

The need for the issue to be addressed through youth work

The youth work setting is very different to the school setting most obviously as formal education up to the age of sixteen is compulsory, whereas children and young people engage voluntarily in youth work.



“*Youth Work: A Model for Effective Practice*” (1997) was designed to be a supportive framework for youth work. Youth workers are encouraged to use

The Model to develop their practice, and to see it as a tool that can be adapted or re-shaped to suit the situation in which they are working.

The Youth Service Policy Review (DE 1999) recommends a set of youth work values that should form the basis of all strategies and activities undertaken by Youth Service. There are also values that should inform the curriculum development process:

- Youth work starts where young people are at, supports their right to make choices, to develop at their own pace and empowers them to voice their own ideas and attitudes.
- Every young person is respected for their combination of qualities and capabilities.

The Youth Service Policy review recommends that these values should be seen within the broader framework of EDI (Equity, Diversity and Interdependence):

“EQUITY: is essentially about fairness. At one level it is about ensuring that people have equality of opportunity regardless of things such as their ethnic or community background, gender or sexuality, or disability. However, it is important to note that equity is more than equality - treating everyone the same is not the same as treating everyone fairly. It is about ensuring that we do not directly or indirectly exclude people, and that we positively seek ways of including those who might otherwise feel excluded.

DIVERSITY: encourages respect for and expression of the range of identities represented by the youth of Northern Ireland, and those who work with them in the youth work sector. It is about seeing difference as something that can enrich us, thus appreciating the value of different experiences, cultures and perspectives. It is crucial in youth work that the youth worker is a positive model in terms of attitudes and responses to difference.

INTERDEPENDENCE: recognises and explores ways in which our individual paths are intertwined. It is about building robust relationships and developing our understanding of how the actions of individuals and

groups affect each other. It is about appreciating the value which can come from working inter-connectedly on the basis of respect and mutual trust.

Equity, Diversity and Interdependence permeate the values set out in the Policy Review document, and sit easily with preparing young people for Participation, testing Values and Beliefs and promoting Acceptance and Understanding. They are CORE VALUES against which each youth work agency, organisation or group should regularly test their policies, procedures and practice.”

Youth Work: A Model for Effective Practice (updated 2003)

The YouthNet report asked young people to identify some of the things youth organisations could do to support LGBT young people. Suggestions focused on a number of key issues:

- **“Provision of confidential support (advice, guidance, counselling, signposting etc.) to young LGBT people and their families**
- **Information on LGBT issues and organisations in general: information bulletins; directories; posters etc**
- **Acknowledging the validity of same sex relationships in personal development programmes**
- **Challenging stereotypes and discrimination with young people generally through discussion of homosexuality in an open, unbiased and non-judgemental way**
- **Raising awareness of issues for young LGBT people with staff, volunteers, management committees and parents in order that they understand the issues and know how to address them in a supportive way**
- **Provision of LGBT role models by inviting people from specific organisations to give a talk and answer questions”**

(Carolan & Redmond 2003)