

## What is Youth Work? (1)

Youth work helps young people learn about themselves, others and society through non-formal educational activities that combine enjoyment, challenge, learning and achievement. Youth work provides for young people's wellbeing and development in all its various forms – intellectual, physical, emotional and spiritual.

Youth workers work primarily with young people aged between 13 and 19. Their work seeks to promote young people's personal and social development and enable them to have a voice, influence and place in their communities and society as a whole. Its origins lie in clubs and projects set up by voluntary organisations in the 19th century. State recognition dates from the outbreak of war in 1939. Around 60 per cent of young people (and there are 8,600,000 of them in England) come into contact with youth work at some point between the ages of 11 and 25. There are over 3,000 full-time youth workers, 21,000 part-time and an estimated half million volunteers.

<http://www.nya.org.uk/information/108501/whatisyouthwork/>

## What is Youth Work? (2)

Youth Work is based upon key principles including:

- the voluntary participation of young people;
- a method that “**starts from where young people are starting**” and seeks to “go beyond where young people start” (training & challenge);
- a focus on **young people as individuals** located within peer communities and wider community and cultural networks (association);
- and a recognition of **young people as young people** – rather than working with young people on the basis of adult-imposed labels (Davies 2005).

Youth Work approaches are particularly valued for their perceived success in engaging disadvantaged, excluded and challenging young people. (Bernard Davies, 2005, Merton, 2007). Where the key factor in developing successful formal education interventions may be taken as consisting in the quality of the educative material or the quality of the materials presentation in lessons and learning settings, the key factor in youth work is often identified as being ‘relationship’. That is, the relationship of ‘trust and mutual respect’ between adult youth worker and young person “through which young people receive the support and challenge needed to acquire the 3 R’s”: **resourcefulness, resilience and resolve**. (Merton 2007).

Interim Report, Youth Work and Social Networking research project: <http://blogs.nya.org.uk/ywsn/>

## What is youth?

### **Youth is an age**

The age between childhood and adulthood. For Youth Workers, this usually means ages 13 to 19, but may cover 11 to 25 in some cases.

### **Youth is a specific (developmental) stage of life**

A stage during which young people undergo a rapid physical, cognitive, emotional and social development. Youth Development is

*"...the ongoing growth process in which all youth are engaged in attempting to (1) meet their basic personal and social needs to be safe, feel cared for, be valued, be useful, and be spiritually grounded, and (2) to build skills and competencies that allow them to function and contribute in their daily lives."* (Pittman, 1993, p. 8)

### **Youth are a generation**

Today's 13 to 19 year olds were born between 1989 and 1995. Most were born after the fall of the Berlin Wall. For most, Tony Blair is the first prime minister they would remember. The Internet has just about always been there. Television has always had 100s of channels.

### **Young people are not adults-in-waiting**

They are key actors and contributors to our society right now.

## What does youth work do?

- Developing **informal education** opportunities
- Delivering **targeted support** for specific young people
- Planning and providing **positive activities** for young people (places to go and things to do)
- Supporting young people's **participation** in decision making
- Providing **Information, Advice and Guidance** (IAG)
- Detached and **street based youth work**