them with respite from otherwise difficult personal situations. Hampshire, 2007.

A group of vulnerable young people judged to be at risk of involvement in gun crime were successfully engaged in writing, performing and recording songs. They had learned how to use using some very sophisticated equipment confidently and were keen to share their knowledge with others. The outcomes of their work were impressive. Sandwell, 2006.

Very good progress is being made by members of the Young Parents' Group at Ellesmere Port; effective relationship based work has enabled the group to set themselves challenging targets, achieve accreditation and become peer educators. Cheshire, 2007.

Young people take part enthusiastically in democratic decision-making, particularly in the Waveney area. Their skills are evident in the very effective bids developed by young people for the Youth Opportunity Fund and Youth Capital Fund. These bids are evaluated stringently by panels of young people. Suffolk, 2007.

Through the mobile project, very good progress was made by a group of young men with a history of disruptive behaviour in the local community. They learned to appreciate the impact of their actions on others and manage more effectively the frustrations and difficulties they faced. Windsor and Maidenhead, 2006.

At the Lozells Recreation Group, young people, mainly from the Muslim community, were able to outline their involvement in a film project that has paid big dividends. They achieved third place in a national film competition and in the process gained qualifications in filming and editing. Many were keen to explain how their involvement had also led them into peer leadership roles in the project and within their own community. Birmingham, 2007.

The Youth Council, developed and supported by the youth service, is a strongly representative campaigning group with an impressive record for promoting key issues for young people. Recent lobbying of council members secured a 50 pence flat rate transport fee for all young people aged 13 to 19. Isle of Wight, 2006.

Good standards of achievement were seen in the 'ball court league', a joint initiative between the youth service and a local professional club, which is providing regular coaching and reinforcement of correct behaviour when playing competitive soccer. Bexley, 2007.

In negotiating targets for their own achievement, young people take responsibility for developing new interests and learning new knowledge and skills, such as in musical

performance. They are keen to gain accreditation and are consistently successful at doing so. Kingston upon Thames, 2006.

The Graffiti project supports young people well in developing not only their creativity and skills in project management but also their social awareness through engagement with the local community. They have produced a mural for a local nursery and their work is to be displayed on the metro at Wallsend. North Tyneside, 2007.

At the Malt House Stables, the Duke of Edinburgh award provided the incentive for three groups of young people to achieve. Those working for their bronze award were developing their canoeing skills and also training for their imminent trip to Birmingham to help celebrate 50 years of the Award. Those working for their silver award were deciding how to restore an old barge, while those aiming for a gold award were developing their mapping skills with the aid of some very helpful computer software. In all cases, there was clear evidence of progress over time as well as a strong sense of teamwork. Sandwell, 2006.

What skills do youth workers need?

'A few years ago I was doing a residential weekend with a group of young people. One of them asked me what kind of skills you needed to be a youth worker. I replied that effective youth workers needed three things: good listening skills, a good sense of humour and eternal patience. He clearly understood the last point: he had often expressed surprise that I had "stayed with him" despite his often obnoxious and oppositional behaviour.' Howard Williamson, *Learning the Art of Patience*, British Youth Council, January 2001.

'I think the skills I use most are the ability to develop positive relationships... I seek to be approachable, consistent, responsive, can mix and match methods and settings ... I try to be honest, non-judgmental, able to challenge in a supportive way I also think that there is a code of behaviour that reinforces all our work. It includes valuing young people, recognising yourself as a role model, always doing what you say you will, recognising and using both verbal and non-verbal communication.' Linda, quoted by Bryan Merton in *Good Youth Work*, The NYA, 2007.

Youth work starts where young people are – with their own view of their lives, the world and their interests. But it does not end there – youth work is about encouraging young people to think critically about their lives and values, about offering new experiences and challenges, about increasing young people's abilities and aspirations. Youth workers draw on a range of skills to achieve this, which are defined through a set of national occupational standards for youth work (currently being revised). The publication on good youth work cited above has summed up the characteristics of effective youth work as resourcefulness, resilience and resolve – the very same 'three Rs' that youth work seeks to develop in young people.

