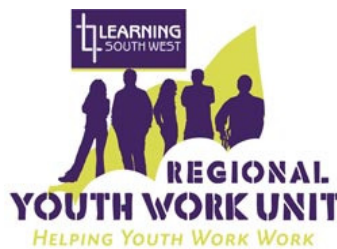


Network of Regional
Youth Work Units
ENGLAND

Good Practice Guidelines in Delivering Youth Support Worker Qualifications

by Gill Millar & Graeme Riley

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Introduction

These guidelines were initiated through the South West Regional Youth Work Unit, in consultation with the South West Regional Youth Work Trainers Group. They have been circulated to other Regional Youth Work Units, and have been discussed at a number of Regional Trainers groups. Comments have also been sought and received from national organisations with key roles in the development of training for youth workers, including LLUK, ABC Awards, The Open University, The National Youth Agency and APYCO. They draw on the extensive experience of running Youth Support Worker qualifications amongst youth work employers and Further Education providers, and can be applied to both Vocational Related Qualification (VRQ) and National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) programmes. As the guidelines are applicable across England, they are promoted by the Network of Regional Youth Work Units: England. For more information about the guidelines, contact Gill Millar at the South West Regional Youth Work Unit (gill_millar@learning-southwest.org.uk).

What is a Youth Support Worker Qualification?

Youth Support Worker Qualifications are nationally recognised qualifications at Levels 2 and 3 on the National Qualifications Framework, and are based on the Youth Work National Occupational Standards. The National Youth Agency, on behalf of the Joint Negotiating Committee for Youth & Community Workers (JNC), endorses the following Level 2 and 3 programmes as qualifications for Youth Support Workers:

- ABC Awards Certificate in Youth Work (VRQ Level 2)
- ABC Awards Diploma in Youth Work (VRQ Level 3)
- ABC Awards NVQ in Youth Work (Level 2)
- ABC Awards NVQ in Youth Work (Level 3)
- City & Guilds NVQ in Youth Work (Level 2)
- City & Guilds NVQ in Youth Work (Level 3)
- City & Guilds VRQ in Youth Work (Level 2)
- City & Guilds VRQ in Youth Work (Level 3)
- National Open College Network (NOCN) Diploma in Youth Work (VRQ Level 3)

Both ABC Awards and City & Guilds offer approved Apprenticeship Frameworks for Youth Support Workers, which combine NVQs at Levels 2 and 3 with technical certificates and key skills.

It should be noted that the JNC for Youth & Community Workers recommends that a Level 3 qualification is required to progress to the higher Youth Support Worker pay range.

The Open University Certificate in Work with Young People (C54), which consists of Open University courses E131 and E118, is also endorsed as a Youth Support Worker qualification at undergraduate level. At the present time, no other undergraduate programmes are formally recognised as Youth Support Worker qualifications, although a number of youth work employers accept successful completion of Year 1 of a JNC recognised qualification in youth work at BA/Dip HE/ Foundation Degree level as the equivalent of a Youth Support Worker qualification.

Several national voluntary youth organisations have aligned their 'in house' training programmes to meet the requirements of Youth Support Worker qualifications: for example, Girlguiding UK's training programme is recognised by NOCN as their Diploma in Youth Work. *Youth work employers would be advised to check the existing qualifications of new Youth Support Worker staff before advising them to undertake a new YSW qualification, as they may have equivalence. The Regional Youth Work Unit can provide advice on this.*

Who can deliver a Youth Support Worker Qualification?

Each Awarding Body has a process for approving 'centres' to deliver their programmes. In youth work, a range of organisations have been approved as centres. These include:

- Further Education (FE) Colleges
- Distance learning specialists, including YMCA George Williams College
- Adult Learning Providers
- Private and work-based learning providers
- Youth Work employers, including local authorities and voluntary youth organisations
- National voluntary youth organisations

The Open University delivers their courses direct to the student. Qualifications are frequently delivered through partnerships of employers and training providers. In such cases it is important that the responsibilities and expectations of each partner are spelled out at the beginning of the programme, and regularly reviewed as the programme progresses, as misunderstandings can easily occur.

