

# Practical pointers

The Youth Achievement Awards and Young Volunteers seminars demonstrated how the Awards work in practice **Stella Baynes** reports.

**T**he seminars, held in London and Liverpool, were aimed at organisations working with young volunteers brand new to the Youth Achievement Awards (YAA) wanting to know a bit more about them before committing themselves.

After a brief introduction to the workings of YAA, delegates were offered a choice of workshops including sessions focusing on the Platinum Award and Building Portfolios. Most importantly, there were plenty of opportunities to hear from agencies – and young people – who are already using the Awards, in order to find out how things work in practice.

**Stella Baynes is UK Youth's Senior Education & Training Development Officer (Young Volunteers & National Agencies).**

## Resources

All seminar delegates went home with a copy of UK Youth's 'Taking the Lead – Young People and Volunteering', a source of ideas for planning, designing and running youth-led volunteering projects.

**visit** ▶ for details of 'Taking the Lead'.

**pdf** ▶ visit the UK Youth's Youth Achievement Awards and Young Volunteers page for information, FAQ and downloads.

Resources include:

- **Introduction to working with Young Volunteers** – tips to get you started
- **More Ways to use YAA with Young Volunteers** – for people familiar with YAA but looking to widen the kinds of challenges they are offering young volunteers.
- **Take Up The Challenge** – designed to support the engagement of young volunteers in the Youth Achievement Awards programme by giving them their first challenge in a self-contained format.

**contact** ▶ Stella Baynes for support on using the Youth Achievement Awards with Young Volunteers.



## In practice

The 'in practice' workshops were designed to give delegates the 'real' face of YAA from workers and young people with direct experience – how to get them up and running, common pitfalls, suggestions for starter activities, and different kinds of ways of collecting evidence for portfolios.

- **British Youth Council Programmes Officer Cathryn Langdon** and young person **Lily Yang** talked about BYC's v funded part-time volunteer campaigners programme, which supports young people to engage in activities, including lobbying MPs about reducing the age of voting. As part of the programme, young volunteers work towards their Silver YAA. Full-time interns, gain a Gold YAA. Lily, who completed her internship during the university summer break, described the Awards as giving a 'focus' to her placement, which helped to identify development needs as well as strengths.

**go** ▶ for more on BYC.

- **Dave McNicholl** from **The Youth Federation** brought an array of alternative portfolios and evidence, including board games young people have created, pairs of painted jeans, and handbags containing CDs of photos and films.

**go** ▶ for more on Youth Federation.



## Top tips

**VSU Youth in Action's hints for introducing the Awards to young volunteers:**

- Take lots of photos – of wall posters and activities as well as young people carrying out tasks. Young people love writing captions about their volunteering!
- Have a stack of pre-prepared proformas young people can use – registration and log sheets, press releases, witness testimony forms and evaluations
- Sit back and let it be youth led.
- Make space in the programme for interviews – talking to young people about their achievements - filmed or written down
- Do the booklets in short bursts – don't spend ages portfolio building every week – they'll hate you for it!
- Make it fun!
- Provide FOOD!! Make it a sociable activity
- Appoint 'Young Ambassador Buddies' to mentor young people who might be struggling.
- Celebrate achievements!

## In practice

• **VSU Youth in Action's** Volunteer Development Advisor, Becky Stotesbury, brought along example portfolios from a wide range of young people, including some with additional support needs, demonstrating that YAA can fit in with any young person's personal learning journey. VSU recruit, train and support 2,500 young volunteers every year. Recent activities used as the basis of YAA challenges include planning and organising YAT residentials, attending children's reading club schemes, fundraising and bid writing, and planning and coaching football sessions.

**go ▶** for more on VSU Youth in Action.

• Amelia Lee, Youth Participation Programme Coordinator, and young person Aminah Atcha spoke about **ICA:UK's** Young Community Leaders Project. ICA works with community organisations to recruit and train young people in group work methods, action planning, public speaking, writing and presenting persuasively, how to write a funding application and how to mobilise resources in the community.

**go ▶** for more on ICA:UK.



## Bronzed!

**Aminah Atcha** (centre) completed her Bronze YAA as part of ICA:UK's volunteering programme.

**Q** What made you join ICA:UK and start volunteering with them?

**A** I have been a volunteer for many years. Volunteering allows me to make a difference in people's lives within and outside the community.

**Q** What's been the best thing about volunteering with ICA:UK?

**A** The best thing was it gave me the chance to meet people, who I would have not normally come across – from different backgrounds and from all different walks of life.

**Q** What kind of skills do you think you've developed as a result of volunteering?

**A** It's helped me develop my inner self, it's made me more confident in my communication and people skills. I feel I can organise and plan projects better.

**Q** How did completing the YAA help you as a volunteer?

**A** From the skills and experience I have gained it's helped broaden my horizon and has opened many different volunteering opportunities that I may not have got if I didn't take part in the YAA.

**Q** What do you hope to go on and do with the experience and skills you've learned with ICA:UK?

**A** I would like to complete my Platinum YAA, so that I can increase my skills to help my local community especially other young people – providing them with opportunities they may not have in life, as well as use my skills when I'm traveling to developing countries.

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