Through professional relationships based on trust and respect, and an understanding of the realities of young people's lives, youth workers encourage and challenge young people to think about what they want to achieve, reflect on their behaviour and consider whether the choices they make are helping them get what they want. They support young people to work with others and to respect and value difference. They encourage young people to take on greater responsibility for themselves and others and to work effectively as a team, judging when to stand back and when to intervene. This may mean letting young people make mistakes – but ensuring that they then learn from them.

Youth workers plan and provide appropriate programmes, while remaining alert and responsive to what is actually happening in a session and adapting their approach as necessary. Even when activities appear to be recreational or social, youth workers will seek to draw out learning, perhaps using passing comments as the starting point for discussion of serious issues. Reflecting on and recording practice, both informally and formally, is also an important part of the youth worker role.

Youth workers need detailed knowledge of the local community and the circumstances of young people, together with an understanding of the ways in which legislation and wider policy developments affect young people and youth work. Based on this, they help young

people gain the information they need to make informed choices about their lives. Youth workers are not expected to be an expert on everything affecting young people. But they do need to know what other services are available, and recognise when and how to refer young people on to specialist agencies, while continuing to support them as appropriate. As young people come to trust workers, they may confide details of difficult personal circumstances. In such situations it is important that youth workers and young people are both clear about when such information will be kept confidential, and when it may have to be passed on to other people.

In addition to the skills needed for direct work with young people, youth workers, depending on their role, increasingly need a range of organisational and management skills. These could include designing, delivering and evaluating programmes; supervising staff; seeking funding; managing buildings and resources; and working with other professionals, parents and community groups in order to ensure that provision and services respond to the needs of young people. More senior staff will be responsible for strategic management and development of projects and services and will need appropriate skills and experience.

What Ofsted says about youth work skills ...

The best workers were leading by example, whether entering fully into the activities and inspiring others to participate, or by their behaviour – acting as role models in showing energy, good humour, respect and empathy for all, in ways that rubbed off on those around them. Buckinghamshire, 2006.

Practice is good and youth workers enjoy what they do. They create a lively and constructive atmosphere that encourages achievement, and are generally adept at supporting and challenging young people in a firm, assertive and open manner. Necessarily, workers have developed strong relationships with young people to get to this point. Youth workers advocate well on behalf of young people within the community and are quick to engineer situations that enable them to consider and express their views. Hampshire, 2007

Local authority workers have very good relationships with the young people they serve. Young people, in turn, say that they trust the adults with whom they come into contact, and believe that staff work hard to provide interesting and varied activities. Newcastle Upon Tyne, 2007.

In a session for young people with mental health problems, workers established a safe and trusting environment where participants shared feelings and supported each other. Workers' interventions were discreet and appropriate; planned activities reinforced basic values of care and consideration for each other and all present subscribed to agreed ground rules. Stockport, 2006.

At the Shalom Youth Centre, ten of the younger members of the club were challenged about a recent spate of anti-social behaviour. At first they were reluctant to acknowledge what they had done but eventually accepted full responsibility. They went on to suggest the need to apologise properly to those whose property they had damaged and then discussed maturely ways of putting matters right. North East Lincolnshire, 2007.

Youth workers develop and maintain very good relationships with young people. They know the young people and their communities well and there are high levels of mutual respect. Youth workers analyse local needs effectively, whilst taking account of the needs analysis at city level. They plan and organise their work consistently and enthusiastically, according to a well-developed process, providing consistent management information. Coventry, 2006.

At the Bangladeshi Outreach Project workers skillfully and sensitively managed a group discussion on racism with a mixed group of white and Bangladeshi young men whose attitudes towards minority groups in their community demonstrably changed by the end of the session. Gateshead, 2006

Workers in detached settings have good long term relationships with young people and have clear objectives for their learning. Havering, 2007

Youth workers have high expectations of young people and encourage them to take risks and challenge themselves within the safe and stimulating environment that youth work provides. Kensington and Chelsea, 2007.

