



Workers within the voluntary and community youth sector within scope of the youth workforce reform programme

Recommendations from the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS) for the CWN Youth Workforce Reform Programme Board

August 2008

Introduction

1. The National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS) is the independent voice of the voluntary youth sector in England. A diverse network of over 170 national voluntary youth organisations and regional and local youth networks, NCVYS has been working since 1936 to raise the profile of youth work, share good practice and influence policy that has an impact on young people and the organisations that support them.
2. The NCVYS network reflects the diverse range of voluntary organisations working with young people at community, local, regional and national level. Most of our members offer opportunities to engage in challenging activities or develop creative talents. They also support young people to become active in their communities and offer opportunities for their voice to be heard. Some offer interventions to prevent or tackle specific issues such as homelessness or offending behaviour. Others offer counselling, advice, guidance and information. All contribute to young people's personal and social development; some also engage with spiritual development.
3. NCVYS welcomes the opportunity to provide recommendations to the programme board about which practitioners working within the voluntary and community youth sector should be within scope of the youth workforce reform programme. This is particularly important as not all occupations within our sector fall within the footprints of the Sector Skills Councils.
4. For more information on any element of this paper, please contact NCVYS's workforce development officer Nichola Brown, email nichola@ncvys.org.uk

Recommendations

5. The voluntary and community youth sector (VCYS) employs a vast array of workers (both paid and volunteers) delivering a very diverse range of services to young people. A large number work directly with young people but there are those workers who provide the support functions in relation to running a voluntary organisation. NCVYS recommends that those workers (and their managers and leaders) whose prime purpose of their role is to work with young people concerning their personal, social and educational development be included within scope of the programme. We agree with the full definition provided within paragraph 2.7 of the Board Terms of Reference.
6. The VCYS works primarily with young people aged 11-25, however increasingly our members are working with children aged 7-13. The recent *Speaking Out* research report commissioned by NCVYS/NCVCCO *Every Organisation Matters*¹ stated that children aged 7-13 appear to be poorly provided for, with an emphasis on early years provision and a growing government agenda around services for young people, leading to this transitional age group being missed out. Workforce development investment too is higher for the early years, social care and youth sectors. It was suggested at the July Youth Workforce Reform Board meeting that those who work with young people aged 13-19 (up to 25 for those with disabilities) should be within scope of the youth workforce. We disagree and it is NCVYS's recommendation that those who **work with young people aged 11-25 should be within scope**. This will help to address the workforce development needs of the upper end of the transitional age group referred to above and ensure the whole of our sector benefits from this programme.
7. It is recommended the following group of workers (and their managers/leaders) should be within the scope of the youth workforce reform programme. Whilst there is clear professional identity in some occupational areas e.g. youth work, play work, sport, it is important to stress that many workers, in particular volunteers, do not name themselves as fitting into a particular area of work with young people. For example, one worker expressed to NCVYS's workforce development officer "*I do not call myself anything....I just simply work with young people*".
 - **Youth workers**
In scope should be those youth workers who are qualified at various levels and those non-qualified.
 - **Play workers**
Play work is delivered to young people up to the age of 16
 - **Sport & activity leaders (including outdoor education)**

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www.ncvys.org.uk/UserFiles/File/Speaking%20Out/Research/Every%20Organisation%20Matters%20July%202008.pdf

- **Vulnerable young people workers**

Vulnerable young people workers are those who deal with young people who:

- a) are in care/leaving care
- b) have learning difficulties and/or disabilities across a range of need and complexities including mental health issues e.g. depression, eating disorders
- c) need help overcoming issues to do with for example substance misuse, self-harm, alcohol, drugs, teenage pregnancy, knife & gun gang crime, homelessness, sexual health, sexual exploitation
- d) are at risk of offending (e.g. preventative programme work such as youth inclusion programmes, informal education)
- e) are refugees and asylum seekers

Please note this list is not exhaustive.

- **Youth information, advice, counselling and support services (YIACS)**

These services help young people with a huge and varied range of problems and issues, some of which are very complex. A misconception is that information and advice services are only there to support learning and career enquiries. These YIACS services also deal with vulnerable young people e.g. counsellors work with LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) young people and those experiencing domestic violence.

- **Mentors and Befrienders**

Often helping to meet specific needs affecting individual young people and particularly around issues related to social exclusion.

- **Personal Advisors (PAs)**

PAs are employed or hosted by the voluntary youth sector.

- **Art & creative workers**

E.g. music, drama, art work, craft work, media.

- **Youth participation workers**

This group also includes adult support workers who support young people's attendance on young people panels.

- **Youth engagement workers**

Often working to engage socially excluded young people, through a range of activities aimed at promoting social inclusion and diversion from anti-social and criminal activities.

- **Trainers and tutors delivering programmes of learning to young people**

The sector is a large training provider of learning to young people.

- **Truancy workers**

Work to promote attendance and limit truancy from school in order to prevent a pattern of truancy from developing and work to support families and young people involved in persistent truancy to break cycles of non-attendance.

8. Finally it is recommended that within any document detailing the scope of the youth workforce reform programme that references should be made to other areas of workforce development investment affecting the youth workforce. This will complement this programme of work e.g. play workers support of level 3 qualifications (Play Strategy), Children's Workforce Strategy, Sector Skills Agreements of the SSCs.

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