

Re-licensing Sector Skills Councils consultation Lifelong Learning UK

UK Commission for Employment and Skills

A response from the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS)

April 2009

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. For more information on any element of this paper, please contact NCVYS's Workforce Development Officer, Nichola Brown at nichola@ncvys.org.uk or 01905 619139.

Introduction

4. The National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS) welcomes the opportunity to feed into the re-licensing process. This response focuses on Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) and is part of UK Commission for Employment and Skills' (UKCES) current consultation on the re-licensing of existing Sector Skills Councils.
5. NCVYS has undertaken consultation with our members to gain their views. All members were given the opportunity to provide feedback through a briefing with an accompanying questionnaire and a web poll. In addition, NCVYS undertook one-to-one discussions with individuals working with young people and facilitated a meeting with membership representatives to discuss the re-licensing process. Overall, the responses received have included a mix which represents the diversity of our membership, including national organisations, councils for voluntary youth services and small voluntary organisations delivering services to young people directly. These views have been coupled with NCVYS's vast experience in the area youth workforce development to inform our response.
6. The above activities and experience have helped to draw out both strengths and areas for further development relating to LLUK which are detailed in this response and have helped inform the following overarching recommendation to this consultation.

Key recommendation

Recommendation: Youth work, as an occupational area, should be transferred from Lifelong Learning UK to be brought under the remit of the Children's Workforce Development Council.

LLUK's strengths and areas for development

7. LLUK's strengths:
 - a. LLUK has supported NCVYS's proposal to Government for a volunteer accreditation scheme;
 - b. LLUK has taken steps to engage with the wide range of work with young people and worked closely with NCVYS and the sector to ensure an effective set of National Occupational Standards (NOS) for youth work were produced; and
 - c. LLUK supports NCVYS's position that it should be possible to gain professional status as a youth worker via a non-academic route and is looking into the feasibility of this approach. It is an action noted in its Sector Skills Arrangement to assess the viability for a General Professional Recognition Learning and Skills Scheme.
8. LLUK's areas for development:
 - a. consultation mechanisms to fully engage the sector in the establishment of positions that affect them need to be better developed. This is with reference to LLUK's stance on supporting regulation – licence to practise – an area where there remains significant contention amongst the youth workforce;
 - b. no consultation took place with the sector around the Further Education workforce reform plans prior to their introduction and until recently there has been a lack of information, which affected those who deliver Learning and Skills Council-funded training;

- c. criticisms have been made of LLUK's management of its Sector Skills Council work connected to youth work, e.g. issues have not been resolved with regards to the youth work apprenticeship scheme (which resulted in NCVYS and the National Youth Agency organising a joint focus group event to highlight this as an area for development). NCVYS still awaits a guidance document to help the sector use the NOS in youth work. Qualifications still need to be updated e.g. NVQ 2 in youth work, based upon the new NOS and LLUK needs to lead the way in this area
- d. LLUK needs to improve its knowledge and understanding of the sector, for example through seconding staff who have previously worked in the sector and be more committed to fundraising to meet the skills gaps and needs of the sector;
- e. LLUK is required to give youth work an increased importance on its agenda. This could be facilitated and strengthened through increased communication and understanding of the sector (particularly the needs of volunteers); and
- f. work needs to be progressed between LLUK and Skills Active looking at a transitional module between youth work and play work.

Advantages of youth work moving from LLUK to be under the remit of the CWDC

9. CWDC is also responsible for workforce reform for the youth sector (children and young people's workforce reform and the youth workforce reform programme) and therefore it seems sensible that one body co-ordinates support for the sector to ensure consistency and effective partnership working.
10. Youth work is a major occupation within the children and young people's workforce and as an occupation youth work would feel more integrated within a single children and young people's workforce if part of CWDC. Although some of our members are concerned that we may lose the informal education element of youth work if it moves across to CWDC, NCVYS does not feel this will be the case. CWDC still provides the commitment to retain specialist roles and we hope therefore that the distinct qualities and skills of youth work will still be valued. We have in place the National Occupational Standards for youth work which clearly explain youth work's purpose, values and activities. The standards confirm that informal education is the main feature of youth work and therefore that focus will not be lost. The sector was fully involved in the creation of standards and will continue to do so with regards to any revision.
11. There are occasions when youth work has not been supported as funding has been available only to the occupations within CWDC's footprint. Examples include the Occupational Grant Funding and research projects e.g. the survey to determine the size of the workforce. Within this context, it is hoped that the youth workforce will have more of an opportunity for increased funding if moved within the remit of CWDC.
12. The move would help align and integrate youth work with other closely related occupations under the remit of CWDC e.g. Connexions Personal Advisers and social work.
13. CWDC is working well to understand the needs of the youth sector and pays for representation, e.g. NAVCA are funded to carry out this role on behalf of their membership. Third sector employers welcome CWDC's recognition of the value of the third sector and the role of volunteers.
14. CWDC is the main body that NCVYS members have contact with, particularly local infrastructure organisations. Our members told us that they want to liaise with fewer

bodies concerned with workforce development so that engagement routes with overarching bodies can be streamlined and resources to interact with such bodies can be better employed. In addition, many of our local infrastructure members have established good working relationships with CWDC and want to build on those.