Youth workers demonstrate considerable skill in responding to the needs of individuals and groups, intervening skilfully to support, guide and challenge. Relationships between young people and adults, and between peers, are highly respectful. Staff have a good knowledge of the needs of individuals, offer appropriate advice and provide useful signposting to specialist support. Young people feel able to discuss sensitive and personal issues with workers, such as bullying and anger management. Kingston upon Thames, 2006

Youth workers are supported well by high quality curriculum packs on topics such as healthy eating and planning a fund raising event. These suggest how to cater for different learning styles and provide a good range of activities with advice on how to put them into practice. High quality training helps youth workers use these materials effectively. Rotherham, 2006

Within the best generic youth programmes, staff are adept at following up topics of interest, such as the impact of racism and healthy lifestyles alongside broadly recreational programmes. Youth workers make good use of opportunities to extend young people's knowledge on issues of local democracy and administration. Westminster, 2007

Becoming qualified

There are two types of nationally recognised qualifications in youth work, and most posts require postholders to hold, or to be working towards, one of these qualifications. These qualifications are for youth support workers (pre-professional/vocational qualifications) and for professional youth workers.

The **youth support worker** qualifications are National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), and Vocationally Related Qualifications (VRQs). NVQs and VRQs are offered in the workplace by employers, sometimes in conjunction with a local further education college. NVQs and VRQs in youth work are currently available at Level 2 and Level 3. Level 2 is for individuals working face-to-face with young people in supervised roles. Level 3 is also aimed at those who are involved in direct face-to-face work with young people, but who work under their own initiative, and have additional responsibility for supervising other people, leading projects and developing their organisation. The training programmes are intended to enhance learning achieved through experience in the workplace. Assessment is based on the worker's ability to demonstrate their competence in a range of skill areas using many types of evidence, and will take place over a period of time to suit the individual.

In addition, employers should provide a range of training and learning opportunities to promote their staff's continuing professional development.

Professional youth workers are required to hold Higher Education qualifications – Dip HE, foundation degree, BA (Hons), PG Certificate and MA. These are currently offered by around 38 English universities and colleges of higher education. Courses are available for both full and part-time study and require completion of substantial field work placements. A few institutions offer distance learning programmes. Since youth and community workers work in a wide range of settings, higher education qualifications reflect different occupational needs, and have a range of titles, including youth and community, community and youth studies, childhood and youth studies, and informal and community education. Most universities have a minimum entry requirement involving experience of paid or voluntary youth work. While most universities stipulate minimum academic entry requirements, all institutions offering youth and community work qualifications welcome applications from those without academic qualifications providing they can show that they have relevant experience in youth work and have the ability to complete the course.

The different higher education qualifications vary in length:

- Dip HE: two years full-time and part-time equivalent;
- Foundation Degree: two years full-time, employment based;
- BA (Hons): three years full-time and part-time equivalent;
- PG Cert / PG Dip: one year full-time and part-time equivalent; and
- MA: one year full-time and part-time equivalent.

The NYA provides a list of universities offering higher education youth work qualifications on the 'training and qualifications' section of its website. Contact your local authority (details also available on The NYA's website) for information about youth work opportunities in the local area, including voluntary organisations and voluntary work, and training leading to NVQs/VRQs in youth work.

As from September 2010, all new qualifications in youth work will be at honours degree level or higher. This change will not be implemented retrospectively and therefore all previously gained professional youth work qualifications will continue to confer qualified youth worker status.

Recognition of youth work qualifications

Professional (higher education) qualifications are recognised in England, Wales and Northern Ireland as long as the programme of study has been professionally validated by The NYA, the Education and Training Standards committee (ETS) of the Welsh Assembly Government or the Joint ETS for Northern Ireland and Ireland. Different arrangements for professional training and qualification apply in Scotland.

Youth support worker (NVQ/ VRQ) training programmes delivered by employers are nationally endorsed by The NYA, providing the appropriate Awarding Body has quality assurance procedures and minimum standards of provision in place.

Qualifications, pay and level of post

The NYA undertakes professional validation of national awards in youth work on behalf of the Joint Negotiating Committee for Youth and Community Workers (JNC). The JNC sets out conditions for pay and responsibilities of different levels of post, to which all employers should adhere. It operates a single spine for all professional youth workers and youth support workers who are entitled to work at different points on this spine – with different levels of responsibility and salary – depending on the qualifications they hold.

