

Why is Youth Work so Important?

The Crucial Nature of Youth Work for our Communities

“Youth services do a vital job in our communities. The benefits they provide for young people are real and long-lasting. While many other public services step in when problems occur, youth services prevent so many of those difficulties from occurring in the first place.” ([Unison: A future at Risk – 2016](#))

Drastic cuts in youth services have come at a time when those services are needed most. Today's young people are struggling with their mental health in a society where funding cuts leave them with no support. It's a devastating statistic that the number of teenage suicides has increased by 67% between 2010 and 2017, with the Office of National Statistics (ONS) figures showing that 187 people aged 19 or below took their own lives in England and Wales last year. Labour's Shadow Minister, Barbara Keeley, told The Independent that “young people's mental health services have not been given the resources they need...this has meant that children who are referred to mental health services too often receive no help at all.” [Read article here.](#)

Anyone who works with young people, or who has teenagers at home can surely identify with the worries we feel surrounding their generation and the pressures they face in relation to exams, social media and so many other external factors. “Research suggests that as many as 1 in 6 young people will experience an anxiety condition at some point in their lives...[and] may be living with anxiety, whether that be OCD (obsessive compulsive disorder), social anxiety and shyness, exam stress, worry or panic attacks.” ([anxietyuk.org.uk](#))

In addition to this, there is an increase in child poverty, with a greater number of young people suffering financially, from material deprivation and social exclusion, whilst struggling to get any kind of economic support to improve their situation. 90% of councils cut services for teenagers in 2015 and the Department of Education showed a cut of more than £103m from youth services from 2013 to 2014 alone.

“More and more young people are falling through the gaps left by a lack of services. The choices that this government is making are damaging young people's life chances, worsening their mental health, and increasing the possibility of them getting into trouble, as they are open to abuse and potentially at risk of becoming more involved in serious youth violence.” ([Unison: A future at Risk – 2016](#))

This is where Projects4Change comes into play. We have a mission to assist in reversing the national downturn in youth provision by addressing the skills shortage and subsequent lack of finance which has eroded services for young people. We are just beginning in full knowledge of the task ahead: **WE LOVE YOUTH WORK** and believe in its ability to change young people's lives.

Using a partnership approach, we will create new provisions and add value to existing provisions, creating value for money and shared resources. We will be youth led, making sure young people have a voice that is heard and supported. All of our projects will be supported by experienced Projects 4 Change youth workers who have the skills and knowledge to assess the needs of the young people they're working with and identify the best way to support them.

“Youth Work is a distinct educational process adapted across a variety of settings to support a young person’s personal, social and educational development:

To explore their values, beliefs, ideas and issues

To enable them to develop their voice, influence and place in society

To acquire a set of practical or technical skills and competencies, to realise their full potential

The Principles of Youth Work are supported by reflective practice and peer education, establishing and maintaining relationships with young people and community groups.”

What Does Youth Work Mean to us?

The information above is an excerpt taken from www.nya.org.uk, we feel it is a simple and clear example of the point in which a youth-led activity becomes informal education and helps young people to reflect and examine their lives through critical dialogue, thus giving them the opportunities and support to build self-esteem through motivational activities.

That is what youth work means to us, it's providing support and tools for a positive future through practical and social education. It's removing (?) barriers, giving young and socially excluded people a safe place to go, someone to talk to who can quietly understand and assess their needs and help them to become active and positive participants in their society for both their own gain and public benefit.

“Youth services are the workers who help young people develop as individuals, get more education, find work, and play positive roles in society.” ([Unison: A future at Risk – 2016](#))