

# Youth Work Consultation – Opportunities for All

## Edinburgh Youth Work Consortium

### 1. The role of youth work

- 1.1 We endorse YouthLink Scotland's definition of youth work
  - young people choose to participate
  - youth work builds from where young people are
  - youth workers and young people are partners in learning.
- 1.2 Young people's voluntary participation in youth work is a fundamental principle.
- 1.3 Universal youth work provision and targeted interventions are not mutually exclusive. Universal provision provides a foundation for effective targeted work.
- 1.4 Youth work is not based on a deficit model. It views young people as agents of change rather than consumers.
- 1.5 Community based youth work that involves local volunteers, parents and the wider community is part of the glue that holds communities together. It supports community cohesion and builds social capital.
- 1.6 Youth work can make a contribution to schools, but should not be shaped by them. It has as much to give as it has to receive.
- 1.7 A growing collaboration between the statutory and voluntary sectors currently provides the springboard for the creation of a distinctive youth work service. This partnership delivers effective youth work for young people and demonstrates the sectors ability to work together.

### 2. National structures

- 2.1 There is a clear need for a body with a national youth work leadership role. This body must be able to champion Scottish youth work to the Scottish Executive, to local authorities, to the voluntary sector, and within the sector itself.
- 2.2 A legislative framework is required in order to create a youth work entitlement for young people. This should include effective community-based provision, supported by an appropriate national and regional infrastructure.

### 3. Better information for young people

- 3.1 Youth information is not youth work. However, part of the youth work task is to provide relevant and accessible youth information.
- 3.2 We need more creative ways of informing young people about youth work provision. The use of ICT is central to this.
- 3.3 Streetwork (street based youth work) is a largely untapped resource for providing information to young people not currently using services.

### 4. Access to opportunities for young people

- 4.1 The youth worker's role is to work alongside young people – identifying their needs and helping to create opportunities for these to be met. Young people set the priorities.
- 4.2 Young people seek opportunities that - offer a range of activities, take place in supportive and safe environments, and are well advertised.
- 4.3 The relationship between the youth worker and the young person is the key building block to successful youth work.
- 4.4 Youth work is effective at meeting the needs of marginalized young people.

- 4.5 Youth work facilities must be open at times and in locations that meet the needs of young people, not those of providers.
- 4.6 We need to be smarter in our use of buildings and facilities.

## **5. Empowering and engaging young people**

- 5.1 A fundamental youth work principle is the development of young people's democratic participation. This encourages young people to effect change in their group, their community, and in wider society.
- 5.2 The relationship between Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament and their 'constituencies' must be a two-way process. The SYP needs to be more accountable to, and better informed by, young people at community level.

## **6. Improving quality**

- 6.1 Quality in youth work will be best secured by investing in a distinctive youth work service. You get good youth work by having good youth workers!
- 6.2 It is important that youth workers have the ability to make active use of quality systems to support and improve their youth work practice.
- 6.3 Youth work should be recognised as an inclusive profession. It is different from other professions, in that 3 out of 4 youth workers are volunteers. It therefore requires an appropriate training, registration, and career structure that embraces and recognises the needs and contribution of all youth workers – volunteer, sessional and full-time.
- 6.4 Consistent and sustainable youth work requires an increase in the level of investment available to front-line youth work.
- 6.5 Young people should be able to choose whether they wish their involvement in youth work to be accredited or not.

## **7. Training**

- 7.1 A youth work service needs a national training structure to match. This needs to be resourced to deliver at regional and local level.
- 7.2 Training needs to be delivered by the right people, at the right time, in the right places - especially to meet the needs of volunteers and part-time staff.
- 7.3 Training needs to equip youth workers with the skills, knowledge and understanding as set out in the National Occupational Standards.
- 7.4 Scottish Executive investment in child protection and disclosure training needs to be counter-balanced with an equivalent investment in youth work training.

## **8. What Next?**

- 8.1 A youth work strategy for Scotland should be developed and implemented within the first eighteen months of the next Parliament.
- 8.2 The strategy should be developed by an independent working group reporting to the Minister for Education and Young People and the Minister for Communities, but with cross-party support. The working group should reflect the diversity of the youth work field and be informed by the current consultation.
- 8.3 The working group's remit should be to develop and implement a youth work strategy based on a distinctive and universal youth work service. It should focus on how youth work supports and strengthens both the lives of young people and the communities in which they live. The 'Opportunities for All' consultation should not be confused with the need to consult the youth work sector on any subsequent draft national youth work strategy.