Disadvantages of youth work moving from LLUK to be under the remit of the CWDC

15. This section considers possible disadvantages of youth work moving from LLUK to be under the remit of the CWDC.
16. It is recognised that there would be no guarantee of extra funding available if youth work was transferred to CWDC. However, NCVYS members have commented on CWDC's good work in consulting with the sector and with activities such as fundraising, seeking an understanding of the sector and the management of its operation.
17. CWDC already has a large remit, which is predominantly children based and includes some occupations that receive significant government investment, and therefore support from CWDC, e.g. early years and social work. Some NCVYS members are concerned that youth work may not receive adequate attention by CWDC. Youth work needs to remain recognised, supported and valued as a distinct specialism within the children, young people and families workforce.
18. CWDC does not cover the UK as it only has an England remit. CWDC may need to establish mechanisms to communicate and co-operate with the other UK nations where it is appropriate to do so. This is with the recognition that youth work policy and activities vary throughout the UK's respective countries e.g. in Scotland where there is a strong emphasis on community based youth work and learning.
19. CWDC covers occupations within the voluntary sector not covered by any other Sector Skills Council – to manage this there is a need to identify these occupational groups and take action to support each part of the workforce and its developmental needs. NCVYS would like to work more closely with CWDC in this area to ensure joined up practice where this is appropriate and a recognition of special expertise where this is needed. For example, NCVYS strongly recommends that youth information and advice workers should be recognised as a distinct occupation that needs to be supported. This will align these workers closely with Connexions PAs who sit under the CWDC footprint. Furthermore, the voluntary sector employs Personal Advisers and these should be recognised and supported too. NCVYS would be happy to work with our member Youth Access to provide CWDC with any workforce data it currently holds.
20. In addition youth counsellors should be recognised as a distinct occupational group and perhaps move across to Skills for Health (instead of currently being classed within the 'other occupations category' within CWDC, and in need for its skills gaps and needs to be met).
21. As a large organisation, communication difficulties occur and criticisms have been made of CWDC's internal communication between departments. CWDC has expanded in a relatively short time period which might have had an impact on its external communication, which needs further development to ensure all are aware of opportunities e.g. communication about forthcoming tenders.

Results of online poll

20. NCVYS posted an online poll on its website asking member and allied organisations whether youth work should be transferred from under the remit of LLUK to the CWDC. This section presents findings from the poll.

21. The majority of respondents to the NCVYS online poll said that youth work practitioners currently operating under LLUK should be brought under the remit of the CWDC.

22. Comments given by participants in support of moving youth work practitioners to under the remit of the CWDC included:

- for many of us the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and related UK legislation means that we view the whole of the 0-19 phase as a unity;
- LLUK are off the pace on youth work integration, by contrast CWDC seem very focussed. It does not make sense to have two Government quangos working in this field;
- the profession would benefit because CWDC has a stronger voice;
- it may mean a considerable shift as well as evaluating existing skills and qualifications for work with young people, but this also means better practice, and safer practice; and
- this move would hopefully bring about more joined-up working.

23. Comments given by participants against moving youth work practitioners to under the remit of the CWDC included:

- youth workers' prime role is informal education and they belong in LLUK. CWDC is the flavour of the moment - but for how long?
- teachers are not being brought under the remit of CWDC, nor should youth work; and
- CWDC is not recognising or enhancing the distinct skills of the many sectors within the children and young people's workforce. We need common core and common induction and the Integrated Qualifications Framework, alongside the recognition of distinct skills and the unique contribution of many professional disciplines.

24. Other general comments included:

- to date LLUK have not assessed employers' needs in modern workforce terms and are not responsive enough to making necessary changes; and
- both 'play' and 'youth' would benefit from a review with some consideration given to linking the workers and giving them some professional cross-over; and both youth work and play work should be in the CWDC.

Recommendation

25. Based on the majority view informed by NCVYS's consultation activities and the reasons discussed above, NCVYS recommends that:

Recommendation: Youth work, as an occupational area, should be transferred from Lifelong Learning UK to be brought under the remit of the Children's Workforce Development Council.