How can we access funding for Youth Support Worker Qualifications?

Training providers are advised to contact their local Learning & Skills Council (LSC) regarding available funding, as approaches differ across the country. It may be possible to access 'Train to Gain' funding, especially for NVQs at Level 2, and at Level 3 for those who are 'jumping' Level 2 to move straight to their first Level 3 qualification. Some local LSCs will also fund VRQs, depending on local priorities and interpretations of 'learning hours'.

Apprenticeship programmes can also be funded by LSC, although the level of funding varies depending on the age of participants (more funding is available for 16-19 year olds than for older participants).

Employers and training providers should be aware, however, that the LSC funding is unlikely to cover the full costs of delivery, and employers and students are likely to have to find funding for course fees and a contribution towards work based assessment costs.

The Open University has financial assistance arrangement for students on low incomes or receiving certain benefits. For some students this would make the courses free of any charge. Further details are available at: <http://www3.open.ac.uk/studyatou/apply/eng-and-ni.shtml>

The NCVYS publication 'Funding Guide to Workforce Development' (2007) provides some helpful guidance on funding specifically for voluntary organisations.

Why provide Youth Support Worker Qualifications?

Employers need to have a clear understanding of the purpose and expected outcomes of the training opportunities they offer and their relevance to the overall objectives of the organisation and the personal development of the member of staff. They should consider the needs of their organisation, or, in the case of local authorities, their area, and assess the ongoing need for the provision of YSW qualification opportunities, based on levels of staff turnover and progression, anticipated growth or shrinkage in the provision of youth work. As we move towards more integrated approaches to working with young people, employers will want to consider the mix of skills within their workforce to ensure it continues to meet young people's needs. Youth Support Worker qualifications will help workers to develop their understanding and skills in providing positive activities for young people, involving young people in decision making, and supporting and developing volunteering opportunities, as well as day to day information, advice and support to young people.

The provision of Youth Support Worker qualifications assists Youth Work employers:

- to ensure that staff and volunteers have the skills and knowledge to provide quality services to young people.
- to provide opportunities for staff to improve and develop their professional skills
- to recruit more qualified staff into the children and young peoples workforce
- to retain people within the workforce by providing improved career development and progression opportunities.

What type of Youth Support Worker Qualification will meet our needs?

All the programmes listed above are deemed by the NYA to provide those working in Youth Support Worker posts (paid or voluntary) with appropriate skills and understanding. There are 2 key decisions to be made when deciding which qualification will work for you.

Levels

Level 2 qualifications are most appropriate for those who are new to youth work, have few academic qualifications and are undertaking work where they are normally under the direct supervision of a more experienced worker. Many organisations offer these qualifications as an initial qualification for voluntary youth workers.

Level 3 qualifications provide a more complex mix of knowledge and skills, and expect students to be able to analyse issues that affect their work. These 'pre-professional' qualifications are well suited to Youth Support Workers who are expected to take on some specialist responsibilities or manage small scale youth work units, and who are able to work without direct supervision.

The Level 4 qualification offered by The Open University does not require any previous academic qualifications and covers the same curriculum areas as the Level 2 and 3 qualifications. It does require a little more analysis and reflection on practice but students are given extensive help to develop their work to this level.

NVQ or VRQ?

In theory, there is no need for a taught element within NVQs, as they are intended to assess competence in the workplace. In practice, however, most delivery centres for youth work NVQs include a compulsory 'underpinning knowledge' taught programme. To deliver NVQs, assessors and verifiers need to be qualified (A1 qualification for assessors, V1 qualification for internal verifiers). These qualifications are offered by several awarding bodies, including City & Guilds. Many providers have experienced problems with delivering NVQs because there are currently very few youth workers with relevant assessor qualifications. If you choose to offer NVQs, we recommend that you ensure you have sufficient qualified assessors at the outset.

