

Qualifications in youth work

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Introduction

This information sheet published by the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS), explains the qualification options available to those individuals aiming to be a youth support worker, or professionally qualified youth worker and signposts the reader to further sources of information.

It is recognised that you do not need qualifications in order to deliver youth work and that some people simply choose that they do not want to study or gain a qualification. It is acknowledged that excellent work is also delivered by committed staff and volunteers who are not qualified. However, people should consider the benefits of gaining qualifications in youth work such as those outlined below.

Both staff and volunteers are encouraged to develop and reach their potential in order to equip themselves with the skills and knowledge to deliver the best possible services to young people. This is a continual learning process and learning can be in the form of experience and life events, reading, training courses or qualifications (qualification routes can also involve experience e.g. work placements). In the learning/education sector this is known as 'professional' or 'workforce development'.

Learning is often a step-by-step process and therefore support should be sought to help you manage whichever form of learning is suitable. Remember, a good mix of experience and training/qualifications is needed for you to be effective in your role. The more skills you have the more the young person will benefit and the more competent and confident you will become. Obtaining qualifications in youth work may be a route you may wish to consider.

For those individuals at the beginning of their learning journey (perhaps who have just completed an introduction to youth work course), the progression routes diagram within this information sheet will be of interest, as it will clearly explain the qualification routes open to you. A table is provided to try and explain how youth worker qualifications fit in with other qualifications, in order to aid your understanding.

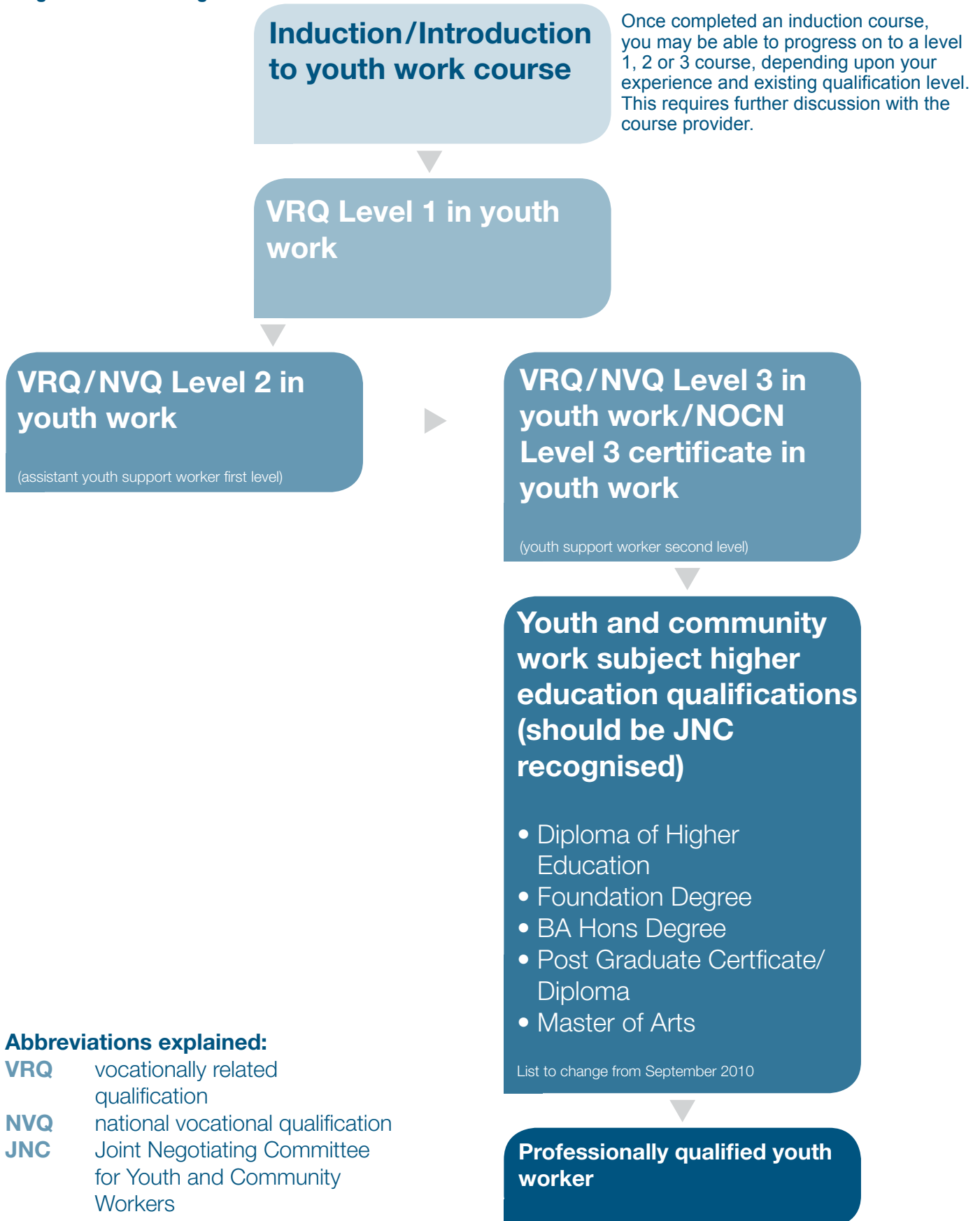
Do you have years of experience delivering youth work but have no youth work qualification?

