



## **Stroud District Council**

### **Youth Work Engagement Policy**

#### **Introduction**

This policy document, principally outlines how the Council engages with young people in delivering community development based youth work as stated in our youth work strategy.

We begin with a brief explanation of what youth work is. Further to this, is a statement explaining the type of youth work that the Councils youth service delivers i.e. youth participation.

Some background information about the principles of youth work is followed by a brief overview of the different types of youth work.

We also give details about our approach and methods of practice, plus the outcomes that young people can potentially achieve through ongoing involvement and participation.

#### **Contents**

Introduction and Contents	Page 1
What is Youth Work?	Page 2
What is Youth Participation?	Page 2
The Four Corners of Youth Work	Page 2
Different Types of Youth Work provision	Page 3
Our Approach	Pages 3 & 4
What happens after successful initial contact?	Pages 4 & 5
Ongoing involvement and participation	Page 5
Outcomes for young people	Page 5 & 6
Behaviour and Conduct Code	Page 6
Contact Information	Page 7

## **What is Youth Work?**

The key purpose of youth work is to:

*'Enable young people to develop holistically, working with them to facilitate their personal and educational development, to enable them to develop their voice, influence and place in society and to reach their full potential'.*

Youth Work National Occupational Standards (2019): [www.nya.org.uk](http://www.nya.org.uk)

## **What is Youth Participation?**

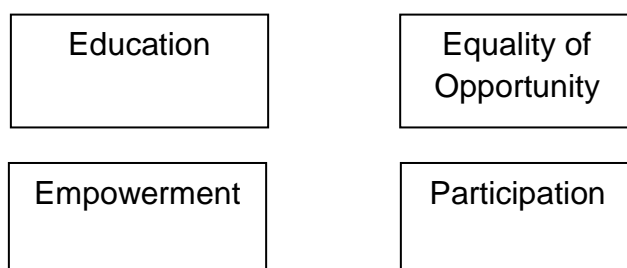
Whilst youth work seeks to promote young peoples personal and social development through a wide range of activities, youth participation can be defined as them being actively involved in matters of concern to them. The following statement clarifies this type of youth work:

*'Youth participation is the process by which children and young people influence decision-making, which brings about change in them, others, their service and their communities'.*

National Hear by Right Standards Framework: [www.nya.org.uk/hearbyright](http://www.nya.org.uk/hearbyright)

## **The Four Corners of Youth Work**

Local and national policy rarely refers to the 'four corners of youth work' when discussing youth work. However the founding principles are very much still part of practice and therefore should be understood by local decision-makers and community stakeholders. The 'four corners', are;



The Council upholds that youth work practice should relate to all 'four corners', to varying degrees.

## Different types of youth work provision

Youth work can sometimes be difficult to define as a practice. However it is best to outline the different types of youth work provision before considering what type would be most suitable for a community. The following are a guide to the different types that can be considered when planning provision;

- **Centre based / drop in** (young people come and go as they wish)
- **Outreach** (linked to centre based work, ideal for recruitment)
- **Street based / detached** (no venue; work is done outside and where young people 'hang out')
- **Issue based project work** (using a venue but focusing on specific projects only)
- **Youth Participation** (in Stroud district: local youth forum groups and Stroud District Youth Council exist to provide a system and structure for all other types of youth provision to feed into)

## Our Approach

We engage with predominantly young people between the ages of 13 and 18, although those as young as 11 are also welcomed. Some aged 19, also engage with us.

We also use the term 'youth voice', which essentially is the same as youth participation but often deemed as a more user friendly term.

Foremost when it comes to our engagement, young people interact with the Council's youth work staff in a voluntary capacity. Similar to all types of youth work, this allows them to have ultimate autonomy over when they engage and for how long. However we do have systems and structures in place that shape our overall approach – these include following safeguarding policy and guidelines as well as the Council's aforementioned dedicated strategy.

Our techniques to initially engage with young people depend on the environment (or types of youth work provision) that we are operating in – focus is on building and maintaining meaningful, trustworthy relationships with young people. Below is a guide as to how we operate in each environment;

**Centre Based** – this would typically see SDC youth workers visit youth centre's or clubs to get to know the youth workers (from other agencies) who are running the centre provision and to meet / engage with young people. Our purpose is to learn about their needs and issues of concern, plus to offer opportunities to join our youth

forum groups. We would do this with an agreed plan depending on our programme for the said locality and that of the centre-based provision.

**Street Based or Detached** – whilst not a typical approach by us initially, it may be used at various times e.g. when looking to assist a community with concerns over young people congregating in groups and potentially (or actually) causing anti-social behaviour. However, the approach would be a positive advocacy one, not akin to enforcement. As an example, we would visit the location on one or two occasions without making the first approach to speak to young people – this would allow us to be informal and non-judgemental, allowing young people to become familiar with us. On the third or fourth occasion we would seek to have conversations with young people and introduce ourselves, stating our professional identity and reason for being there.

**School Based** – engagement in secondary schools enable us to meet and support young people and teachers with regards to student voice programmes. This involves the schools listed in our youth work strategy and featuring on our youth voice vehicle (system and structure) diagram. Our engagement approach is still informal but obviously the environment is formal, therefore we recognise and adapt accordingly. It's likely that we would initially talk to large groups of young people (students) as directed by the school and then graduate to those students expressing further interest in student voice or our locality based youth forum groups. We would visit each school on an agreed schedule.

