

Children & Young People Now

For decision makers and senior practitioners working with children, young people and families

www.cypnow.co.uk



Guide to Youth Work

Key content

- The unique approach of youth work, and the difference it makes to young people's lives
- The expanding role of youth work in sectors including mental and physical health, youth justice, social work and outdoor education
- Common routes into youth work including apprenticeships, Level 3 qualifications and degrees

In association with

NYA
National Youth Agency

YOUTH WORK DEVELOPMENTS

Kevin Jones, head of workforce and professional development at the National Youth Agency, sets out the policy and funding trends shaping youth work

The vital role of youth work was highlighted during the pandemic. The government recognised qualified youth workers as key workers, continuing to engage with young people when schools closed and other agencies drew back. Showing creativity and ingenuity, youth workers drew on their unique principles and practices to continue to build relationships with young people online, on doorsteps, in parks and on street corners.

Life is presenting a range of challenges to young people, from the socio-economic impact of the pandemic, to reductions in service provision and severely impacted educational opportunities. Support from an effective and highly skilled youth work sector has never been more important, but employers across the country are telling us they are struggling to recruit qualified youth workers. At the NYA we are calling for the recruitment and training of 10,000 qualified youth workers, 20,000 youth support workers and 40,000 volunteers as a starting point.

With the recent announcements from the government of a Youth Guarantee (including capital, revenue and workforce/ infrastructure funding), there is a clear commitment to growing and protecting youth work for young people across the country.

‘The pandemic has driven many people to re-evaluate their lives and careers. Some may be looking to take a first step into working with young people. Others may already work in social care, health, education, or youth justice, but would like to use their skills with young people in a different way. Youth work offers the opportunity to journey alongside young people, building confidence and life skills they need to live, learn, work and achieve consistent and long-lasting support that makes an impact that stays with them throughout their lives.’

Kevin Jones, head of workforce and professional development at the National Youth Agency



WHY ENTER YOUTH WORK?

Youth workers are needed now, more than ever, to unlock young people's potential and help them navigate a changing world. For many young people their youth worker is a lifeline, the only person they can talk to, and their youth organisation is the only place they can really be themselves. Youth workers offer consistent and impactful support that stays with young people throughout their lives.

Although many professionals work with young people, only in youth work is it the choice of the young person to engage with the professional. Youth work works because of this voluntary relationship. Youth workers engage with young people on their own terms, building relationships, promoting personal and social development and supporting them to realise their full potential. Youth work offers young people safe spaces to explore their identity, experience decision-making, increase confidence, develop interpersonal skills and learn to navigate challenges and risks, building skills for their future.

“A lot of people go into professions such as social care or education because they want to work with and help young people,” explains Kevin Jones, from the National Youth Agency. “Other sectors do so with a prescribed set of outcomes. Youth work is democratic, takes the young person's pace, is self-directed. Youth workers use many of the same skills as other children's professionals, but with often very different, positive outcomes.”

Outdoor learning: Ben Evans, youth and play worker, Water Adventure Centre

The Water Adventure Centre has been engaging young people on Greater Manchester's canals and lakes with youth and play work since 1977. “We are not a traditional outdoor company - we don't so much teach boating skills as build confidence, raise



esteem, and help young people develop skills to improve their lives,” says Ben.

The outdoor setting of the Centre is an inspiring workplace, he says. “Something about the water is special – when young people are in a different environment they gain new experiences. Youth work is so broad, it is always different and every young person comes with different lived experiences that shape them.”

Supporting mental health: Karina Nyananyo, head of service, 42nd Street



Manchester-based charity 42nd Street supports young people with mental health difficulties. “Our approach is that we go into the community and build relationships, seeing young people where they want to be seen,” says Karina.

Qualified youth workers on the team work alongside those with social work or counselling qualifications. “There are so many ways you can be a youth worker in this organisation,” says Karina. Some are based in early help teams or children's homes, others provide one-to-one support, or sessions for specific groups such as Black young men or LGBT+ young people.

Karina was inspired to become a youth worker after benefiting from youth work herself. “I started my life in youth projects; youth work saved me at a time when things were tough,” she says.

She completed a youth work degree at the University of Leeds in 2006 as a mature student, which she describes as “one of the best learning experiences of my life.”

A RANGE OF OPPORTUNITIES

From working in social housing schemes to supporting vulnerable young people in custody, youth workers now operate in an array of settings across communities

Alongside traditional centre-based youth work, today's youth worker is as likely to find themselves working in a school providing mental health support, in the great outdoors running adventure activities, or based in a hospital or even inside a prison. Historically, youth work was mainly delivered by local authorities. Modern youth workers might be employed by voluntary organisations, social enterprises or private companies.

Youth workers can create an interesting, diverse career path by moving between different specialisms or concentrate on one particular area. Whatever path they choose they will need to be flexible and quick-thinking, because no day in youth work is ever the same.

