

Definitive Features of Youth Work

Youth work is about voluntary participation

Young people are involved in youth work as they choose to be. It enables them to do worthwhile enjoyable things in their free time in the company of friends and interested, supported adults both paid and voluntary.

Youth work starts where 'young people are at'

Youth work is flexible and versatile in its approach. It embraces a young person's interests and ambitions and helps them to develop and expand their horizons.

Youth work is about partnership

In youth work the young people are active partners in making decisions, planning programmes and setting priorities. The youth work relationship is based on dialogue between young people and adults.

Conclusion

Youth work is an empowering process that tips the balance in young people's favour. It provides one of the few settings where young people have the power to make decisions, follow them through and take responsibility for the consequences in a safe and supportive environment.



Photo courtesy of HSE Community Games

*The Youth Work Act 2001 defines youth work as:

- A planned programme of education designed for the purpose of aiding and enhancing the personal and social development of young people through their voluntary involvement and is -
 - o complementary to their formal, academic or vocational education and training.
 - o provided primarily by voluntary youth work organisations.

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NYCI is a membership-led umbrella organisation recognised in the Youth Work Act as the designated representative body for voluntary youth work organisations in Ireland.



**STATEMENT
ON THE NATURE
AND PURPOSE OF
YOUTH WORK**

Introduction

Youth work has been enhancing the lives of young people and adults in Ireland for more than 100 years. It was given formal statutory recognition in the Youth Work Act 2001.*

Above all youth work is an educational and developmental process based on young people's active, voluntary participation and commitment. It is often defined as 'non-formal education' and is for all young people with a particular focus on those aged between 10 to 25.

Youth work is provided primarily by voluntary organisations with statutory support from the Office of Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA) and the Vocational Education Committees (VECs).

Our vision is for young people to have ambition, be confident individuals, effective contributors, successful learners and responsible citizens along with being nurtured, safe, active, healthy, achieving, included and respected. We believe that youth work has a significant role to play in realising this vision for young people.

Purpose of Youth Work

Youth work has a number of purposes including:

- Building on young people's capacity to consider risks and consequences in order to make informed choices and take responsibility. Developing an ability to manage personal and social relationships.
- Building self-esteem and confidence.
- Enhancing young people as active citizens.
- Giving young people a voice in decisions that affect their lives.
- Giving young people the opportunity to talk and be listened to.
- Helping develop social awareness and a sense of social solidarity.
- Offering worthwhile and challenging experiences.
- Providing learning opportunities to gain knowledge and develop new skills.

How Does it Happen?

The active and critical participation of young people is essential. The methods adopted along with the programmes and activities engaged in are very diverse including:

- Arts and culture including drama and the Irish language.
 - Citizenship, social action, youth participation, rights and equality issues, the environment, development education and politics.
 - Critical analysis, creative and reflective thinking.
 - Information technology.
 - Intercultural and international awareness activities and exchanges.
 - Life skills including leadership, teamwork, planning and decision making, communication, problem solving, initiative and responsibility.
 - Recreation, sport and indoor/outdoor leisure pursuits.
 - Welfare and well being such as health promotion, relationships and sexuality, stress management, first aid, drugs, alcohol and smoking.
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Values of Youth Work

The values of youth work match the purpose of education and are fundamental to the process; raising confidence of individuals, their contribution to society and their value as citizens. These values include:

- Young people make the choice to be involved.
- The work starts where young people are at.
- Promotes equality and inclusion.
- Facilitates and empowers the voice of young people.
- Involves young people in decision making.
- Partners with young people, communities and other agencies.
- Respects all young people.

Benefits of Youth Work

Youth work adds value to the lives of all young people by helping them develop lasting skills and attributes. It can particularly affect the lives of those who are vulnerable and disadvantaged, or are most challenged by school. It can help build confidence, provide role models, open up new experiences and provide a sense of belonging.

For young people - Youth work is educational, enjoyable, fulfilling and fun. Those who take part have more opportunities and options for the future.

For communities - Youth work is about adults and young people working together building community spirit and playing an active role in the development of their communities.

For society - Youth work tackles real social issues, combats disadvantage, enhances democratic life and is huge value for money!