**Community Youth Project / Events** – we would engage with young people using various approaches similar to those explained above but dependant on the environment and project / event theme. The event or project may be a 'one off' so would typically see youth workers make the first move to speak to young people, whereby we would introduce ourselves stating our professional identity and reason for being there. It's likely that we would offer information leaflets and expression of interest forms.

### **What happens after successful initial contact?**

To enable us to go from initial contact with a young person (as described above) to further engagement, we typically offer an Expression of Interest Form. This is a document that a young person can complete, to state that they wish to further engage with the service. Completing this document is not compulsory and future involvement does not depend on it – however it is designed to help the communication pathway towards obtaining consent from the parent/guardian. One section of the form is kept by the young person, which can be given to their parent/guardian. The other section is given to a youth worker or can be posted to our office.

Once a young person has expressed an interest in working with us, we would obtain their parent/guardian consent (using the official form) and record these details on our secure database. We would then typically invite the young person to a youth voice group meeting that's relative to them.

Enabling young people to become part of the relevant group as soon as possible, is a milestone in our approach to maintaining meaningful and trustworthy relationships with them.

### **Ongoing involvement and participation**

Our service delivery, principally enables young people to increase their involvement and participation through groups. Young people who become part of a group, are referred to as youth voice representative – this reflects the role as one that represents others, as well as themselves in expressing views and opinions. If they are elected to be a representative on Stroud District Youth Council they may additionally be referred to, as a district youth councillor.

The groups are either based in localities across the district i.e. local youth forum groups or accessed through representation to Stroud District Youth Council. Each group may meet physically at a dedicated venue, or virtually via a video platform.

On the rare occasions that only one young person wishes to meet, we would inform them that they are as such and give them the option to postpone the meeting. If they still wish to meet, we would ensure this was either in a public space/place or a youth related venue which they are familiar with.

Some planned one-to-one work also takes place. This will be in accordance to projects and programmes and typically with those taking on extra responsibility within a group – as before, it will be determined by the young person's wish to meet for such purpose. We would ensure this was either in a public space/place or a youth related venue which they are familiar with. It may also be virtually via a video platform. All projects and programmes are facilitated by the Council's youth work team – however, importantly, the projects and programmes are informed by (and often led by), young people.

An up to date view of the projects and programmes can be found by contacting the Councils youth work team or visiting their website and social media platforms (see contact information below).

### **Outcomes for young people**

The outcomes of our work are broadly explained under 'What is Youth Participation?'. However we specifically seek to enable young people to develop personally and socially through our programmes and opportunities. We measure these outcomes using The Catalyst Framework for Young Peoples Outcomes. This includes the following indicators, defined as 'clusters of capabilities' that are of value to young people individually;

- **Communication:** *explaining; expressing; presenting; using different ways of communicating.*

- **Confidence & Agency:** *self-reliance; self-esteem; self-efficacy.*
- **Planning & Problem Solving:** *Navigating resources; organising; setting and achieving goals; decision-making; researching; analysing; critical thinking; evaluating risks; reliability.*
- **Relationship & Leadership:** *Motivating others; valuing and contributing to team-working; negotiating; establishing positive relationships; interpreting others; managing conflict; empathising.*
- **Creativity:** *Imagining alternative ways of doing things; applying learning in new contexts; enterprising; innovating; remaining open to new ideas.*
- **Resilience & Determination:** *self-disciplined; self-management; self-motivated; concentrating; having a sense of purpose; persistent; self-controlled.*
- **Managing Feelings:** *Reviewing; self-awareness; reflecting; self-regulating; self-accepting.*

The framework model that we use, also recognises a distinction between those listed above and other individual outcomes for young people, such as;

*Literacy and numeracy; qualifications; attainment at school or college; and / or not exhibiting risky behaviours.*

There is also a distinction between those listed above and broader social outcomes, such as;

*Success in education; career success; being healthy; having positive relationships; involvement in meaningful and enjoyable activities. Plus: positive family relationships; community cohesion; civic participation; and / or positive future parenting.*

## **Behaviour and Conduct Code**

As representatives of their school / college / local youth forum project and of Stroud District Youth Council, we ask all participants to respect the environments that are used for the delivery of the service, including all property, staff, other users and activity providers.

We ask all young people involved with the service for their full support in the event of having to change any aspects of a scheduled programme, meeting or event.

Anti-social behaviour, including the possession of alcohol or illegal drugs will not be accepted at any activity, event, meeting, or educational visit and journey.

A young person's failure to comply with any request or direction given by a member of staff, may jeopardise continued involvement with the services delivered by the Council.

## **Contact Information**

For further information on the Councils youth service, please contact us on the following;

Tel: 01453 754504

Email: [youth@stroud.gov.uk](mailto:youth@stroud.gov.uk)

Websites and Social Media:

[www.stroud.gov.uk/community-and-living/youth-and-community-work](http://www.stroud.gov.uk/community-and-living/youth-and-community-work)

[www.stroudyouthvoice.co.uk](http://www.stroudyouthvoice.co.uk)

[www.facebook.com/stroudyouthvoice](https://www.facebook.com/stroudyouthvoice)

[www.instagram/strouddistrictyouthcouncil](https://www.instagram/strouddistrictyouthcouncil)