



Proposal – volunteer youth workers accreditation scheme

For consideration by the Department for Children, Schools and Families

February 2008

National Council for Voluntary Youth Services
3rd Floor
Lancaster House
33 Islington High St
London
N1 9LH
T: 020 7278 1041
F: 020 7833 2491
E: mail@ncvys.org.uk
W: www.ncvys.org.uk

Introduction

1. The National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS) would like DCSF to consider supporting the development of a **volunteer youth workers accreditation scheme**, which could be an integral component of the youth workforce reform plans; thus supporting the largest group of workers within the youth workforce.
2. We believe such a scheme would offer the Department a **different approach to licensing**: instead of restricting what a volunteer can or cannot do, we are proposing to reward achievement and incentivise volunteers to take up training and professional development opportunities. NCVYS believes that this approach will deliver better results **driving up outcomes for children and young people** and encourage rather than discourage volunteers.
3. NCVYS has just completed a consultation exercise with our members from national voluntary youth organisations. The members were provided with a copy of the proposal provided in Appendix A. An overwhelming majority of the national members who responded support the proposal (a list of those organisations that responded is attached in Appendix B).
4. This paper summarises the main features of the scheme, provides an overview of the concerns provided by our members and makes recommendations for the way forward.

Main features of the volunteer youth workers accreditation scheme

5. The purpose of the volunteer youth workers accreditation scheme is to provide a mechanism that allows the skills and expertise that volunteer youth workers bring to their work with young people and/or develop during the course of their engagement, to be recognised and rewarded.
6. This proposal recommends the creation of a framework for existing training and accreditation schemes currently provided by a range of national organisations and local networks. The framework will be based on an agreed minimum level of competence achieved and/or training that would need to be undertaken in order to qualify for accreditation.
7. Take up of the scheme will be voluntary and provides a mechanism for volunteer youth workers to gain accreditation, recognition and be rewarded for achieving a required level of training and professional development and demonstrating practical work experience (competence).

8. The scheme **does not provide training directly**; instead the individual volunteer youth worker would demonstrate they have achieved the required level of training through **existing national VCYS in-house training schemes or through local courses**. There will be a system in place to recognise existing competence/prior learning, so that the individual only need to undertake additional training as necessary.
9. The volunteer would need to submit a portfolio of evidence demonstrating practical work experience completed and could be linked to the volunteering passport in development by v.
10. Following completion of the requirements, the voluntary youth worker will be awarded with a certificate, warrant or card which allows him or her to identify him/herself as a recognised volunteer youth worker. The accreditation will be portable and recognised nationally by the sector, local authorities, young people and their parents.
11. There will be a strong recognition on existing prior learning – in that some volunteers will automatically receive accreditation if they have already achieved a qualification such as the NVQ 3 in youth work. The scheme is aimed primarily at unqualified youth workers/paid part-time staff who want to develop their skills and competence as youth workers.
12. In return for achieving the standard of competence the volunteer youth worker will be rewarded with benefits such as discounts from national retailers and local organisations e.g. swimming club reductions.
13. The scheme may lead the sector to register those volunteers who are awarded accreditation and will include a system of continuous professional development and CRB clearance.
14. The scheme may be operated locally through the VCYS/local infrastructure in conjunction with the local authority supported by a national support body.
15. A similar scheme has operated successfully in Germany for over 30 years.

Comments from NCVYS members

16. During our initial consultation, a total of 25 NCVYS member organisations provided feedback on the scheme. 24 organisations endorsed the scheme in principle. As expected, the proposal invited a range of comments which will need to be addressed during a development phase. Below is a summary and selection of key comments made.
17. The scheme would need to be as light as possible bureaucratically – especially for volunteers/voluntary youth organisations.

