

Services for Young People: Development Service

Youth Work in Schools

Guidelines for Good Practice

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CONTENTS

PAGE

A	Introduction	1
B	What Does Youth Work Offer to Schools?	1
C	Values and Principles	2
D	Protocols for Youth Work in Schools	2
E	Guidelines for Specific Projects:	
	Drop-in Sessions	5
	Work with PSHE	6
	Pupil Inclusion Projects	7
	Detached Youth Work	7
	Accreditation of Informal Learning	8
F	Conclusion	8

YOUTH WORK IN SCHOOLS GUIDELINES FOR GOOD PRACTICE

A. INTRODUCTION

This document draws on the experience of youth workers in local authority and voluntary sectors who have been working with young people in school settings. It seeks to provide guidelines for good practice in the development of school-based youth work, and identify some of the most common issues raised by this work. It should be of use to youth workers working in schools, and to school and college staff who are interested in developing youth work as an element of the spectrum of support and development opportunities available to young people on their sites.

B. WHAT DOES YOUTH WORK OFFER TO SCHOOLS?

Youth work can contribute in many ways to schools' pupil support and curriculum services. Youth workers work informally with young people in groups and individually, in a range of contexts, and are able to provide informal learning and personal development opportunities for young people aged 13-19.

Youth workers can assist young people to deal with many aspects of their lives, and will work through at least some of the following with young people:

- Self awareness: including self-respect, rights and responsibilities.
- Relating to others: including communication and relationship skills.
- Developing interests and talents
- Being healthy: substance education, sexual health, coping with stress
- Being safe: knowing how to access support, avoiding abuse, assessing risk.
- Education, training and employment
- Environmental awareness
- Housing: living at home, leaving home, and accessing related support.
- Money management: learning about banking, tax, fund raising, and shopper's rights.
- Values and beliefs
- Voice and influence

Often these issues are raised through a programme of activities. Equally, however, youth workers use informal contact, conversation and one-to-one support as tools to help young people to develop. Youth workers work in Wiltshire schools on the following projects:

- Inclusion projects
- Lunch-time and after school drop-in sessions
- Supporting the development of School Councils and youth forums.
- Detached youth work on school sites
- One off events and training sessions e.g. Local Democracy Week Road shows.
- Contribution to PSHE and Citizenship curriculum
- Enabling young people to accredit their learning in informal settings through Youth Achievement Awards, Duke of Edinburgh's Award etc.

It is possible to tailor-make a package of youth work support according to the needs of individual schools and young people.

C. VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

The key values and principles that underpin youth work are set out in Learning for Life: the Wiltshire Youth Work Curriculum Framework. These are that youth work is:

- needs-led: designed in response to the developmental needs and interests of the young people.
- Participative: designed to encourage and sustain young people's active voluntary participation.
- Developmental: designed for learning, to result in the incremental acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding associated with young people's personal and social development.
- Inclusive: pro-actively promoting equality of opportunity, enabling access and valuing diversity. Challenging attitudes and behaviours that result in discrimination on the grounds of gender, race, religion, ability or sexuality.
- Empowering: designed to result in young people developing a sense of ownership; acquiring an understanding of their rights and responsibilities, and being enabled to exercise their voice and influence.
- Planned: designed with young people
- Reflective and evaluated: thinking back on youth work practice; to learn and improve from experience, through ongoing review, reflection and evaluation.

When youth workers are working in schools, they will apply these principles to their work with young people.

D. PROTOCOLS FOR YOUTH WORK IN SCHOOLS

1. Funding: Youth Development Workers will work with local schools to identify ways in which youth work can support the learning process for school students. Given the range of demands on youth work resources, it is unrealistic for school-based work to be fully resourced from the youth work budget. Schools and colleges have access to funding to support youth work interventions through Pupil Support and other sources. It is recommended that where a piece of work will require substantial youth work time and resources, or when the work is delivered in National Curriculum time, then schools are expected to contribute to the costs.
2. Clarity about the youth work role: there should be clear expectations about what youth work processes and outcomes. This information should form part of the contract setting process, and should be regularly monitored throughout the project. Youth work curriculum, policies and guidelines should be shared with the school. School policies and procedures on child protection, drug related incidents and behaviour support should be shared with youth workers, and agreement reached as to how youth workers will operate on the school site.

