

Youth Work Context Briefing and Equalities and Diversity Statement

Background Paper E

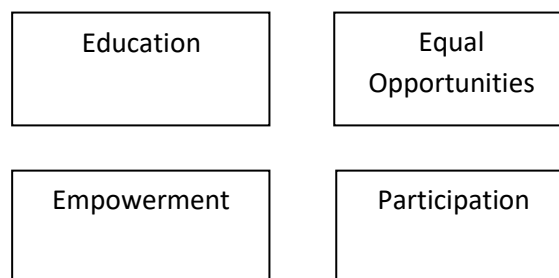
Youth Work in Context

The key focus of youth work is to: *'enable young people to develop holistically, working with them to facilitate their personal and educational development, to enable them to develop their voice, influence and place in society and to reach their full potential'*.

Youth Work National Occupational Standards (2014): www.nya.org.uk

The Four Corners of Youth Work

Whilst local and national policy rarely refers to the 'four corners of youth work' when discussing youth work nowadays, it is very much still part of practice and therefore should be understood by local decision-makers.



All youth work practice should relate to all 'four corners', to varying degrees.

Different types of youth work provision

Youth work can sometimes be difficult to define as a practice. However it is best to outline the different types of youth work provision before considering what type would be most suitable for a community. The general differences are;

- **Centre based / drop in** (young people come and go as they wish)
- **Outreach** (linked to centre based work, ideal for recruitment)
- **Street based / detached** (no venue)
- **Issue based project work** (using a venue but focusing on specific projects only)
- **Youth Participation** (in Stroud district: local youth forum groups and Stroud District Youth Council exist to provide a system and structure for all other types of youth provision to feed into). This is also referred to as 'Youth Voice Vehicle'.

Youth Participation in Context

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) Article 12 is the basis for youth participation; it defines how young people have the right to be actively involved in matters of concern to them.

'Youth participation is the process by which children and young people influence decision making which brings about change in themselves, others, the services they receive and their communities'.

National Hear by Right Framework; www.nya.org.uk

Equality and Diversity Statement regarding Youth Participation

The young people involved with our respective groups and referred to in this report (CSL Committee, 28 November 2019), have a diverse range of abilities and are from differing social and cultural backgrounds. This may not be apparent to adult stakeholders (including elected adult decision-makers) when they meet young people.

The nature of youth work will mean practitioners (youth workers) will have knowledge and experience of a range of factors about an individual young person or groups, which reflects their social demographic. Providing all aspects of safeguarding are followed, youth workers are bound by a code of ethics to uphold the trust of that young person and therefore not divulge personal or social information unless it is offered by the young person to those it is intended for.

A stereotypical image of a young person involved in youth voice groups is:

'Being confident, articulate and high performing at school and; will be aspiring to attend university'.

Often this is not true. Many young people will not display the stereotypical image of their 'background or ability' and neither should they, particularly if (as adolescents) they choose not to. However we must as a Council, embrace such diversity and ability by the young person(s) to support them in becoming positive active citizens.

Through the nature of this type of youth work practice we will see young people change and develop both personally and socially in a range of different ways. Subsequent evidence of this includes examples of:

- a) *Increased confidence;*
- b) *Speaking out on behalf of those they represent;*

- c) *A growing ability to articulate views and opinions (of them and others) in front of adults;*
- d) *Expressing knowledge of social factors and political perspectives;*
- e) *Making changes to physical appearance (which may also be dependent on the group or environment at the time).*

Such evidence is likely to increase the longer a young person stays involved with the group or project. Supporting evidence is commonly a result of sustained engagement in youth participation based programmes.

Impact Risk Assessment

Having carried out an impact risk assessment the following risk factors have been identified;

- The Council and the Stroud district not having a youth work strategic plan to follow, could negatively impact on its services.
- Further negative impact for individuals and communities who are, or feel they are, already marginalised due to issues of austerity and social exclusion.
- Young people will be inhibited from having a voice locally, particularly in communities with issues around social exclusion and cultural diversity.
- The established district youth council will become less representative and less able to voice the issues affecting young people, including those from diverse social backgrounds.

This strategy will help to address inequality and will help build an infrastructure to enable public and voluntary sector organisations to work in partnership.

What is a Local Youth Forum in Stroud district?

Each local youth forum group is made up of young people looking make positive contributions and be active citizens in their local community. Through group work, the personal and social development of young people can lead to them designing and carry out peer led consultation work and acting as youth advisors to adult organisations. Whilst giving a positive profile of young people they embrace equality and diversity among young people and adults. They can also campaign for change, locally. This enables their respective communities in nine defined localities, to gain an insight into what young people's needs and wants are, in terms of provision for the future. Each local youth forum group has the opportunity to elect direct representatives to Stroud District Youth Council and provide a representational aspect to their work locally with adult organisations e.g. Police Neighbourhood Management Panels, Parish or Town Council, and GP Patient Participation Groups.

Discussions on the way forward for towns and parishes

Wide ranging discussions have taken place on a way forward for towns and parishes in the district; conclusions can be drawn from the universal need for adults to know what young peoples needs are, as equal members of their communities.

As a result of the ongoing investment and commitment by Stroud District Council, this district is currently in a strong position to gain the views and opinions of young people. A culture of youth participation has been developed and evolved over the last 20 years which results in towns and parishes having a reliable and informed view in relation to the 'needs' and 'wants' of young people in their communities. Primarily this has been done by developing Stroud District Youth Council (SDYC) as *the active voice for young people in the district* and more recently, the creation of local youth forums as recognised groups in the nine most populated areas of the district.

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