

CWDC: Young People's Workforce Development – Consultation

Comments from Surrey Youth Focus June 2009

Who we are: *Surrey Youth Focus* is an infrastructure body supporting nearly 80 member organisations in the voluntary sector who are working with young people. Our members include Surrey Scouts (12,000) Surrey Guides (14,000), other uniformed organisations, three YMCAs, Surrey Care trust and a number of smaller charities working with needy young people. Our members cover the spectrum from positive activities to targeted youth support, and work with 24,000 young people a week, and 75,000 in the course of a year. (There are 250,000 children and young people in Surrey). A Members Survey in 2008 showed the need for at least another 500 youth work leaders.

Youth workers: The voluntary sector is by far the largest provider of youth work, and of youth workers in Surrey. For example Guildford Anglican Diocese alone has almost the same number of full time paid youth workers as the County Council's youth service. Whilst data is scarce, the view is that about a third of voluntary youth workers have qualifications, a third are in some form of training, and another third have no formal training at all.

Policy Context: The policy aim of achieving a single C&YP workforce by 2020 is understood. We are involved in developing the Surrey Workforce Strategy, and indeed are recipients of CWDC funding under the WSSP programme whereby we are developing a "Roadmap" of entry / exit points for youth work training incorporating common core skills and developing a "Surrey certificate" of basic youth work so that volunteers can be confident of knowing basic youth work skills. Our Chief Executive is on the CWDC funded FPM Leadership course for integrated workforce delivery. One of our staff has attended the regional consultation event in Brighton, and so we think we are up to speed.

The CWDC's Intended outcomes: The intended outcomes of the Skills Development Framework and the Youth professional Status are cited as being to give:

- a stronger sense of professional identity and a rise in workforce status, morale and aspirations;
- a clearer entry and progression picture for staff;
- a more consistent set of integrated training and qualifications across the workforce;
- a rise in skill levels and greater and more consistent quality of practice;
- most of all, a workforce better able to successfully deliver outcomes for young people.

Critique of the proposals:

- 1) The consultation is a misnomer because the direction is prescribed – you have even advertised the tender to recruit a Youth Professional Status training organisation in July, so the process is one of informing, not consulting.
- 2) The papers fail to recognise the leading and substantial contribution of the voluntary sector, so for example Model A appears to assume that volunteers will just slot in to a “career journey” and acquire “skill sets” that define their status. There is no evidence that volunteers would do this – have they been asked - or how this would be implemented, and financed.
- 3) The three models fail to make explicit what particular objectives they’re trying to achieve, and, in their different ways, are impracticable.
- 4) The term “social pedagogy” is a recent one, and not one which youth workers (or others) are generally conversant. There is real potential however to align youth work with this model as it sits well with traditional youth work values. It is suggested that a greater degree of focus is put on this aspect, which once communicated and understood could have real mileage as a concept around which to cluster youthworkers and other professions.
- 5) That said, the youth workforce sector is overly complex, and in long overdue need of radical reform, with far too many stakeholders and dysfunctional relationships – for example :
 - CWDC sets occupational standards for most C&YP workforce groups except that LLUK set **youth work** occupational standards....
 - CWDC sets out the common core knowledge and skills (which are excellent)
 - Various bodies (ABC, City and Guilds and NOCN) set the curriculum for youth work standards set out in NVQs **BUT these don’t incorporate all common core skills.....**
 - NVQs reflect experience and competency acquired **but do not reflect how to** acquire the skill in the first place
 - Local authorities frequently advertise youth work posts as requiring NVQs but don’t provide the courses
 - DCSF wants to make youth work a graduate profession, but can’t decide whether this is based on a core foundation course with subsequent specialisms (Connexions, Education welfare) or whether there is something distinctive called youth work
 - University courses in youth and community work are approved by the NYA and won’t necessarily link to occupational standards
 - There are not enough youth workers
 - Young people in the UK will be amongst the worst victims of the recession as youth unemployment, NEET, mental illness, and crime all increase .
- 6) The objective should be to simplify, and not to try to achieve too much too quickly. The announcement of the postponement of the Youth Work Licence is welcome. The Common Core Skills should be an essential underpinning, but thereafter the differences between C&YP professions in working with different age groups should be recognised. Working with children aged 0-5 is very different from working with teenagers.

- 7) A fundamental decision has to be taken as to whether to advocate youth work as a graduate profession, OR to see it as a set of values/ skills that are applicable across the entire youth workforce - hereafter used to describe the youth workforce set out in Fig 1.2 of the Children and Young people workforce strategy
- 8) The youth workforce sector needs to be regarded **holistically**. Each time a decision is taken to draw a dividing line **there is a risk of alienation**, so for example: Youth Professional Worker OR Youth Support worker, and the Voluntary sector youth worker is defined as.....what exactly? Then again in the model of page 14 of the Strategy: "Core (statutory) workforce and "Wider" (voluntary sector) workforce.... at least not *peripheral* workforce.
- 9) With these points in mind and the aim of a holistic approach, it is suggested there should be a standard induction programme (how to) that would be common to all youth workers whether statutory sector, or voluntary. Thereafter the approach should be one of developing competences/skills combined with experience, AND for those wishing to progress a career in youth work (Paid/unpaid) with a process of assessing /validating those.
- 10) IF youth work is to become a graduate profession, largely for the statutory sector, great care must be taken not to exclude and disempower the voluntary sector, which is universally acknowledged as the major provider. There need to be permeable boundaries/ cross over points whereby voluntary sector experience/competency can be transferred across to the statutory sector.
- 11) To sum up it is suggested that the CWDC should focus on achieving this permeable approach by:
 - Developing shared induction/ common core skills on a generic basis within the youth workforce, and in time across the entire C&YP workforce
 - Recognition that at a senior management/ leadership level the skills are again generic
 - Accreditation of the competences and experiences of the voluntary sector youth workers in a licensing system **that must be light touch**, and not discourage volunteers
 - Development of the social pedagogy concept as a basis for development/ application of common core skills, though with a simpler title please
 - A clear pathway for youth work training /development/ career that is simple to understand, and supported in the sense of the ready availability of training provision.
 - Permeable boundaries between the statutory / voluntary sectors so that competences/ experience gained in the voluntary sector can be transferred into the statutory, and vice versa
 - Encouragement to joint training between the sectors, and, in time, across the 0-25 C&YP professions.

Mike Abbott
Chief Executive

June 2009