Where youth work is to be undertaken as part of a multi-agency approach it may be appropriate to incorporate multi-agency arrangements to enhance communications between the agencies and school.

3. Evaluation: Youth work in schools should be continuously evaluated in line with the Youth Work Curriculum Framework and Quality Assurance Inspection Framework. When a school based youth work project is established, clear aims, objectives and targets, against which progress can be monitored, should be agreed with the school. Evaluation reports should be produced regularly, for example termly and should be shared with the member of school staff. Evaluation procedures should be agreed when the project is established.

Work carried out by youth workers in schools will be subject to the Quality Assurance Inspection processes for youth work and can be assessed by relevant internal and external inspections.

4. Communication: Effective communication systems with school staff are essential for youth workers operating in schools. There should be an identified member of school staff, preferably a member of the schools senior management team, who acts as a contact point with the youth workers, receives and provides information and negotiates the contract. This person should also be responsible for informing other staff of the youth worker's role on the school site.

Where youth workers are closely involved in schools, they should be involved in pastoral care meetings along with other professionals [e.g. Education Welfare Officers, Connexions Personal Advisers etc]. It may also be appropriate for youth workers to be involved in parent's evenings and other events. The contact member of school staff should ensure that youth workers are invited to meetings where their input would be of value. Schools should make sure that all key staff [including reception, lunch-time attendants and caretakers] are aware of the youth worker's presence on site, and have an awareness of what they are doing. Youth workers must wear identification badges and should ensure that key staff are aware of their location, and know how to contact them.

5. Confidentiality: There may be differences between the Youth Work Confidentiality Guidelines and the school policy. Given the importance of confidentiality within relationships between the youth worker and young people, it is essential that agreement is reached over confidentiality during the development of a school based youth work project.

The basic principle of confidentiality for youth workers should be that *information disclosed by a young person should not be disclosed to anyone else without the young person's consent*. This principle should only be overridden where:-

- There is a legal requirement or duty to disclose information
- There is a risk of serious harm or threat to life or to national security

6. **Sharing information about young people:** Where youth workers are operating as part of pupil support systems, it will be necessary to share information about young people's progress on a project or programme with other school-based staff. The Confidentiality Guidelines do not preclude information about young people's progress on particular projects and programmes from being shared with school staff.

There will be occasions when a youth worker becomes aware of issues in a young person's life that could have an adverse affect on their progress at school. The youth worker may experience conflict as to whether they should share this information with school staff, as the sharing of the information may assist school staff to ease pressure on the young person. In such instances, the worker should discuss the matter with the young person, and help them explore the advantages and disadvantages of the information being shared with named others. If the young person agrees to sharing, the youth worker should make clear who will be told, and how far the information will go. This will need to be negotiated with the youth worker's regular contact on the school staff. If the young person does not agree to share, then the youth worker remains bound by the basic principles of confidentiality. Both school staff and youth workers will need to be sensitive to each other's professional needs here. Youth workers should ensure that they discuss these cases with their Line Manager, and seek support in dealing with the issues.

7. **Management:** Youth work managers should try to ensure continuity of staffing, to enable youth workers to become established within the school. Supervision must address the work being undertaken in schools.
8. **Access to Space:** Access to space and notice boards should be addressed when the project is being established, and should be reviewed regularly to ensure the project can meet changing needs and demands.

Lack of an identifiable youth work base in the school can make it difficult for youth workers to keep in contact with young people. It is also useful for youth work to have access to a designated notice board area, where information about access to youth workers and any specific events can be posted.

E. GUIDELINES FOR SPECIFIC PROJECTS

Drop-in Sessions

- Establish the aims and purpose of the proposed drop-in session[s] jointly with school staff.
- Identify the target groups of young people.
- Clarify why youth workers are the appropriate people to provide the sessions.
- Identify the space to be used for the drop-in, and ensure it is accessible to all young people, and has appropriate facilities.
- Identify the times for the drop-in and ensure that they can be adhered to on a regular basis.