Youth support workers with NVQs and VRQs at Levels 2 and 3 will normally work in posts with a starting salary of c£15,000 (this will be pro-rata where the post is for less than a 37 hour week). Professional youth worker posts command a starting salary of c£22,000, and posts with more responsibility from £27,000 to £34,000 (again pro-rata for less than a 37 hour week). Salaries for youth work managers vary widely according to the size of the authority or organisation and the responsibilities of the post, but are normally upwards of £35,000.

Previous systems

The systems for youth work training have recently changed, and terms relating to the previous systems are still often used, particularly descriptions of youth workers as being 'locally' or 'nationally' qualified.

NVQ/VRQs at Levels 2 and 3 replaced the RAMPs training and awards system, which provided locally devised and assessed initial or basic training programmes for people entering youth work. RAMP qualifications were associated with the terms 'locally' or 'part-time' qualified. They are still valid for work as a youth support worker. The terms 'nationally' and 'professionally' qualified are associated with the higher education qualifications.

However, the terms 'local', 'part-time', and 'national' are now outdated and confusing because of the development of the new NVQ/VRQ system of qualifications, which are recognised and

transferable nationally. As a result the terms youth support worker and professional youth worker are now more commonly used.

Career prospects

Youth work skills are in great demand, and opportunities for qualified youth workers in a range of settings are expanding. A look at job advertisements in the weekly Children and Young People Now magazine (www.cypnow.co.uk) gives a flavour of the range.

Greater attention is also being paid to the progression of more experienced staff. A wide range of services for young people offer opportunities to move into management or into more specialised posts, and a range of training programmes are now available to enhance the management skills of both new and experienced managers.

Criminal records

All youth workers must be prepared to give information about any criminal record they might have, even if it might normally be considered 'spent'. The Criminal Records Bureau will, on request from employers, check the records of anyone applying to work with children and young people, whether on a paid or voluntary basis. But having a record does not mean automatic disqualification, indeed some of the best youth workers have a chequered past, and they draw on their experiences and what they have learnt from them in their work. Further information is available from the CRB on www.crb.gov.uk

Further information

More information about youth work and youth services, and The NYA's role in supporting and improving work with young people, is available on its website at: www.nya.org.uk

For information on youth work and youth work training in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland contact:

YouthLink Scotland, Rosebery House, 9 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh EH12 5EZ. Tel: 0131 313 2488; Fax: 0131 313 6800; E-mail: info@youthlink.co.uk; Website: www.youthlink.co.uk

Wales: Youth Work Policy Branch at the Welsh Assembly Government, c/o ELWa South East Wales, Ground Floor, Ty'r Afon, Bedwas Road, Bedwas, Caerphilly, CF83 8WT. Tel 01443 663814. E-mail: liz.rose@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Youth Council for Northern Ireland, Forestview, Purdey's Lane, Belfast BT8 4TA. Tel: 02890 643882. Website: www.ycni.org

Lifelong Learning UK is the Sector Skills Council for youth work and other informal education occupations, setting the standards for training in this sector.

5th Floor, St Andrew's House, 18-20 St Andrew's Street, London, EC4A 3AY.

Tel: 0870 757 7890. Fax: 0870 757 7889. Helpline: 020 7936 5798. E-mail:

enquiries@lifelonglearninguk.org. Website: www.lifelonglearning.org

Other related areas of work with different qualifications and career structures include play, social work and teaching.

For information on social work: The General Social Care Council, Goldings House, 2 Hay's Lane, London SE1 2HB. Tel: 020 7397 5100. Website: www.gsc.org.uk

For information on becoming a teacher, contact the Training and Development Agency for Schools. Teaching Information Line: Tel: 0845 6000 991. Minicom: 0117 915 8161. Website: www.canteach.gov.uk/index.html

For information on sport, recreation and play: contact SkillsActive, Castlewood House, 77-91 New Oxford Street, London WC1A 1PX. Tel: 020 7632 2000. Website: www.playwork.org.uk

Information on careers in play and childcare is also available at www.childcarecareers.gov.uk.

