

Youth workers have long argued that youth groups were a vital place for informal learning. The government is challenging us to find ways of demonstrating this.

The document Transforming Youth Work: Resourcing Excellent Youth Services marked a turning point for youth work: for the first time, government was proposing standards for local authority youth services.

The document describes a set of 'youth work values' to guide good practice. It also outlined a 'pledge to young people', which lists what young people should expect within an area, in terms of youth services. This included: 'the opportunity to participate in programmes that offer accreditation for learning [emphasis added].

A set of 'Annual Youth Service Unique Targets' went alongside the youth service values and the pledge to young people, as a way of raising expectations of the quality of youth services. The initial document set a target that, of the young people reached by the youth service, 60% of them should 'undergo personal and social development which results in an accredited outcome'. Accreditation had arrived in youth work, even though the target has been amended to a more realistic 30%.

One of the main reasons for this new emphasis on accredited learning was that youth work is being seen as having a key role in 're-engaging' young people who are not involved in education,

More than a 'scrapbook'

Guidelines on portfolio building

A portfolio is not a 'scrapbook'. It has a specific purpose, to reflect learning. When it comes to evidence, encourage young people to ensure that all of the evidence contained in their portfolio is relevant to the specific learning outcomes. Be selective and try not to duplicate.

It is very important that material should be personalised in some way. Good annotation is key to this process. Evidence should be annotated to make it clear what the young person was doing and the relevant learning points.

Three main types of evidence

■ **Evidence produced by or with the young person** – this could include such things as: photographs, flyers, leaflets, notes from meetings, diagrams, diaries/log books, letters, questionnaires, articles, session plans or meeting agendas, worksheets, tapes, videos, etc. 3D objects e.g. craft work /sculpture

■ **Evidence collected by the young person** – such as: consent forms, records of attendance, tickets to events, flyers & leaflets, pre-printed course notes, evidence of research e.g. internet material, newspaper cuttings, certificates

■ **Evidence offered by others** – including: testimonials from workers, employers or others, observation notes, reports.

training or employment. The Youth Achievement Awards (and other accredited routes) are seen as a bridge to get learners from where they are now to there.

All-round learning

There is a wider move to value and encourage young people's all-round abilities. The Tomlinson Working Group has been reviewing the 14-19 Curriculum across the board, its proposals are expected around the time this edition of UK Youth reaches you. It has indicated that it will be putting forward the concept of a 'Diploma', which will have at its core 'elements

that are designed to ensure that all young people participate in wider activities, based on personal interest, contribution to the community as active citizens, and experience of employment.'

There is a definite opening for the learning from youth work to have a direct contribution to this way of valuing young people's learning. Accredited learning programmes, like the Youth Achievement Awards, provide an opportunity for youth workers to link their work with mainstream education.

Yvonne Richards is Accredited Learning Manager with UK Youth

Building bridges

Accrediting young people's learning is now high on the youth service agenda, says Yvonne Richards.