It is usually easier to access LSC funding for NVQs than for VRQs, as they fit more closely with LSC priorities. In summary, NVQs work best where:

- the training provider/employer has access to sufficient qualified assessors with experience in youth work
- the participants are already experienced Youth Support Workers who just need accreditation and recognition of their existing skills and knowledge
- the training provider is experienced in running NVQs in other disciplines.

VRQs, in theory, can be delivered without the need to assess fieldwork practice, as they consist of a taught programme with assignments/assessments attached to each element. However, most delivery centres include assignments that require students to be working in youth work settings and use their youth work as the basis for evidence of learning. VRQs have a required number of learning hours (180 for Level 2 and 240 for Level 3), which are usually split between classroom sessions, supervised fieldwork and individual guided learning. Tutors on VRQ programmes do not require assessor qualifications: however, to meet LSC funding requirements, they should hold a relevant FE teaching qualification. VRQs are eligible for LSC funding, but can be subject to the discretion of the local LSC, depending on its priorities.

In summary, VRQs work best where:

- students are less experienced youth workers, or would benefit from more taught input and group work to enable them to reflect on and analyse their practice
- the training provider/employer wants to use the training programme to embed organisational culture, policies and practices

Progression

Many youth work employers offer qualifications at both Level 2 and Level 3, for staff in different settings and with different responsibilities. This can help provide progression routes for staff who may be returning to learning after a number of years. However, it should also be noted that it places a substantial burden on both the organisation and the individual, and some people report considerable overlap between Levels 2 and 3 programmes. Employers could consider focusing on either Level 2 or Level 3, depending on their requirements for staff skills and understanding. One model which works well in some areas is to provide a shorter, introductory programme at Level 2, using some units of a Level 2 VRQ, and focus on the full Level 3 as the required qualification.

Most Higher Education Institutions that offer JNC validated Professional level qualifications in youth work accept both VRQs and NVQs at Level 3 as access qualifications for their youth work degree programmes. They report that Youth Support Worker qualifications provide a sound basis for moving into Higher Level Professional Formation in Youth Work, as recognised by the JNC for Youth & Community Work. The Open University does not have such entry requirements although there are fast track entry routes available for those possessing NVQ 3 and having extensive experience.

Partnerships for Delivery of Youth Support Worker Qualifications

As stated earlier, most Youth Support Worker Qualification are delivered as a partnership between youth work employers and training providers. Even when an employer is delivering the whole qualification 'in-house', it is still useful to think about the programme as a partnership as different individuals have different roles and expectations. The three main partners in any programme are: employers, training provider and students. The next section identifies key responsibilities for each partner. The *employer* may be one key employer, or a consortium of youth work providers in an area who work together to ensure that their local workforce needs are met. Even if the training is to be delivered 'in house', we feel it is helpful to establish the responsibilities of the part of the organisation that is seen as the *training provider* as separate from those specifically related to employment issues.

TRAINING PROVIDER	EMPLOYERS	STUDENT
Establishing the programme		
<p>Understand and explain the requirements of the qualification options available</p> <p>Agree the most appropriate programme(s) to be delivered</p> <p>Agree the contribution and roles of line managers, supervisors, assessors, tutors required for the programme</p> <p>Agree the costs of the programme to (a) employers, (b) provider and (c) students</p> <p>Ensure funding applications and requirements for the programme are appropriately completed</p> <p>Agree staffing arrangements for the programme, ensuring sufficient staff with youth work expertise and relevant assessor qualifications</p> <p>Establish a Partnership Agreement with relevant youth work employers, with periodic reviews built in</p>	<p>Understand and explain the local workforce needs and priorities</p> <p>Agree the most appropriate programme(s) to be delivered</p> <p>Agree the costs of the programme to (a) employers, (b) provider and (c) students</p> <p>Agree the contribution and roles of line managers, supervisors, assessors, tutors employed in their organisations</p> <p>Ensure that line managers, supervisors etc are aware of the course requirements and their roles in meeting them</p> <p>Establish a Partnership Agreement with the training provider to include periodic reviews</p>	
Recruitment & Selection		
<p>Agree criteria for recruitment to programmes, to ensure that students have the capacity to work at the programme's designated level</p> <p>Ensure that potential students are aware of all the course requirements and can achieve them within their practice settings</p>	<p>Agree criteria for recruitment to programmes, to ensure that students have the capacity to work at the programme's designated level</p> <p>Ensure that staff are invited to enrol for programmes at the level that meets their own and the organisation's needs</p> <p>Ensure their employees have appropriate work placements, supervision and time to complete course requirements</p>	<p>Ensure they are aware of all the course requirements and can achieve them within their practice settings</p> <p>Ensure they are able to meet any costs (fees etc) they are required to provide</p>

