



Issues, challenges and considerations concerning regulation and registration of the voluntary and community youth sector

For the attention of Lifelong Learning UK

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Introduction

1.The National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS) has been concerned for some time about any move to introduce regulation/registration of the children and young people workforce. We welcome the opportunity to highlight issues, challenges and considerations for LLUK to advocate on our behalf for the:

CWN review in to the role of regulation and registration within the children’s workforce

Consortium discussions of ‘licence to practise’/ professional registration of youth workers

2.We will keep the voluntary and community youth sector (VCYS) up to date with developments concerning regulation and registration and the latest update issued to the sector is shown in Appendix A.

Regulation – position statement from NCVYS

3.NCVYS believes that regulation continues to be the biggest threat to the work of the VCYS and the services that it delivers to young people. Regulation and licensing may counteract 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.

4.The largest number of workers within the youth sector workforce are volunteers, with an estimated 500,000 across England alone. Strategies should be introduced which do not run the risk of deterring, alienating and restricting volunteers, but instead providing support and incentives for them to take up training and professional development opportunities. This will help to drive up standards and upskill the workforce, which after all is the government’s aim all along.

Regulation/registration - safeguarding

5.The sector is trying to come to terms with the impact of the forthcoming **Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA)** scheme. From 12 October 2009, a register will be in place that will help prevent the most unsuitable people from working with children and vulnerable adults. Whilst employers are committed to the principles of safeguarding children, the mandatory registration scheme will cause a burden on time and resources for employers e.g. administration, training requirements, the need to make changes to systems, policies and procedures.

6.There is great concern within the VCYS around the point at which volunteers will have to register with the scheme. If the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) continues to insist that registration happens prior to any regulated voluntary work being undertaken, it will have a damaging impact on the future recruitment of volunteers. Another concern is who will pick up the cost of the ISA registration of paid staff – will it be the employer or the employee?

7.We continue to work with the ISA with regards to making them aware of the impact and issues that the ISA registration scheme will bring for the VCYS. It is also important that the DIUS, DCSF and the Children’s Workforce Network are made aware of the impact of the ISA scheme upon the sector.

8.Consideration: If the government introduces any more mandatory regulatory/registration schemes it will hinder the provision of valuable services provided by the VCYS leading to devastating consequences for children and young people.

Regulation/registration – professional development of youth workers

9. We look forward to the consortium informing us of their exact proposals for both licence to practise and the registration system of professionally qualified youth workers. At this stage we wish to stress that we need to be careful that a **two tier youth service is not created**.

Licence to Practise

10. Our consultation work to date shows that only a small minority of individuals within the VCYS are in favour of a licence to practise (our understanding is that the term means that an individual will be awarded a licence if they have attained a minimum level of qualification to be a youth worker). The majority are against the move due to the impact that it will have on volunteers and feel strongly that this requirement will stop thousands of individuals from providing free valuable time to work with children and young people.

11. A clear message from many within the sector is that undertaking a qualification is not for everyone but individuals are still keen to undertake training to meet gaps in knowledge. They want recognition for their skills and competence, which we hope to address in NCVYS Volunteer Accreditation Scheme proposal.

12. In addition, we are pleased that LLUK has agreed to explore NCVYS's suggestion for a non-academic accredited professional practitioner route. This will be explored via a potential General Professional Recognition Learning and Skills Scheme, as highlighted in LLUK's Sector Skills Agreement.

Registration system of professionally qualified youth workers

13. With regards to the creation of a **registration system of professionally qualified youth workers**, we encourage any discussions at a national level around recognising the professionalism of youth work. However, we advise that care needs to be taken to recognise that professional youth workers are not the only staff employed in the youth sector workforce and that the largest section of the workforce is volunteers. Efforts need to be focused on looking at strategies which take into account the professional development of all workers in the youth sector.

14. Some employers have asked what would be the benefit of such a registration scheme – how will it benefit young people and how will it raise standards for example? We already have professional qualifications in place so what would be the added value?