- Establish ground rules regarding access to the drop-in space by school staff and non-targeted young people: young people may want to see the space as 'theirs' for the duration of the drop-in, and may not be comfortable about school staff and managers presence during those times.
- Establish systems for the reporting of incidents and accidents during the drop-in.
- Ensure that young people who attend the sessions know and understand the boundaries of the workers involved, and understand the relationship between the sessions and the school.
- Use youth work recording sheets to record and monitor use of the drop-in sessions.

Work within Personal, Social and Health Education [PSHE]

- Establish with PSHE co-ordinator the aims and purpose of youth work involvement in the programme.
- Ensure that youth workers have a copy of the curriculum to clarify the level and type of information that is expected/required to be covered.
- Talk to teaching staff to find out what has already been delivered and in what style. This will help clarify the aims of the youth work intervention.
- Establish whether or not a teacher will be present during the session. In most cases, it is school policy for a teacher to be present, so it is important to clarify roles and responsibilities of the teacher and youth worker: will the teacher be an observer, participant or co-facilitator?
- Ensure there are processes to evaluate the work.

Pupil Inclusion Projects

- Identify the role of youth workers within the project.
- Be very clear about processes for dealing with challenging behaviour: it is likely that there will be differences in what youth workers would normally accept and what can be tolerated in school settings.
- Ensure that the space available for the project can accommodate youth work methods [e.g. space for group work and one-to-one work]
- Ensure that the youth workers are seen as part of the team of other staff working on the project.
- Establish clear lines of communication with school staff.

Work with young people during school lunch and other break times.

- Establish clear contact with school staff.
- Ensure non-teaching staff [Lunch-time organisers, caretakers etc.] are aware of the youth worker's presence on the site, and understand their role.
- Ensure that school students know that youth workers are available and how they can find them.
- Ensure that the outcomes of the work are reported to school staff on a regular basis.

Accreditation of Informal Learning

- Ensure that the school staff contact understands the form of accreditation offered.
- Ensure that young people understand the value of the form of accreditation they will receive.
- Establish the process for assessment of accredited work
- Seek to demonstrate the learning in all activities undertaken.

F. CONCLUSION

Youth work in schools is increasingly valued, for youth workers ability to provide informal and positive support to young people within the school environment. These guidelines should help to iron out some of the misunderstandings that occur in establishing projects in new settings, and will be most effective where youth workers recognise the constraints experienced by school staff and schools are able to support youth work's informal approaches to education and learning.

G. EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE IN WILTSHIRE

- **Corsham:** the establishment of a sixth form [Lunch Club Plus](#) in the Mansion House Youth Development Centre for 2 hrs per week - in partnership with the School and in response to concerns about groups of young people gathering in large numbers outside the local shop. The initiative was well received; and many who had not set foot inside the building before formed a rapid attachment to the centre and its staff; giving up their time over the half term holiday to take part in a redecoration project. In true youth work fashion, the opportunity was seized to advance this groups life skills; and so they soon found themselves being given collective responsibility for project managing the whole task, including keeping it within budget. As well as up-grading the environment, the initiative resulted in a welcomed diversification of groups being reached, with older young people supporting and encouraging the younger ones to get involved.

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- **Wootton Bassett:** Seven Year 11 students at Wootton Bassett School had been supported by the Youth Development Service, every Tuesday afternoon, to work towards achieving their [Asdan Short Course Award in Active Citizenship](#). As part of their two week community project, with the Town Council, the young people worked with Council staff to repair and replace signage. The group's efforts were well received in the local community and resulted in a fair degree of positive press. On an individual basis, the young people each took away a variety of new skills. These necessarily included improved ability to work together as a team; and an understanding of how to undertake risk assessment.