18. The scheme would need to be adequately resourced and delivered through the voluntary sector and involve all parts of the sector including small organisations (therefore the sector needs support with capacity building too).
19. There is still a viable and important role for occasional volunteer helpers e.g. parents and therefore this still needs to be recognised and encouraged (it is not expected that they would take up the accreditation scheme).
20. There is a need to fully recognise all of the existing training schemes in place in the sector already (do not re-invent the wheel) and have an agreed criteria in which the training element of the accreditation requirements can be awarded against.
21. From some members, there is a call for more flexibility than is implied within the NCVYS proposal e.g. not to restrict provision and imply that only those volunteers accredited can run groups.
22. The sector would like to be fully involved in the development of the scheme and to influence decisions. A number of questions have been posed e.g. what will the volunteer be awarded – a certificate? card?
23. There is an urgent need to have buy-in of the proposal from local authorities.
24. A concern has been expressed about the need to ensure that any training the volunteer receives is based on the National Occupational Standards for youth work.
25. To consider the Christian faith sector's needs as it may need a different approach when promoting the scheme to this sector.
26. To research further the value in offering discounts as a reward (learn from experience of previous schemes).

Next steps

27. NCVYS will now consult further with a number of stakeholders, in particular volunteers, local and regional networks, local authorities, training providers, awarding bodies, LLUK, CWDC and the allied organisations of NCVYS e.g. NYA, NAVCA, NCVCCO.
28. NCVYS would welcome a partnership approach with DCSF and would propose that the volunteer accreditation scheme becomes part of the youth workforce strategy announced in *Aiming high for young people*.

29. NCVYS would like to recommend that DCSF commits funding to research, design and test (pilot) the scheme. In particular to learn of the costings for running such a scheme on a national basis from Germany.
30. As a first step, NCVYS proposes that DCSF commissions a scoping and feasibility study that will allow us to get a clearer idea of the likely benefits, costs and risks attached to the scheme. This would allow us to prepare a pilot as second stage of development.
31. The specification for such a study needs to be developed and agreed. However, as a starting point, it is likely that it should include an examination of the following:
- What the scope is for such a scheme (e.g. should it cover just youth work volunteers and/or who else);
 - What are the likely benefits of a volunteer youth worker accreditation scheme for young people, volunteers, voluntary organisations and government (national and local);
 - What are the risks;
 - Whether CRB checks can be incorporated;
 - How existing schemes (e.g. the warrant scheme for guide and scout leaders) can be incorporated and how easy it is to transfer currently warranted leaders to a new scheme;
 - What the likely take-up is of the scheme;
 - Whether existing providers of volunteer training have the capacity to provide all training that is needed;
 - How many extra training hours would need to be provided per annum;
 - What an appropriate operating model may be;
 - Whether such a scheme would be recognised and supported by the public, volunteers themselves and the funders/commissioners of youth services.
 - How much full implementation would cost.
32. In parallel, NCVYS will map the training provision that is currently provided by NCVYS members for volunteers and other youth workers. This study is funded by CWDC and will allow the identification of gaps in training that need to be filled should a full roll-out of the scheme be agreed.
33. If you have any questions concerning this paper, please contact Susanne Rauprich, Chief Executive on 020 7843 6450 or e-mail susanne@ncvys.org.uk.

Appendix A

Volunteer youth workers accreditation scheme: an outline proposal for NCVYS members

Introduction

The DCSF has announced plans to regulate the youth workforce (within *Aiming high for young people: a ten year strategy for positive activities* page 82) and considerations have been given to individual or organisational licensing. No firm decisions have been announced as to what regulation will consist of.

NCVYS has strongly opposed these plans. We believe that regulation and licensing may counteract the Government's efforts to increase the level of volunteering, involve communities in the design and delivery of services, and as a result, lead to a demise of valuable opportunities for young people provided by the VCYS.

We have indicated to the DCSF that NCVYS will submit a proposal outlining a volunteer youth workers development and accreditation scheme, which may be an alternative option to licensing. Our proposal offers a different approach: instead of restricting what a volunteer can or cannot do, we are proposing to reward achievement and incentivise volunteers to take up training and professional development opportunities. NCVYS believes that this approach will deliver better results and encourage rather than discourage volunteers. We informed the DCSF that we are now consulting further with our members over the idea. NCVYS explained that we will submit a paper to them for consideration by the end of January 2008, so that it can inform youth workforce reform plans associated with the ten year youth strategy.