TRAINING PROVIDER	EMPLOYERS	STUDENT
Programme delivery		
<p>Establish a clear timescale for delivery and completion of the programme</p> <p>Provide a handbook for students, supervisors and assessors to enable them to understand all aspects of the programme including assessment schedule</p> <p>Ensure the taught programme is delivered in places and at times that are appropriate to the student group (eg recognising that part-time workers may have commitments outside of youth work)</p> <p>Ensure the content of the programme is coherent, focused on the Youth Work NOS and keeps up with new developments in youth work policy and practice</p> <p>Ensure that students are encouraged to utilise learning support and help with special needs</p> <p>Establish and agree a learning contract between individual students, their work place assessor/ supervisor and the training provider, that clarifies who is responsible for which aspects of a student's progression through the programme</p>	<p>Ensure that students are able to undertake project work to help them achieve programme requirements</p> <p>Ensure that appropriate fieldwork supervision is in place for students</p> <p>Establish and agree a learning contract between individual students, their work place assessor/ supervisor and the training provider, that clarifies who is responsible for which aspects of a student's progression through the programme</p>	<p>Commit to undertake all elements of the programme within the agreed timescale</p> <p>Establish and agree a learning contract between individual students, their work place assessor/ supervisor and the training provider, that clarifies who is responsible for which aspects of a student's progression through the programme</p> <p>Alert tutors/assessors/ supervisors as early as possible to any problems they encounter that may prevent them completing the programme within the agreed timescale</p> <p>Seek help with learning support and special needs from the training provider where difficulties are identified</p> <p>Be reflective and positively self-critical in your approach to training</p>
Assessment		
<p>Ensure that those responsible for assessment of student progress understand their responsibilities and are confident and competent to carry them out</p>	<p>Ensure that employed staff with a role in student assessment carry out that role effectively and within agreed timescales</p>	<p>Present work for assessment in appropriate formats and within agreed timescales</p>

TRAINING PROVIDER	EMPLOYERS	STUDENT
<p>Provide training opportunities to enable those involved in assessing programmes to gain relevant qualifications</p> <p>Assume overall responsibility for effective assessment of student progress</p> <p>Establish effective internal moderation/ verification processes, as agreed with the Awarding Body</p> <p>Ensure that external moderation/ verification processes are in place and useful</p>		
Quality Assurance		
<p>Establish and maintain effective QA processes for the programme, including internal and external moderation/ verification and periodic reviews of the programme delivery and content</p> <p>Respond to concerns raised by students and employers regarding programme design and delivery</p>	<p>Contribute to QA processes in relation to employer feedback, programme design and development</p> <p>Respond to concerns raised by the Training Provider and/or students with regard to your organisation's contribution to the programme</p>	<p>Contribute to QA processes in relation to student feedback, programme design and development</p> <p>Alert the Training Provider to concerns about aspects of programme design and delivery</p>

Sources of Information

For more information on Youth Support Worker Qualifications and how they work in practice, contact:

NYA Website: www.nya.org.uk

SW RYWU Website: <http://www.learning-southwest.org.uk/web/Page3.aspx?PageID=118>

Awarding Bodies: <http://www.abcawards.co.uk/>
<http://www.cityandguilds.com/cps/rde/xchg/cqonline>
<http://www.nocn.org.uk>
<http://www3.open.ac.uk/courses/bin/p12.dll?Q01C54>

NCVYS: <http://www.ncvys.org.uk/>

Lifelong Learning UK: www.lluk.org