



**KDYT Submission to All-Party Parliamentary Group for Youth Affairs  
Parliamentary Inquiry on the Role and Sufficiency of Youth Work**

**July 2018**

## Who are KDYT?

Kidderminster & District Youth Trust (KDYT) was established as a Charity in 1966 and has supported young people since then using a variety of methods.

In the 1970's KDYT established and ran Kidderminster Youth House, a purpose-built facility for young people; between 1979 and 2012, we leased the building to Worcestershire Youth Service. During this time the Trust gave over £1m in grants to young people, youth groups and uniformed organisations.

In 2012 Worcestershire County Council commissioned out the Youth Service and KDYT has been successful in tendering for this since January 2013, the money available for this has reduced over the years and we are currently commissioned until March 2019.

Our mission is: 'To provide a safe, secure, fun environment where young people are supported in identifying their strengths and skills, so they can avoid, or be better able to deal with, challenges in their lives. To help young people to recognise their responsibilities, offer the opportunity for them to have their voices heard and realise their full potential'

Our youth work provision includes:

- The KDYT Youth Café.
- Fusion Youth Club (for young people with additional needs).
- Junior Youth Club.
- Flannel Youth Group (for young people who identify as LGBTQ).
- The Axis Youth Hub, for young people in crisis, KDYT are one of four core partners in this Big Lottery Funded project based at Kidderminster Youth House.
- The KDYT Young Leaders programme (one of whom received a Diana Award for being a Young Leader despite facing significant challenges in his life).

Young people have always been involved in helping us deliver our services:

- Young people sit on the KDYT management committee and have equal voting rights with Trustees and managers.
- The KDYT Young Leaders programme enables a supportive, peer led approach to guide our work, keeping us relevant and attractive.
- We talk to young people who don't use our services, ask them why and engage them in helping us increase our offer.
- We support young people in accessing key decision makers so that they have their voices heard by those in power to help create positive change

More information about the work we do, and the impact it has, can be found in our latest annual review which can be found here: <https://www.kdyt.org.uk/annual-review>.

This submission is on behalf of the KDYT, the young people we work with and the staff team of experienced youth workers we have.

## **What is the role of youth work in addressing the needs and opportunities for young people?**

Young people and research informs us of the many needs young people have and young people tell us what opportunities they enjoy or what would they would like to do.

We believe that good quality; professional youth work has a significant role to play in meeting the needs of young people and helping them create and access opportunities.

Youth work can be flexible and dynamic in its response to the needs of young people. It needs to keep true to what works and be able to embrace the challenges of modern life, so that we can be articulate and honest with young people, supporting them when needed.

Youth work is often best placed to support young people through the most challenging of times, we are both informal and professional, meaning that youth workers are easily approachable, yet efficient at accessing the right support for young people in a way that young people feel comfortable with.

Through engaging with youth work, young people can learn a range of new skills, reduce isolation, make new friends (often outside their normal social group), create a sense of self-worth, increase their communication skills and confidence.

More targeted work can produce significant benefits. KDYT recently ran a peer education programme designed to empower young people to avoid being drawn into anti-social behaviour. Funded by the West Mercia Police & Crime Commissioner the project saw over 108 young people engaged in the programme with 12 young people training to become KDYT Young Leaders working with other young people.

Youth work can also be a source of fun, learning and life skills, and it is often by taking part in a range of activities that young people build trust in their youth workers and decide that they can open up to them and share any issues.

The long-term relationships that young people and youth workers have is exceptionally important, young people tell us that they need to know someone (or a youth work organisation) is going to be there for a long time. We have some members who have been attending 10 years and many former young people will drop in to keep in touch, letting us know how things are going for them and talking about their time with KDYT.

These conversations often focus on some advice and guidance we may have given 5 or 6 years ago, which helped them to focus and change their behaviour for the better.

## **Are the key issues and challenges faced by young people being addressed by current youth service provisions?**

Kidderminster is a town which has suffered for many generations due to the gradual loss of the carpet industry, many of our young people have parents, and in some cases grandparents, who are on benefits and have struggled to find employment.

This has had a significant impact on their families and we are seeing increasing cases of family breakdowns and young people becoming homeless as a result. Young people tell us that they are concerned about their career prospects and feel disempowered by limited choices.

We have also spoken to young people using drugs and alcohol, who tell us that they feel doing so provides an escape from the circumstances they find themselves in, unfortunately this can become a self-fulfilling situation, one that KDYT can support young people through.