If you decide to gain youth work qualifications, then you may learn more about the theory behind the work, updates about current practice and an understanding of how government policy and strategy have an impact upon youth work. You would also get an opportunity to network and learn from other peers on your course and contribute too.

You may already think you know a great deal, but with further study you may be surprised how much you learn and gain from the experience.

Studying further develops skills such as analysis, research, writing (summarising/report writing) and reading (learning to skim read). This information sheet will explain how you go about gaining accredited prior learning (APL) for your experience/previous study. Gaining qualifications is, of course, a personal choice, and you must weigh up the benefits and consider your own aspirations, against the commitment (time and financial).

Progression route diagram



Abbreviations explained:

- VRQ** vocationally related qualification
- NVQ** national vocational qualification
- JNC** Joint Negotiating Committee for Youth and Community Workers
- NOCN** National Open College Network

Table – how do youth work qualifications fit in with other qualifications?

Youth Work Qualification	National Qualifications Framework (current levels)	Framework for Higher Education Qualification levels
	8 Specialist professional awards	D (Doctoral) Doctorates
Post Graduate Certificate/ Diploma, Master of Arts (youth and community work subject). If it is a JNC recognised course, then a professionally qualified youth worker status is awarded	7 NVQs, Level 7 Diploma, Level 7 Fellowship, Level 7 Advanced Professional Certificate	M (Masters) Masters Degrees, Postgraduate Certificates and Diplomas
BA hons Degree (youth and community work subject). If it is a JNC recognised course, then a professionally qualified youth worker status is awarded	6 NVQs, Level 6 Diploma, Level 6 Certificate	H (Honours) Bachelors Degrees, Graduate Certificates and Diplomas
Diploma of Higher Education, Foundation Degree (youth and community work subject). If it is a JNC recognised course, then a professionally qualified youth worker status is awarded	5 NVQs, Level 5 Diploma, Level 5 Certificate, Level 5 BTEC Higher National Diploma	I (Intermediate) Diplomas of Higher Education and Further Education, Foundation Degrees, Higher National Diplomas
	4 NVQs, Level 4 Diploma, Level 4 Certificate	C (Certificate) Certificates of Higher Education
VRQ/NVQ Level 3 in youth work (youth support worker second level)	3 NVQs, VRQs, A-Levels, Level 3 Diploma, Level 3 Certificate	Qualifications at Higher Education level start at level 4
VRQ/NVQ Level 2 in youth work (assistant youth support worker first level)	2 NVQs, VRQs, GCSEs Grades A*-C, Level 2 Diploma, Level 2 Certificate	
VRQ Level 1 in youth work (introductory level)	E Entry Level Certificate	

(The table is compiled with reference to the National Youth Agency's *Where Youth Work Fits in to the Qualifications Frameworks* document and can be found at: www.nya.org.uk)

Youth support worker qualifications

The youth support worker is a term used to describe youth workers who act in a supporting/assisting capacity. Youth support workers should be supervised by a professionally qualified youth worker.

If you currently work or volunteer for a national voluntary organisation then they often have their own in-house training programmes. It is important to find out what is available prior to booking on an external course. If possible, seek training which is accredited.

The Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) recognises national qualifications at Assistant Youth Support Worker (First Level) and Youth Support Worker (Second Level) for youth support worker posts. The National Youth Agency endorses the programmes of study which are approved by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority.

Assistant Youth Support Worker (First Level) post & qualification

The qualification provides a basic understanding of youth work concepts and is suitable for those individuals who are unlikely to work without supervision e.g. trainee youth workers, sessional staff, new volunteers.

What are the qualifications for Assistant Youth Support Worker (First Level)?

Vocationally Related Qualification (VRQ) Level 2 in Youth Work (Certificate)

Awarding bodies: ABC Awards, City & Guilds

National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 2 in Youth Work

Awarding bodies: ABC Awards, City & Guilds & Open University (knowledge elements covered within Higher Education level 1)

Youth Support Worker (Second Level) post & qualification

These qualifications provide more detailed knowledge and understanding of a wide range of youth work issues and concepts. They allow you to work with young people with a reasonable amount of autonomy e.g. workers in charge of small teams, those responsible for developing a particular area of youth work activity or local youth club/group. The youth support worker has some operational management responsibility and should be supervised by a professionally qualified youth worker.