15. It is argued that many professionally qualified youth workers are not front-line delivery staff but are the managers and leaders of youth support workers¹ and therefore it will **not help to professionalise those that actually work with young people on the ground**. It is this front-line workforce which should be a priority to support, in order to drive up outcomes for children and young people.

Alternative approaches?

16. NCVYS has recommended that the government takes a different approach to regulation and registration: 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 provided in the form of a **Volunteer Accreditation Scheme**² will deliver better results and encourage rather than discourage volunteers. We are pleased that the CWN's Youth Workforce Reform Programme Board has approved the support of feasibility/scoping study to explore the application and feasibility of the scheme and are grateful to have LLUK's support too.

¹ The term 'youth support worker' refers to an individual who is not professionally qualified and therefore holds qualifications at levels 1-4 (National Qualifications Framework). However in the VCYS this term is rarely used and the term youth worker is generally used and can refer to a worker who is a qualified or non-qualified regardless of what level they work at or have attained qualification wise.

² www.ncvys.org.uk/UserFiles/File/Policy/Consultation%20responses/dcsf%20paper%20volunteer%20youth%20workers%20accredit%20scheme.pdf

17.The focus to date from agencies/unions debating the merits of registration has been on the actual registration of individuals. An alternative approach some of our members have suggested is that the government should be looking instead at **encouraging and supporting organisations to achieve quality assurance systems, that include workforce development.**

18.NCVYS and the NYA have started work together to help provide the sector with information and guidance on quality assurance systems via Quality Exchange³. For example, *Raising the Standards – a guide to quality systems in the Youth Sector*⁴ has been published. It would be beneficial to assess the schemes which cover workforce development and publish this information.

19.There is a specific workforce development quality standard available to all size of organisations - **Investors in People**. This provides a framework that helps organisations to improve performance and realise objectives through the effective management and development of their people.

20.To support smaller youth organisations to attain and implement quality assurance systems, further investment in infrastructure support would be strongly welcomed. Infrastructure organisations provide a wide range of valuable support services including advice, information, training and resources to help smaller charities to remain sustainable and develop.

21.Achieving a quality assurance system, which includes the area of workforce development will help towards meeting the charities objectives, promote good practice and be attractive to potential new volunteers and paid staff. In addition the **evidence would give confidence to commissioners and the government that organisations are committed to raising standards in the development of the workforce.** It would be beneficial if the government could provide **support to enable commissioners to understand further the quality assurance systems available.** NCVYS would welcome the opportunity to work with the government with this aim.

Conclusion

22.We welcome the opportunity to work with the consortium and Lifelong Learning UK with regards to proposals. Full consultation with the sector is required. We have undertaken some limited consultation with our members but more needs to be done. We would ask that with regards to any paper based consultation, that the Compact guidelines are adhered to and of course we would be happy to jointly host consultation events.

23.We hope that the points presented in this paper are a useful contribution to the Children's Workforce Network review too.

Should you have any further questions with regards to this paper please contact Nichola Brown, workforce development officer at nichola@ncvys.org.uk or ring 07792 875635.

³ www.ncvys.org.uk/index.php?page=391

⁴ www.ncvys.org.uk/UserFiles/File/Other%20Work/Raising%20the%20standards.pdf

Appendix A



Information update for the voluntary and community youth sector: Regulation and registration of the children and young people's workforce

Introduction

Announced within *Next Steps on the Children's Plan – developing the Children's Workforce and Children's Trusts*⁵, the Children's Workforce Network (CWN) is reviewing the role of regulation and registration within the children's workforce. The review will take the form of a scoping exercise. Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK), the Sector Skills Council for youth work, is leading on this review on behalf of the network. It is also lead partner of a consortium who is seeking government support for a licence to practise for youth workers.

NCVYS will submit a paper to LLUK outlining the issues and concerns that the voluntary and community youth sector (VCYS) has raised to date regarding licensing and registration. In addition, LLUK has agreed to work with NCVYS to organise full consultation with the sector through events – so watch this space!

The VCYS is confused as regulation/registration is being discussed in two different ways. This article aims to provide clarification and explores some of the issues that the VCYS has raised to date.