Office of National Statistics data shows that 58.84% of households in Wyre Forest have between 1 & 4 dimensions of deprivation, these being employment, education, health and disability, and housing. The statistics also demonstrate that over a quarter of residents aged over 16 have no qualifications. Young people inform us of other disadvantages they experience which include, mental health issues, family breakdown, drug and alcohol use, loneliness, homelessness, self-harm and being a victim of bullying.

Postcode analysis shows that many KDYT young people come from Areas of Highest Need, where there is multiple deprivation, for example, low income, unemployment, poor health, and limited educational achievement.

We have been lucky in Worcestershire, that Worcestershire County Council rather than completely cutting the Youth Work budget has commissioned services for 6 years. For the first 3 years this was full funding and for the 3 years (ending March 2019) has been on a reducing basis (60%, 50%, 40%).

This has been positive for KDYT as we have been able to use the time to create impact and to put in place the necessary requirements for us to be in a strong position to apply for funding. It must also be noted that KDYT own its own building which helps us too.

The future looks less bright as there is more competition for funding opportunities, and increasingly the funding available from statutory organisations is being directed more specifically to targeted work such as anti-social behaviour.

The preventative and diversionary elements of youth work are often overlooked, even though many organisations are trying to counter this through good reporting and reviews. Importantly, young people tell us that they are frustrated when they see young people who are being naughty 'rewarded' when their services are under threat or being reduced.

The result of this change is that youth work organisations are left with a challenge to stay true to quality provision and genuine youth work, or source funding and deliver services according to specification. Again, we have so far been lucky with this as we have managed to do both, but we anticipate this will be a bigger struggle over the next few years.

Funding in itself is time consuming and can involve many days of work, although many of the larger funders such as the Big Lottery have changed their approach to make the first stages much less work which is welcome.

This funding is often only part of what is needed to provide quality services, so a delicate balancing act and a good financial plan is essential to any funding strategy.

Youth work organisations have been innovative in their approach to this, partnership working has produced some incredible outcomes, such as the Axis Youth Hub, based at Kidderminster Youth House which is funded by the Big Lottery Fund. This is a hub for young people in crisis and has had an incredible impact on young people's lives.

Many of the partners from the statutory sector are finding that their resources and staffing are being cut. On a couple of occasions, services are taken under the wing of the private sector, who don't recognise the value of the partnerships and we lose significant support very quickly.

Partners from the voluntary sector are in the same position as youth work organisations and often have to concentrate on funding their work rather than the partnership work, another issue is that once a charity has applied to a funder they may not be able to apply again, so that partnership work might negatively affect any funding plans.

We are conscious that the above may paint a picture of youth services struggling and outcomes suffering. However, youth workers on the ground are working incredibly hard, often longer hours than they are paid for, and the vast majority are driven by passion for the role. We also have amazing volunteers who step up and help us (this includes young people themselves).

How long passion can sustain youth workers around the country, we don't know, but reliance on this is unfair and, considering the impact of youth work on young peoples lives, is not something that should be done.

### **Are there sufficient youth workers to support youth services and other delivery models for good quality youth work?**

Following the commissioning of youth services, there are less youth workers in our area. Many of us worked together in the old Worcestershire Youth Service and many have retrained and entered other professions. Some have started their own businesses that have nothing to do with youth work.

The number of open access sessions around the county have reduced, some areas now have no provision where previously there was plenty.

We believe that there is a genuine risk that trained youth workers could disappear and to recover from this might prove to a difficult task, which could take time and have a negative effect on many thousands of young people.

### **What are the training and workforce development needs to secure and sustain youth work?**

Youth work has a trusted role with young people, their families and the communities within which they operate. It is essential that Youth Workers and youth work organisations are skilled to deliver the work safely and with the biggest impact possible.

Reducing finances has **seen** increased demands on statutory services, such as CAMH(s), housing associations, NEET prevention, careers work and others.

Youth work finds itself dealing with many more issues as a result of this, often very well, and we need to ensure that youth workers are suitably equipped to deal with these increased demands.

Key areas we are finding that our team needs to work in include:

- Mental Health (Mental Health First Aid).
- Education & Teaching Skills (Award in Education & Training).
- Outdoor Leadership (Duke of Edinburgh).
- Publicity & Promotion.
- Human Resources.
- Strategic Planning.
- Internet Safety.
- Health and Safety.
- Fundraising.

Small youth work organisations like KDYT can find that we undertake many of these roles and, whilst this can reduce costs and increase efficiency, we need to be suitably qualified to do so.

**Attachments:**

We have sent separately:

- A copy of the KDYT Annual Review 2017/18.
- Increasing Responsibility, Promoting Opportunity. Programme Report.
- 'KDYT – A Young Person's Perspective' video.