What are the qualifications for Youth Support Worker (Second Level)?

Level 3 Certificate in Youth Work

Awarding body: National Open College Network

Vocationally Related Qualification (VRQ) Level 3 in Youth Work (Diploma)

Awarding bodies: ABC Awards, City & Guilds

National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 3 in Youth Work

Awarding bodies: ABC Awards, City & Guilds & Open University (knowledge elements covered within Higher Education level 1)

What is the difference between a VRQ and NVQ?

The main difference is in the assessment methods. On a VRQ course, work based observation is not a requirement, but is good practice. On a NVQ course, it is required that qualified assessors supervise a student's work. They provide the same level of qualification. The National Youth Agency can provide a longer explanation of the differences – see www.nya.org.uk

Professionally qualified youth worker

In many job roles, the professionally qualified youth worker carries the strategic and operational responsibility for service delivery and development. They therefore lead, manage, guide and supervise staff and volunteers as well as obviously being equipped to directly work with young people.

Youth work to become a graduate profession

From 2010, youth work will become a graduate profession. This means that in order to be considered professionally qualified within the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) Framework, an individual will need to achieve from the 1st September 2010, a minimum of a Honours Degree in a youth and community work subject. This course should be recognised by the JNC, which full time, takes three years to complete.

Up to 2010, any of the following qualifications will provide professionally qualified youth worker status (if JNC recognised) and the individual will maintain their professional status i.e. no requirement to undertake additional study due to the changes in 2010 mentioned above (however, continuous professional development (CPD) is always recommended).

Current qualifications – professionally qualified youth worker status

The youth and community work qualifications currently available through a range of higher education institutions on a part-time/full time basis are:

- Foundation Degree – two years full time
- Diploma of Higher Education (Dip He) – two years full time
- Bachelor of Arts with Honours (BA hon) – three years full time
- Post Graduate Certificate (PG Cert)/ Post Graduate Diploma (PG Dip) – one year full time
- Master of Arts (MA) – one year full time

Do I need a work placement?

It is a requirement that on a full time three year degree programme that a student undertakes at least two placements totalling a minimum of 24 weeks or 888 hours. On a postgraduate programme (minimum of one year full time) this equates to 16 weeks or 592 hours.

Other qualifications which confer qualified youth worker status

As advised by the National Youth Agency, people who have already gained qualified teacher status by 31 December 1988 are recognised as qualified to hold professional youth work posts (those in the JNC Professional Range). Also, those who gained a social science degree between 1974 and 1981 will be recognised as qualified, subject to supervision and satisfactory performance in the work place for a period of one year.

What is the JNC?

The Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) for Youth and Community Workers is the body which sets the national framework used to grade and pay youth work jobs. The function of the JNC is to agree the salary scales and other terms of conditions of service. You may see job adverts which state JNC qualified and to which level (there are two pay ranges: youth and community support worker ranges and professional range)

The second function of the JNC is to endorse youth and community workers' qualifications which have been professionally approved by the Education and Training Standards (ETS) Committee of the National Youth Agency (NYA). Two NCVYS members sit on this ETS committee which considers applications from higher education institutions for the professional validation of qualifications. The National Youth Agency also endorses Youth Support Worker qualifications, and these are also recognised by the JNC. By selecting a course recognised by the JNC you ensure that the course is fit for purpose.

The JNC is served by organisations which represent employers and employees (staff). For example, NCVYS is a committee member on the employers side and the Community and Youth Workers Union is a committee member on the staff side. Both sides negotiate pay and employment issues, which are then set within the *JNC for Youth and Community Workers handbook (pink book)*. Within the handbook are also lists of those courses which have been professionally validated and JNC pay scales and allowances.

Many local authorities subscribe to the handbook. The JNC recommends that the handbook should also apply to all voluntary organisations employing youth and community workers.

How to gain accreditation for previous study or experience

Higher Education Institutions will accredit prior learning (APL) where it has been linked to current professional practice. They may also consider APL for those who already hold related qualifications. Therefore it is advisable when considering applying for a course, to have a discussion with the admissions department of the Higher Education Institution.

In preparation, it is suggested to provide the Higher Education Institution with a curriculum vitae which outlines all of your paid and/or voluntary experience. You may wish to seek the support from your current employer or provider of your voluntary placement, who may be able to provide information e.g. job specification, supporting letter.

If you have studied in the past, provide evidence of any previous qualifications. If you suspect that you have studied part of the course before, then obtain a copy of the course curriculum and try and match areas of study to your previous course.

Do you have a degree but not in a youth and community work subject?