To follow is a brief outline of what we propose. Do you agree with this proposal and do you have any comments to make? Are there any other considerations or issues that we should take note of? Please respond by the **22nd January 2008**. Please e-mail Nichola Brown, workforce development officer at nichola@ncvys.org.uk. Please note that a considerable amount of development work is required and further consultation with the sector is needed in order to design, plan and implement this scheme.

Objectives and outline of the scheme

1. Summary - outline of scheme

1.1 The scheme is a mechanism for volunteer youth workers to gain accreditation, recognition and be rewarded for achieving a required level of training and professional development and demonstrating practical work experience (competence).

1.2 Training can be achieved through existing national VCYS in-house training schemes or through local courses. Evidence of units of learning achieved (to be ratified) will need to be

documented and a portfolio of evidence demonstrating practical work experience completed. The NCVYS proposal will provide an opportunity for training providers to come together and coordinate their internal volunteer training programmes and ensure that common standards are set across a wide range of organisations.

1.3 There will be a system in place to recognise existing competence so that the individual only need to undertake additional training as necessary.

1.4. Following completion of the requirements, the voluntary youth worker will be awarded with a certificate, warrant or card which allows him or her to identify themselves as a recognised volunteer youth worker.

1.5 In return for achieving the standard of competence the volunteer youth worker will be rewarded with benefits such as discounts from national retailers and local organisations e.g. swimming club reductions.

1.6 The scheme may be operated locally through the VCYS/local infrastructure in conjunction with the local authority.

The German volunteer youth card system

In Germany, voluntary youth workers are encouraged to obtain a youth leaders card. This card is nationally recognised and locally administered. To obtain it, volunteers have to undergo 40 hours of training covering a range of core themes such as health & safety, working with a group, planning activities etc. The card is issued by a licensed authority (usually the local voluntary youth network) and training is provided by a range of voluntary organisations as well as local authorities.

The card is widely recognised. Without it, voluntary youth leaders are not able to obtain group discounts on train travel for young people or similar benefits. However, once obtained, volunteers can access a range of discounted goods and services both for their youth group as well as for themselves personally. The scheme provides many benefits:

- it recognises volunteers for their competence, commitment and dedication
- it protects young people by ensuring that only trained card holders can book residential places and/or train travel
- it allows young people and the public to protect themselves (they can ask for evidence that the volunteer has received some training)
- it allows the providers of training opportunities to collaborate and coordinate training opportunities
- it allows the voluntary sector to demonstrate that they offer services of quality

1.7 This paper will go on to explain further the benefits of such a scheme. But to summarise, the scheme is needed in order to demonstrate that the sector can produce competent

volunteers and provide quality training provision at a standard which is recognised nationally by the sector, the Government, local communities, local authorities and commissioning bodies. At present confidence in the sector to produce a high quality workforce is often low and the sector is pressurised to provide evidence that it does already produce skilled volunteers and workers.

1.8 The scheme may lead the sector to register those volunteer youth workers who are awarded accreditation and will include a system of continuous professional development (cpd). These two elements may then satisfy and meet the needs of the Government, Lifelong Learning UK, the National Youth Agency and the Community and Youth Workers Union. Registration and the need for cpd has been raised by these bodies in tentative discussions about individual licensing/licence to practise. It is important that we have a scheme which recognises the competence and professional development of volunteers rather than the focus be on professionally qualified paid youth workers, which are after all very much a small segment of the youth workforce.

2. Who does the scheme apply to?

Any unqualified volunteer and/or part-time paid staff who want to develop their skills and competence as youth workers. The scheme is voluntary and not a pre-condition for people who want to volunteer with young people. Once established however, we would envisage that only volunteers who have achieved accreditation will be able to assume full responsibility for running a group.

3. In order to achieve accreditation, it is anticipated that volunteer youth workers will:

3.1. Show evidence of achievement of core learning (units of learning to be agreed further with consultation with the sector and analysis of existing training in existence for example: health and safety, first aid, working with groups, exploring what is a youth worker).