Youth work in prison: Neil Levy, senior youth work co-ordinator, Kinetic Youth

Neil's team of youth workers are based in Feltham Young Offender Institution, working with some of the most vulnerable young people in the country. "It's a distinctive way of doing youth work in a unique setting," he says. As well as running the prison's youth council and peer support project, the team delivers one-to-one and group sessions, and acts as a friendly face in a difficult environment. "These young people haven't had a positive role model in life, you are in a situation where you can be that person," says Neil "It is really rewarding".

Neil, who gained a youth work degree from Leeds Metropolitan University in 2000, started out by helping to run the youth club in his local synagogue. "I wanted to help hard-to-reach

young people that society has given up on, and be there for them," he says.

Youth work on the streets: Annie Fordham, detached youth work manager, Trafford Council

As a teenager Annie failed her A-Levels but at the age of 21 she did a foundation course followed by a degree in Youth and Community Work Studies at Manchester Metropolitan University. As soon as she started her first placement with Salford Youth Service she realised her future lay in youth work. "I walked in to a building and after half an hour I thought this is now my profession," she says. "I was attracted by the energy, the fun – it is really diverse work and the possibilities are endless."

Trafford Council established a detached youth work team in 2019. "We took a long time getting to know the community, getting the young people used to us being on the streets," she says. The team now runs a wide range of projects from photography to gender identity discussions. "You need to be friendly, confident, quick-witted and creative," says Annie, "It is one of the most powerful things in the world – you are meeting young people on their own terms, in their own base, with mutual respect."



ROUTES INTO YOUTH WORK

The three most common routes into youth work are through further and higher education, apprenticeships or volunteering.

Youth work qualifications are endorsed by the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) via the NYA's Education & Training Standards Sub-Committee and are designed to be accessible to students who may not have taken traditional academic routes.

Apprenticeship

An apprenticeship is a way for young people and adult learners to earn while they learn in a real job. Apprenticeships are funded by the government and the employer.



A Level 3 Youth Support Worker

Apprenticeship takes around 18 months to complete and successful apprentices will gain a Level 3 Diploma in Youth Work Practice. The new Level 6 Youth Worker apprenticeship is anticipated to be offered by Universities in autumn 2022. It will take around 36 months to complete and will include a JNC-endorsed professional level degree in Youth Work. Scan the QR code above for more information.

Youth Support Worker

A youth support worker is a youth worker who has achieved a Level 2 or 3 certificate or diploma in Youth Work Practice. The JNC-endorsed Level 2 and 3 youth work qualifications, available from a range of awarding bodies, are aimed at people working with or volunteering in a youth work environment:

- **Level 2 Certificate in Youth Work Practice**
260 hours including 40 hours of work-experience

- **Level 3 Certificate in Youth Work Practice**
270 hours including 60 hours of placement
- **Level 3 Diploma in Youth Work Practice**
370 hours including 80 hours of placement. This qualification opens the pathway of studying youth work at degree level.

Professional Youth Worker

Youth work degree courses must be JNC-recognised to confer the status of qualified youth worker. Youth work degrees are evolving to reflect roles outside traditional youth work settings with modules covering social care, health, social enterprise and business development. There are a range of programme titles such as youth and community studies, youth and theology, and informal and community education.

Level 6 qualifications include the BA (Hons), (three years full-time, can also be studied part time). Level 7 qualifications include full or part time PG Dip or Masters. The NYA map shows the universities currently offering a



professional qualification in youth work. Visit the 'Getting Qualified' webpage for more information.

Volunteering

Most youth work training providers and employers look for some experience, paid or voluntary, of working with young people. To find out what is going on in your area you can contact your local youth service or volunteer centre. The NYA offers free resources and training for volunteers through its Youth Work Academy, while organisations such as UK Youth and the Institute for Youth Work also offer training that volunteers can access.

Currently, full time youth and community support workers receive between £19,308 and £28,787 per annum, while a professional youth worker earns between £25,513 and £42,718. London area allowances range from £833 to £3,253. Scan the QR code for up-to-date information on youth work salaries. Revised pay rates are negotiated annually by the JNC.



FIND OUT MORE

If you have been inspired to find out more about a career in youth work, there are a host of organisations and resources to support you every step of the way.

The National Youth Agency web site contains a range of resources including FAQs, documents, toolkits, research, webinars, and the NYA Youth Work Academy with free training courses and webinars. The NYA Network is free to join and provides monthly updates on training and development opportunities as well as other news. www.nya.org.uk

The Network of Regional Youth Work Units brings together independent organisations working across the youth work sector at regional level in six English regions. Regional Youth Work Units are hubs for developing and supporting youth work. For contact details for Regional Youth Work Units visit: www.regionalyouthunits.com

UK Youth is a network of more than 8,000 youth organisations and other partners. It campaigns for greater understanding of and investment in youth work and aims to strengthen the sector. www.ukyouth.org

The Institute for Youth Work is a membership organisation for youth workers, offering resources such as conferences and events, discounts and monthly newsletters. www.iyw.org.uk

The Federation for Detached Youth Work aims to improve the quality of detached youth work practice, advance education and training of detached youth workers, and improve understanding of detached youth work and its values. www.fdyw.org.uk

This Guide has been produced by Children & Young People Now in association with NYA. Find out more at nya.org.uk