Further reading

Banks, S, ed., *Ethical Issues In Youth Work*, Routledge, 1999. ISBN 0415165016. £14.99. Examines some key ethical dilemmas facing youth workers, including confidentiality, religious conversion, conflict between cultures, balancing the autonomy and control of young people, and accountability.

Davies, B, *A History of the Youth Service in England: vol 1, from voluntarism to welfare state; vol 2, from Thatcherism to New Labour*, National Youth Agency, 1999.

Offers a critical pathway through the crucial moments in the youth service's history since 1945, seeking to locate developments in the broader conditions and concerns of the time.

Free download from www.nya.org.uk/publications

Department for Education and Skills, *Youth Matters (2005) and Youth Matters: next steps (2006)*.

Sets out the government's proposals for implementing *Youth Matters*, which seeks to give all young people the chance of a positive future.

Free download from www.everychildmatters/youthmatters

Doyle, M and Smith, M K, *Born and Bred? Leadership, heart and informal education*, YMCA George Williams College, 1999. ISBN 1870319125.

Pack including activities and a CD, which explore some key themes for informal educators (including youth workers) around leadership.

Free download from www.ymca.ac.uk/rank/bornandbred/born_and_bred.pdf

Factor, F, Chauhan, V and Pitts, J eds., *The RHP Companion to Working with Young People*, Russell House Publishing, 2001. ISBN 978 1 898924 52 4. £17.95.

Book aims to draw together the key issues and current debates for practitioners working with young people in fields of youth work and youth justice.

HM Treasury/Department for Education and Skills, *Policy Review of children and young people: a discussion paper*, 2007. Free download from www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/B/B/cyp_policyreview090107.pdf

HM Treasury/Department for Children, Schools and Families, *Aiming high for young people: a ten year strategy for positive activities*, 2007.

Free download from www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/tenyearyouthstrategy/

Informal education website: devoted to exploring explore informal education, lifelong learning and social action. www.infed.org

Ingram, G and Harris, J, *Delivering Good Youth Work: a working guide to surviving and thriving*, Russell House Publishing, 2001. ISBN 978 1 898924 97 5. £14.95.

Book aims to offer effective and tested ways of putting youth work theory into practice.

Merton, B et al, *An Evaluation of the Impact of Youth Work in England*, DfES, 2004.

Research report identifying the impact of youth work on young people, their communities and other services for young people.

Free download from www.dcsf.gov.uk/research

Merton, B, *Good Youth Work: what youth workers do, why and how*, NYA, 2007.

ISBN 978 0 86155 341 9

Uses youth workers' own voices to capture and analyse elements of effective practice.

Merton, B and Wylie, T, *Towards a Contemporary Curriculum for Youth Work*, The National Youth Agency, 2002. ISBN 086155 275 X. £3.50.

Sets out some of the key principles of curriculum construction and assessment, and proposes

a curriculum standard.

Network for Accrediting Young People's Achievement, *National Framework of Awards in Non-Formal Educational Settings*, NYA, 2007. Single copies free.

Lists the major national awards that accredit young people's experience and learning in informal settings.

Free download from www.nya.org.uk/publications

Robertson, S, *Youth Clubs: association, participation, friendship and fun!* Russell House, 2005. ISBN 978 1 903855 38 6. £14.95

Documents the history of youth club work, explains why it is valuable, and puts the case for preserving and developing it.

Rogers, V, *So You Want to Work with Young People? A resource handbook for training and supporting volunteers*, Youth Work Press, 2001. ISBN 0861552598. £12.95.

Activity-based handbook providing a broad introduction to work with young people for voluntary youth workers.

Spending Wisely, NYA, various dates

A series of booklets from The National Youth Agency which look at youth work's role in young people's development.

Free download from www.nya.org.uk/publications

Young, K, *The Art of Youth Work*, Russell House Publishing, 2nd ed. 2006. ISBN 978 1 903855 46 1. £14.95.

Argues that youth work is centrally concerned with making relationships with young people and supporting them in finding the meaning and values which shape their lives and guide their actions.