It is advisable to consider the post graduate options i.e. Master of Arts, Postgraduate Certificate/Diploma in a youth and community work subject. It is recommended that you select a course which is JNC recognised. Please obtain further advice from the admissions department of the Higher Education Institution.

Type of course provision

There are different types of course provision available from in-house youth support worker qualifications through to attending further or higher education centres. There is also the option of distance learning courses e.g. YMCA George Williams College, which may suit individual needs due to circumstances e.g. live in a rural area.

Some higher education courses provide not only professionally qualified youth worker status but also specialise in areas such as faith e.g. Chester College provides a BA Youth Ministry/Dip He in Christian Youth Work.

Further information

National Youth Agency (NYA)

The NYA has produced a list of universities and institutions offering higher education youth work qualifications, see www.nya.org.uk via the following path: training and qualifications heading/professional qualifications page/ list of courses by qualification type. Alternatively, telephone Linda Macilwrath on 0116 242 7422 or email lindam@nya.org.uk.

Lifelong Learning UK

Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) is the Sector Skills Council for lifelong learning and is responsible for workforce planning and for leading the professional development in the youth work profession across the UK. They also lead on the revision of the National Occupational Standards for youth work, which are used by the learning and education sector in the design of qualifications and training.

A list of courses is available from the LLUK Information and Advice Team on 020 7936 5798 or email advice@lluk.org. The website www.lluk.org provides further information about the work of LLUK.

Local authority youth service

Local youth service should be able to advise you about course provision for youth support workers. Some local authorities have been known to provide free funded places to workers from the voluntary sector.

Employer

You should check if your employer/voluntary placement provider is able to provide details of courses and fund the course for you. They may be able to obtain a training bursary. If your employer needs support, then they should contact their local Council for Voluntary Youth Service (if no provision, then local Council for Voluntary Service). Contact details of Councils for Voluntary Youth Services can be found at www.ncvys.org.uk (see members and local contacts). Contact details for Councils for Voluntary Services can be found at www.navca.org.uk (see members and local contacts).

Connexions

(for young people aged 13-19 and 19-25 if disabled) Advice about qualifications and local course provision can be sought from Connexions. To find your local Connexions Centre or to obtain advice direct telephone 080 800 13219 or view www.connexions-direct.com

Nextstep

Nextstep is a free national information and advice service about learning and work for those aged 20 and over. Local Nextstep offices should be able to provide: details of local course provision; career factsheets; financial assistance information to support learning and childcare costs; and advice about finding and applying for work. To find your local Nextstep office click on the map on the website www.nextstep.org.uk

Learndirect

Learndirect runs the government funded national learning advice service, which provides impartial advice on courses, funding, careers and childcare. You can search for courses using the search facility at www.learndirect-advice.co.uk, ring 0800 100 900 or email enquiries@learndirect.net

Awarding bodies

The awarding bodies will also be able to advise if there is local provision of courses for youth support workers in your area. Telephone and website details are:

City & Guilds: www.city-and-guilds.co.uk or telephone 020 72942800

ABC Awards: www.abcawards.co.uk or telephone 01823 365436

National Open College Network: www.nocn.org.uk or telephone 01332 268080

The Open University: www.openuniversity.co.uk/education or telephone 0870 900 0304

Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC)

If you are a voluntary sector employer and want to find out more or subscribe to the JNC for Youth and Community Workers handbook and subscription service then please email info@lge.gov.uk or ring 020 7187 7331/0 and ask for Allison Wheeler or James Mensah.

The handbook includes current conditions of service for youth and community workers and covers issues such as maternity, sick leave and qualified youth worker status.

National Council for Voluntary Youth Services

The National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS) is the independent voice of the voluntary youth sector in England. A diverse network of voluntary and community organisations and local and regional networks, NCVYS works to inform and influence public policy, support members to improve the quality of their work, and raise the profile of the voluntary and community sector's work with young people. Visit www.ncvys.org.uk

If you require further NCVYS *information sheets: Introduction to youth work and getting started* and *Highlighting careers in the voluntary and community youth sector*, then please see the NCVYS website www.ncvys.org.uk. For any other queries, then please contact Nichola Brown, workforce development officer, on 01905 619139 or email nichola@ncvys.org.uk.

Equal Opportunities

If you require this information in different formats or have any other need then please contact Nichola Brown at nichola@ncvys.org.uk or ring 01905 619139.

Thanks

This *information sheet* has been written by Nichola Brown, workforce development officer at the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services. Thanks go to the following individuals for their contribution: Diane Evans from the National Youth Agency, Linsey Taylor from Lifelong Learning UK, Rob Ryan from the YFC Local Ministries, Cathy Clements from Worcestershire CVYS, David Cox from Surrey CVYS, Steve Drowley, Calvin Williams and Vivienne Nwabuzo from NCVYS.

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