3.2. Core learning can be achieved through national VCYS in-house training schemes or through local courses e.g. introduction to youth work course. Curriculums on offer will continue to vary to meet local area needs or organisational needs and may offer training over and above the core learning needed to achieve accreditation.

3.3. Show evidence of practical work.

3.4. Only need to undertake additional training to be awarded accreditation if they do not have the necessary experience (need to provide a portfolio of evidence demonstrating competence).

3.5. At the three year renew stage, individuals will have to show evidence of continuous professional development and have CRB clearance.

4. Benefits for the volunteer youth worker will be:

4.1. Accreditation which will be portable and recognised nationally by the VCYS, young people and local authorities. It will instil confidence in the individual, organisation and commissioners that they have the minimum level of competence to be a volunteer youth worker.

4.2. As a reward and recognition for their achievement and contribution (in particular volunteering time) discounts from national retailers, local organisations e.g. discounted rail travel, swimming club reductions will be on offer.

5. Benefits for the VCYS will be:

5.1. Skilled, motivated and competent staff helping to achieve the organisation's objectives.

5.2. More contracts if commissioners only award contracts to those youth organisations who have a certain percentage of volunteer youth workers who have achieved accreditation of the scheme.

5.3. Increased confidence in the organisation from young people, potential new staff and volunteers, families and communities.

5.4. An improved image of the VCYS. At present the sector can be accused by some of being unprofessional.

5.5. More young people attracted into the profession (as evidence from Germany shows who run a German youth leaders card system). Could be linked to the volunteering passport in development by v.

5.6. To have in place a scheme which is led by and meets the needs of the sector rather than a regulatory scheme coming from Government which could deter volunteers.

5.7 Coordination and enhancement of existing training programmes, accreditation schemes and quality awards within the sector as accreditation awarded will be portable and evidenced.

6. Benefits for the Government will be:

6.1. Highly skilled youth leaders improving outcomes for young people.

6.2. Some form of registration will take place, as will be registering those individuals who are awarded accreditation (which in itself will be some sort of control, regulation type mechanism).

6.3. It will satisfy those bodies pushing for continuous professional development e.g. Sector Skills Councils such as Lifelong Learning UK (which was also described in the individual licensing discussions).

6.4. It will take in to account the Common Core of Skills and Knowledge and fit in to the work of the forthcoming Integrated Qualifications Framework and national Qualification and Credit Framework. The latter will include a system of credit accumulation and transfer and designed to recognise a wide range of learner achievements.

7. What needs to be in place?:

7.1. Infrastructure locally (scheme may be operated through the VCYS infrastructure in conjunction with the local authority).

7.2. A national governing body to run the scheme.

7.3. It needs to link to CRB and the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA). Organisations will need to register with the forthcoming ISA scheme.

7.4. Further consultation with stakeholders and more detailed plans.

7.5. Funding!

7.6. Commitment and buy-in from the sector, the Government and other stakeholders.

National Council for Voluntary Youth Services
3rd Floor
Lancaster House
33 Islington High St
London
N1 9LH
T: 020 7278 1041
F: 020 7833 2491
E: mail@ncvys.org.uk
W: www.ncvys.org.uk
January 2008



Appendix B

Consultation responses

The following 21 organisations submitted a written response to the NCVYS consultation document:

Army Cadet Force
Baptist Union of Great Britain
British Youth Council
Changemakers
Clubs for Young People
Endeavour
The Lifetrain Trust
Ormiston Children and Families Trust
RSPB Youth
Salvation Army – ALOVE UK
The Scout Association
Sefton CVS
St. John's Ambulance
UK Youth
Wings South West
Woodcraft Folk
Young Lives
Youth Access
Youth for Christ
YMCA George Williams College
VYS Devon member (unknown)

Of these organisations, the vast majority (20) supported the scheme in principle. Only 1 organisation did not. As the list shows, responses and endorsements were received from the majority of large volunteer involving organisations.

The proposal was also discussed at a meeting of chief officers of larger organisations and received endorsement all present. This includes:

4Children
Clubs for Young People (also submitted a written response – see above)
Girlguiding UK
The Foyer Federation
UK Youth (also submitted a written response – see above)
Youthnet UK