

## ~ Case Study ~

# Involving young people as trainers The Somerset Young Trainers project

In August 2008 the newly formed Integrated Workforce Development Team (IWDT) for the Children and Young People's Directorate (CYPD) in Somerset recruited 12 young people into the team to help train staff employed to deliver frontline services to children and young people.

Having formally adopted the UN charter article 12 that states: 'Children and Young People should be involved in decisions that affect their lives', in Somerset, the Integrated Workforce and Youth Services team felt that young people's active involvement in workforce development would certainly help to build upon the culture of participation already beginning to establish within the CYPD directorate.

Inspired by the work of other young people from the region, Somerset decided to run a pilot project to recruit and employ young people to the IWDT. The aim of the appointments being to train young people to help deliver to the workforce as 'expert' young people and 'young trainers', in order to help bring more relevance to the learning of the staff engaged in training.

The project was part funded by the CWDC (Children's Workforce Development Council) as part of their Participation Fund 2009/9 and supported by the South West Regional Youth Work Unit.

### **How we did it**

12 trainee positions were created for young people aged between 15 years and 21 years (up to 25 where special needs applied) interested in helping to 'change' adults.

The Integrated Youth Services Team (IYST) and IWDT teams felt it was important to offer paid positions to the young people and also offer a recognised and accredited 'training the trainer' programme which could be transferred and offer progression to other related teaching and learning opportunities for them in the future.

Adverts were placed in the local press across Somerset and approximately 90 young people expressed an interest and requested packs, with about 25 applying for an interview.

### **Recruiting the Young Trainers**

12 Young people were appointed having participated in a formal panel with interviews and presentations. The interviews were treated as any other professional recruitment and selection process which the young people reported back that whilst 'scary' in itself, offered a valuable learning experience for the future.

Most of the young people had never completed an application form, prepared for an interview or planned a presentation before. This process was challenging and a 'big ask' for young people, but given the nature of training environments in which they were to become involved, preparing a short presentation to strangers in an interview context was a fair process and a crucial aspect of their preparation for involvement in the programme.

At the end of the selection process 12 young people out of the 17 interviewed were appointed as trainees.

Once inducted, the young people embarked upon a training programme which included a residential experience and training days held in Taunton which is central to the county. The IWDT appointed an external training provider and approved NOCN provider 'Training Exchange' to help develop a young people friendly accredited course of teaching and learning skills. Colleagues from the company had youth work backgrounds so were keen to help develop the programme in a way that responded flexibly to the needs of the young people involved.

## **Training**

All the Young Trainers successfully completed the level 2 NOCN Training Skills for Trainers programme and have since directly delivered training, supported delivery or job shadowed.

Young people have been involved in the direct delivery of training to teachers, youth workers, trainee teachers, managers and strategic leads. Examples include -

- Health and safety with risk assessment for youth workers
- National Common Induction level 1 / 2 for CYPD generic staff
- Cyber bullying
- Children and young people's rights
- Leadership and facilitation of events

*'I did not realise the scope of the work Young Trainers were involved in - well done!'*

Participant from Regional Youth Work Unit conference at workshop led by Young Trainers.

## **Lessons learnt**

### **For young people -**

1. They want to be involved in helping to shape the services that affect them and can be involved as professional young people.
2. They valued a rigorous recruitment and selection process and welcomed the 'professional' context to their involvement as paid employees.
3. They liked 'going to work' and doing a 'job'.
4. They can recognise that they are not fully fledged trainers, but can use training and facilitation skills to enable learning and change to take place.

## For the organisation

1. The recruitment and selection process needs to be reviewed to target young people who may not necessarily have demonstrated that they can study at or achieve level 2; this meant that the pilot group were not as representative as they could have been.
2. Training programmes for the young people need to be carefully thought through, the younger of the Young Trainers in their last year at school needed work permits and opportunities that satisfied employment law and legal working hours. Therefore, the timing of appropriate training opportunities that they can lead on need to be carefully scheduled in and advertised well in advance.
3. Training dates and events need to be planned to coincide with the hours available to them, so as not to marginalise their involvement.
4. Transport is a massive issue in a large rural county like Somerset and whilst the project has supported young people with this by providing taxi's, this is expensive and need to be sustained and resourced.
5. The Young Trainers had a go at most types of events. It has been evaluated that where it works best are when young people work on an issue identified by children and young people themselves eg the cyber bullying package came from the UK Youth Parliament manifesto, and where young people can have direct access to leaders and managers of services as facilitators and leaders of a process which is concerned with improvement of their services.
6. It works well to have the Young Trainers involved in a rolling programme such as the national common induction, so that they can develop expertise in a few key areas rather than a broad brush understanding of too many areas or subjects. This is also much more sustainable and the impact upon course participants is more effectively assessed.
7. Although employed on a sessional basis, we felt it was still important to offer youth work support and to consider the project to still be a youth work project. Dedicated youth worker time and project co-ordinator time needs to be incorporated into a programme like this, for a group this size and a basic programme 6 hours per week for youth work time (minimum worker in charge level) and project co-ordinator time (minimum level 2 teaching and learning) 14 hours per week would be recommended.

*'The session was interactive, thought provoking and a good pace'*  
Participant in training led by the Young Trainers.

## What next for this project?

Somerset's Young Trainers hope to recruit more young people from under-represented groups by August 09 and support them to attain a level 2 teaching and learning qualification.

Somerset are revising how they structure and schedule training opportunities in order to help the Young Trainers specialise in key modules, such as the national common induction for practitioners within integrated services. In addition to direct delivery to staff, the Young

Trainers will help to develop a 360° appraisal tool for practitioners as part of the overall workforce strategy. This and other initiatives where young people will be involved in workforce development in Somerset can be found in the Workforce Development strategy for Children and Young People's Services document due out later on in the year.

A dedicated pro rata youth worker to help lead and support the project is due to be appointed in June 09, with a project co-ordinator starting in May 09.

### **For more information**

The project was part funded by CWDC (Children's Workforce Development Council) and supported by the South West Regional Youth Work Unit. As a result of the CWDC Participation Fund, a toolkit has been produced which gives you further information and additional resources to help you run your own Young Trainers project.

The toolkit contains

- Copies of the Young Trainers job description, advert, legal information surrounding the employment of young people and sample letters to parents.
- The training plan and course outlines to give you an idea of what was covered in the NOCN structure of modules.
- Examples of the training packages developed by the Young Trainers and examples of the types of training they delivered.

The toolkit can be downloaded **FREE** from the South West Regional Youth Work Unit website by clicking in the link below:

<http://www.learning-southwest.org.uk/page/Policies.-Guidelines-and-Key-Documents> – please look under the heading '***Guidelines and Toolkits produced by the RYWU and/or National Agencies***'.