Science and the youth sector

How to communicate with youth workers
This toolkit sets out best practice principles for engaging youth workers. It focuses on 3 core areas of engagement:

**COMMUNICATIONS**

**RESOURCES**

**TRAINING**

**Key elements underpin these principles**

(always keep these in mind when attempting to engage)

- Youth workers are time and resource poor.
- They are informal learners as well as champions of informal learning.
- They are committed to improving the lives of young people.
- Many heavily involve young people in shaping their work and making decisions on content.
- Getting young people through the door and keeping them engaged is central to their role.

To engage them you must help them meet their objectives, which fall into one or more of the following categories – ‘Engagement and Entertainment’, ‘Building Life Skills’, ‘Employability and Future Steps’.
COMMUNICATING WITH YOUTH WORKERS
BEST PRACTICE PRINCIPLES:

CONTENT

- Imagery boosts engagement and should reflect audience
- Easy-to-digest, ‘bite-size information’, means less relevant parts can be easily ignored
- Localised (to region)
- Content that features contribution and input from young people / local community is appreciated

BITE-SIZE INFORMATION

- Relevant to youth workers’ objectives
  
  *With evidence*
COMMUNICATING WITH YOUTH WORKERS
BEST PRACTICE PRINCIPLES:

**LANGUAGE**

- Should be **informal**: grounded in real-life, easy to understand and conversational
  - Avoid acronyms, jargon
  - Avoid academic phrasing

- **Simple** and straight to the point

- **Humour** goes a long way

- Use of **young people’s terminology** is appreciated as are direct quotes where appropriate

- Avoid ‘STEM’ as it is not well known and feels too academic
  - Refer to subjects individually as appropriate
COMMUNICATING WITH YOUTH WORKERS
BEST PRACTICE PRINCIPLES:

CHANNEL

FACE-TO-FACE

Press coverage can be useful

WORD OF MOUTH

Useful channel and highly trusted:
- Multi-agency networks – social workers, career coaches, Scout leaders
- Manager, colleagues, friends
- Team meetings and Meetups are an important space for sharing
Avoid school holidays – as these are particularly busy times for youth workers

Send reminders (as emails can be easily missed)
CREATING RESOURCES FOR YOUTH WORKERS
BEST PRACTICE PRINCIPLES:

STYLE

- Clear objectives and outcomes
- Simple to use and adapt to needs
- Do not require the lots of additional materials
- Involving young people in early stages of design
- Young person friendly – elements that can be directly shared with young people e.g. videos
- Tailored by age of young person - younger need more structure, older more flexibility
Creating Resources for Youth Workers

Best Practice Principles:

Format

Ideally an **online portal like TES** (teaching resources) where free tools and resources are shared
- Resources reviewed and improved by youth workers
- Amazon style ‘other resources you might like’
- Central website preferable to personal accounts as removes need for login details and boosts accessibility

Videos work well for both youth worker and young person
- **YouTube** is an already well-used channel

Resources should be primarily online but be printable
- Supporting offline resources should be orderable if needed
RUNNING TRAINING FOR YOUTH WORKERS
BEST PRACTICE PRINCIPLES:

CONTENT

✓ Informal learning style – based on real life examples, practical application
✓ Show outcomes for young people
✓ Accreditation / certification for youth workers
✓ Allow for networking with other youth professionals and youth workers
✓ Participative and deliberative
✓ Evidence of buy-in from young people
✓ Take away resources and tools to use straight away
✓ Ongoing support post-training – follow up and practical help
✓ Ongoing share site – discuss experiences, observations, examples of use
RUNNING TRAINING FOR YOUTH WORKERS
BEST PRACTICE PRINCIPLES:

LOGISTICS

½ day is most realistic length

- Deliver **on-site** where possible
- **Partner** with other organizations, piggy-back onto existing training schemes to maximise engagement (e.g. regional training)

Should be free/very low cost

Make signing up quick and easy
e.g. ‘one click’ using site such as Eventbrite

KEEP IT LOCAL
(to region)
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