

Introduction to youth work and getting started

September 2007

This information sheet, published by the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS), is aimed at anyone considering volunteering or working in the field of youth work. It will briefly explain what youth work is, how to find a volunteer placement, and explain programmes open to young people interested in being a youth worker.

Introduction to youth work

Youth work is a broad term used to describe activities which enable young people (aged 11-25 years) to make the transition from childhood into independent adult life. The key purpose of youth work is to enable young people to develop holistically, working with them to facilitate their personal (including spiritual), social and educational development and to enable them to gain a voice, influence and a place in society. Young people engage voluntarily in their relationship with their youth worker, which is built on mutual respect and developed over time.

There are varied activities on offer to young people. Many organisations in the voluntary and community youth sector deliver specialist youth work e.g. sport, drug education, youth volunteering, outdoor pursuits, and arts. Some organisations also work with specific groups of young people, depending on the charitable aims of the organisation e.g. faith, physically disabled young people, refugees, homeless.

Youth work is delivered in lots of different settings from youth clubs, church halls, residential venues through to sailing ships and street corners.

The term youth worker refers to someone who facilitates and/or delivers a variety of activities to young people, adhering to a common set of youth work values around the themes of:

- **informal education;**
- **participation;**
- **equality; and**
- **empowerment.**

Youth workers also work to ethical and professional principles. Please see the further reading section if you wish to learn more about youth work values and principles.

Youth workers undertake a wide range of tasks including direct work with young people, supervising staff/volunteers and designing and planning activities.

Youth workers can be volunteers or paid staff and they can also be unqualified or professionally qualified.

Youth work is one of the most diverse, challenging, varied, worthwhile and rewarding careers around. Its origins date back to the 19th Century, in projects set up by the voluntary sector. Still today, a vast majority of youth work is delivered in the voluntary and community youth sector by committed volunteers and paid staff passionate about helping young people, often helping the most disadvantaged young people in our society.

Why not get involved today and help make a difference?

Getting started in youth work - volunteering

A good way to get started in youth work is to volunteer. Volunteering allows you to decide whether youth work is for you, as well as providing an opportunity for you to gain experience and skills in working with young people. Many volunteer placement providers offer induction programmes. Inductions can include the provision of courses such as an introduction to youth work, child protection, risk assessment and first aid. Some volunteer placement providers might also be able to pay for your travel expenses. As you will be working with young people, your volunteer placement provider will arrange for you to have a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) disclosure check.

So, how do you find out about volunteering opportunities? You could try one of the following sources:

Local volunteer centre

To find your local centre please view the map on the website www.volunteering.org.uk or ring Volunteering England on 0845 305 6979.

Local youth club/local authority youth service

Call into your local youth club to enquire about opportunities to volunteer or ring your local authority youth service (located within children's services). Locate the number in your telephone directory or look on your local authority website.

Local Councils for voluntary youth service or councils for voluntary service

Contact details of councils for voluntary youth services or voluntary youth networks (if available in your area) 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

Interested in sport youth volunteering?

Why not take a look at the v web site www.vinspired.com? v, an independent charity created to provide a step change in youth volunteering, is working closely in partnership with Youth Active. Youth Active is committed to developing sport and physical activity throughout the youth sector.

Study – another way to get started

There are different courses available from introduction to youth work through to higher education courses. The NCVYS information sheet *Qualifications in youth work* provides more information – see www.ncvys.org.uk or email nichola@ncvys.org.uk for a copy.

Are you a young person aged 16 – 25 and interested in a career in youth work?

Youth Steps (for young people aged 18-25)

Youth Steps is a Prince's Trust managed project, run in partnership with The National Youth Agency, YMCA and Wiltshire Youth Development Service. It is aimed at young people who have faced barriers and benefited in the past from personal development programmes and are now interested in becoming youth leaders. The programme provides experience and a qualification (ABC Level 1 Certificate in an Introduction to Youth Work).

Youth Steps can be accessed from any part of the country but young people must have a sponsor organisation or worker. For more information contact Sabrina Lucas email: Sabrina.lucas@princes-trust.org.uk.

Apprenticeship in youth work (for young people aged 16-25)

The apprenticeship is not widely available across England. To check availability in your area please contact your local Connexions Centre or Nextstep office (contact details below).

Advice from Connexions (for young people aged 13-19 and 19-25 if disabled)

Careers and learning advice can be sought from Connexions and an adviser can let you know about course availability, funding and options available. To find your local Connexions Centre or to obtain advice direct telephone 080 800 13219 or go to: www.connexions-direct.com. If you are over the age of 19, then you should contact your local Nextstep office. To find your nearest office visit www.nextstep.org.uk

Further reading

Full set of youth work values

Can be found within 'Transforming Youth Work Resourcing Excellent Youth Work', published 2002. See page 20.

www.gos.gov.uk/497417/docs/211293/211296

Ethical Conduct in Youth Work

The National Youth Agency publication 'Ethical Conduct in Youth work – a statement of values and principles from the National Youth Agency' Re-printed December 2004, it can be found on the website

www.nya.org.uk or telephone Linda Macilwrath on 0116 242 7422 or email lindam@nya.org.uk.

The NYA Guide to Youth Work and Youth Services

'The NYA Guide to Youth Work and Youth Services' can be located on the National Youth Agency's

website www.nya.org.uk or telephone Linda Macilwrath on 0116 242 7422 or email lindam@nya.org.uk

National Occupational Standards in youth work

These standards can be found on Lifelong Learning UK's website www.lluk.org.uk under the standards section.

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 (NCVYS). Thanks go to the following individuals for their contribution: Louise Murray from Salford Nexus, Diane Evans from the National Youth Agency, Tiger de Souza from v, David Cox from Surrey CVYS and Barry Lockwood/Vivienne Nwabuzo from NCVYS.

Disclaimer

The National Council for Voluntary Youth Services has made every reasonable effort to ensure that the information contained within this information sheet is accurate. However, the information has been compiled from a variety of sources and there may be errors or omissions. NCVYS cannot accept responsibility for loss occasioned to any person acting or refraining from acting as a result of the material contained herein. If you are aware of any inaccuracies please email nichola@ncvys.org.uk.