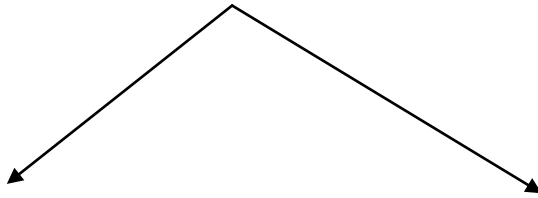
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⁵ www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/childrensplan/downloads/7482-DCSF-WorkforceMatters.pdf (paragraph 3.15)

Regulation/registration/licensing

Discussed or being introduced in two ways:



Independent Safeguarding Authority Scheme

Register to prevent the most unsuitable people from working with children from Oct 2009.

Registration and licensing of youth workers

Schemes to regulate and recognise professional development are being debated e.g. licence to practise or registration of professionally qualified youth workers.

Independent Safeguarding Authority Scheme

From 12 October 2009, a register will be in place that will help prevent the most unsuitable people from working with children and vulnerable adults. Whilst employers are committed to the principles of safeguarding children, the mandatory registration scheme will cause a burden on time and resources for employers e.g. administration, training requirements, the need to make changes to systems, policies and procedures.

There is great concern within the VCYS around the point at which volunteers will have to register with the scheme. If the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) continues to insist that registration happens prior to any regulated voluntary work being undertaken, it will have a damaging impact on the future recruitment of volunteers. Another concern is who will pick up the cost of the ISA registration of paid staff – will it be the employer or the employee?

Website: www.isa.gov.org.uk

Professional development of youth workers

A consortium, led by LLUK and including the National Youth Agency (NYA), the union UNITE (CYWU) and the Association of Principal Youth and Community Officers (APYCO), has met to discuss the introduction of a licence to practise for youth workers and an approach to government for funding to support a voluntary registration process. We still await information about the consortium's proposals. However, over the past couple of years the following has been discussed by some members of the consortium.

Should there be a minimum level of qualification in order to be a youth worker?

This potential requirement has been referred to as a licensing system called licence to practise. At the time of writing (July 2008), this has only been debated and speculated, it has not been implemented as the required government support has not yet been given.

To date, our research shows that only a small minority of individuals within the VCYS are in favour of such a licensing scheme. The majority are against the move due to the impact that it will have on volunteers and feel strongly that the new requirement will stop thousands of individuals from providing free valuable time to work with children and young people.

Should there be a registration system of professionally qualified youth workers?

The NYA and some unions have been debating the merits of registering only professionally qualified youth workers, e.g. those that hold a relevant youth and community work degree, whereas the licence to practise scheme has been promoted as applying to the whole of the youth work workforce.

The main advantage of such a registration scheme is that it will help raise the professional status of youth work and help the profession to be on par with teaching and social work. Employers in the voluntary sector, many of whom rely on volunteers as their key workforce, are asking what is the benefit of such a scheme?

The impact

NCVYS believes that regulation continues to be the biggest threat to the work of the VCYS and the services that it delivers to young people. Regulation and licensing may counteract 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.

The largest number of workers within the youth sector workforce are volunteers, with an estimated 500,000 across England alone. Strategies should be introduced which do not run the risk of deterring, alienating and restricting volunteers, but instead providing support and incentives for them to take up training and professional development opportunities. This will help to drive up standards and upskill the workforce, which after all is the government's aim all along. A different approach NCVYS has suggested the government takes, is for them to support a volunteer accreditation scheme⁶. We have received full support to our proposal from a range of organisations and agencies, including LLUK.

We continue to work with the ISA with regards to making them aware of the impact and issues that the ISA registration scheme will bring for the VCYS. We will also listen to the proposals from LLUK and the consortium when they are made available and facilitate full consultation with the sector.

NCVYS has been invited to sit on a Task/Steering Group which will oversee the review of the role of regulation and registration within the children's workforce. We therefore want to assure members and the VCYS that we will continue to represent their views and ensure that the VCYS has full say in developments.

Website: www.ncvys.org.uk

If you wish to comment about regulation or registration please contact Nichola Brown, Workforce Development Officer.

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⁶ www.ncvys.org.uk >> policy>> policy statements