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Salisbury: The 'Year 8 youth group' was set up to engage those at the younger end of the target age range who were not being attracted to open sessions or contacted through work on the streets. As a member of this new group, the Locality Team Leader invited **Luke (13)** to take part in interviewing candidates for a vacant Youth Development Coordinator post in Salisbury as she felt he could hold his own opinions, despite his young age. Some weeks later, in response to a questionnaire she sent out to parents, Luke's Mother mentioned the impact of his involvement in this process. She spoke positively of a change in Luke's attitude both at school and at home and went on to say: *"he is growing in confidence and developing into a thoughtful caring young man. I find myself talking to him more like a young adult now! The outcomes for Luke have been positive"*.

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Wootton Bassett: The **Engage Project** is an alternative Curriculum opportunity for Students in Years 9, 10 and 11. The project is a joint working partnership between Youth Development Service, Connexions and Wootton Bassett School. The Project allows Young People the opportunity to come to the Youth Development Centre for 1 hour a week, to engage in programmes that promote communication, confidence building and social skills.

The Young People are all referred to the project on a needs basis and through evaluation it is clear the initiative is highly valued by the participants and School alike. All Young People receive accreditation through the Wiltshire Award, which is in itself a positive mechanism for raising self-esteem and confidence. All partners are committed to continuing the project and developing further its preventative work with those most at risk from becoming NEET.

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Bradford on Avon: After working to establish a positive partnership with the local secondary school, the team was invited in to set up a programme of **School Based Drop-In Sessions**. It was anticipated that this would a) enrich young people's experience of the school day and thus support attainment, b) provide young people with the opportunity to talk through issues with differently trained adults whose role was less formal than that of a teacher, and c) enable the youth workers to extend their reach into the 13-19 population beyond those attending the Centre and/or whom they may be in contact with on the streets. To date the project has been reviewed with the school on a number of occasions. Each time it has been regarded as a success. The sessions have been well attended by over 200 young people in total to date. Most of these did not previously know about the youth service and have gone on to attend the Youth Development Centre in the evenings. The Drop-in Sessions' programme is regularly publicized in the School News Letter. These sessions have been successfully used to de-escalate mounting conflict between groups and individuals; support young people who are feeling very low; encourage involvement in other positive activities and events; and engage young people in important consultation exercises e.g. in connection with the Local Youth Council, Tomorrow's Voice and UKYP Elections.

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Melksham: In October, the local YDS Team commenced **Outreach in George Ward School**. This has involved workers interacting with young people during lunch hours and breaks similar to the way they would if approaching young people during their own time on the streets. Initially young people were surprised to find that they had a choice in the relationship and were free to walk away. Probably because of this few ever did and so the team's contact base within the school has grown exponentially week on week. Objectives achieved to date include: increased awareness of youth workers role; wider use of the Youth Centre in the evenings and take-up of related programme activities (such as the Summer Scheme); and workers gaining a fuller understanding of group dynamics within the school and how best to support those they are working with in relation to their education. Plans for the next phase of partnership work with the school are already in place. This includes: joint work with the school's DOE co-coordinator; working with the Saturday Academy to produce a publicity film about the Centre that can be broadcast on the School TV; and borrowing music equipment to use within youth work programmes. It also involves a member of the youth work team attending the schools Learning Co-ordinators meetings in return for the school's representation on the LYPIG.

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Salisbury: The Voice & Influence Team worked in partnership with Salisbury District Council to deliver a **Citizenship Training Day** for young people from schools in the Salisbury & Kennet Area. The day was designed to promote involvement in School Councils, and to broaden young people's understanding of what school councils could actually achieve. A range of interactive learning processes were used to explore related themes such as 'representation', 'decision-making', 'market research' and 'the community'. The young people were also given information about other decision-making opportunities such as LYPIGS, the Salisbury Consultative Forum and WAY. Many of the young people who had become somewhat disillusioned with their school councils renewed their commitment and said that they felt better able to engage with the larger issues above and beyond "debating school uniforms". An unexpected outcome of the day was that several Citizenship teachers said it had also helped to renew their enthusiasm for the subject. They were taking away tips for how to make their own sessions with young people in schools more interesting and participative.

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