



## Special Conference Supplement Dec 2007



The **Edinburgh Youth Work Consortium** was established in 2006 to act as a forum through which youth work providers and policy makers can support youth work in the city. In particular it seeks to:

- Promote, encourage, support and develop quality youth work
- Sustain and extend youth work provision
- Share youth work issues, concerns and practice
- Monitor funding streams
- Scrutinise and influence youth work policies

Membership comprises of representatives from The City of Edinburgh Service Departments; voluntary youth work organisations; Edinburgh Leisure and Edinburgh Youth Council. EYWC is an associate member of YouthLink Scotland.

EYWC is administered by LAYC and has received funding from The City of Edinburgh Council and The Scottish Government to support its work. For further information contact: Ian Boardman Tel. 0131 667 1828 E-mail: eywc@layc.org.uk

*The conference was supported by:*



Edinburgh Youth Work Consortium

# EYWC

**It was the Best of Times**  
**It was the Worst of Times ...**

**Charles Dickens** opening words to Tale of Two Cities summed up the Conference. The best because the sense of belief, passion and commitment that people had was absolutely palpable - the worst because funding is a touchstone as to how valued youth work is with the looming funding crisis providing a reality check.

Someone once called for the Campaign for Real Youth Work and they had a point. Lost in an array of settings, youth work has at the very least got waylaid. Often unable to untangle itself from the myriad of government initiatives from achievement to anti-social behaviour, youth work is a victim of its own success. Being all things to all professions has value, but not if it's distinguishing features are not discernable.

EYWC has sought to re-capture and re-articulate the importance of youth work. And the greatest exponents of that are youth workers themselves and the conference demonstrated that fully.

The youth workers out in Ratho reinforced the call to develop and implement a youth work strategy for the city. They articulated what that needed to be, not 'policy speak' terminology, but in practical approaches that would directly impact on their ability to be more effective in what they did.

With clear steers ringing in the Conference Organisers ears, EYWC has pulled together the key elements that youth workers want to see embedded in the strategy.

This EYWC Conference Supplement provides details of what came from the day and how EYWC intend to drive this forward.

As you will see from the what next, EYWC will continue to need your support to ensure the strategy is bedded in ways that will improve your practice and ultimately your work with young people.

*The next line in the Tale of Two Cities was 'It was an age of wisdom, it was an age of foolishness'... let's hope it's the former.*



# Youth Work in Edinburgh

## A Vision for Youth Work

At the conference, youth workers in Edinburgh described the vision they have for the future development of youth work in the city.

## Long Term Strategy

**A long term youth work strategy will:**

- Articulate an unambiguous right to youth work for young people
- Focus on services which meet young people's needs
- Describe how young people will actively participate in the design and delivery of services
- Transcend the traditional divide between the voluntary and statutory sectors
- Describe the shared vision in accessible language
- Raise the profile of young people's issues and how youth work addresses them
- Seek to shape policy affecting young people
- Link to Scottish Government and City of Edinburgh policies

## Priorities

- Central point of contact
- Communications across youth work sector
- Co-ordination of training
- Information seminars
- Publication of existing resources
- Engagement at a political level



## Positive Aspects

- The diversity of youth work opportunities available for young people
- The passion and enthusiasm of youth workers
- Examples of improved partnership working
- The diversity of practice and approaches
- The quality of relationships between young people and adults
- The school sector increasingly respecting the youth work profession
- Young people's involvement in the design of youth work
- Innovative examples of using space
- Evidence that communities want to preserve youth work services.

## Areas to Improve

- A more positive portrayal of young people in the media
- A youth work strategy that emerges from grassroots level
- Staff to be valued, and youth work appreciated as a profession/vocation
- An ICT 'search' facility for youth work opportunities
- Raise profile of youth work (both in and out of the sector)
- A recognised national training qualification and better locally coordinated training
- Improved communication between youth work providers
- To be allowed to take risks
- Long-term funding that is flexible and simple to access.

## Purpose and Nature

**The purpose of youth work is to:**

- Build self-esteem and self-confidence
- Develop the ability to manage personal and social relationships
- Create learning and develop new skills
- Build the capacity of young people to consider risk, make reasoned decisions and take control
- Develop a 'world view' which widens horizons and invites social commitment.

**Youth Work has three essential and definitive features:**

- Young people choose to participate
- The work must build from where young people are
- Recognises the young person and the youth worker as partners in a learning process

## Supporting Practice

**We can best promote good practice and develop new practice when:**

- There is a common evaluation framework
- Recognise the scope for collaboration between practitioners and the academic community
- There are local practitioner forums across the city
- Youth workers exchange ideas, experiences, and practice at local level and city wide
- There are dedicated youth work bases for all young people, which make best use current buildings, including underused facilities and schools

## What Young People Need

**Young people need youth work provision that:**

- Is guided by a long term strategy
- Harnesses and promotes best youth work practice
- Is delivered by a skilled and motivated workforce
- Benefits from effective coordination
- Is supported by adequate resources



## A Day in the Life of a Youth Worker . . .

### Developing Skills

*Youth workers are most productive when:*

- They have a clear professional identity and a clarity of role
- The skills they need are built on the youth work National Occupational Standards
- Learning and development opportunities are available for all youth workers (paid and unpaid) in order to learn the core youth work skills as well as specialist ones.
- These opportunities are progressive, accessible, and flexible
- Morale is high

### Coordinating Effort

*Effective coordination for youth work needs:*

- An Edinburgh Youth Work Consortium
- All youth work staff to work in partnership - with each other, and with other services for young people
- A one door 'portal' for youth work that provides information on
  - Youth work provision
  - Information
  - Services
  - Training
  - Resources

### Resourcing

*Youth work will be properly resourced when:*

- Unnecessary duplication of effort is avoided
- There is a financial commitment to youth work based on a rational 'formula'
- Funding arrangements are on a long term basis

**8.00am** Woke up - got out of bed - dragged a comb across my head

**9.00am** Waterloo Place for the bus .... no show (luckily the organisers were sussed and phoned the bus company sharpish and along came a sleepy bus driver)

**9.45am** Out at the venue near Ratho - somebody had said it was a quarry with a fancy roof over it. No way - one or two couldn't cope with the glass elevator and the registration desk in the glass fronted cafe 100ft up.

**10.00am** Into the start of the day - no chance to sit in the back row and nod off! They had us sitting at round tables with linen tablecloths, candles and flowers and bowls of sweets. Seemingly this is a World Cafe event - even had a menu telling us what we were going to be talking about. 8 or 9 youth workers at each table, marker pens, post it notes and a paper tablecloth and someone 'hosting' each table to keep conversation flowing and get us introduced to each other.

After half an hour all you could hear was the hum of all the tables hard at it, folk giving it laldy about the good youth work they knew about (and some of the bad). Then it was time to move on to another table, meet some other youth workers, more discussions about different things for a bit and then back home to the table you started at.

**11am-12 noon** Round of applause for some teenage volunteer youth workers who had just walked 4 miles from Ratho Village. Missed the bus but still got there!

Some Irish guy who had just retired from heading up the National Youth Work Agency talking about spending the past 11 year lobbying the Westminster Government about youth work. He reckons we're making headway about how all young people should be entitled to access good quality youth provision of one sort or another in their own community ... it's going to cost though!

**1.00pm** Lunch - I think they were expecting queues cos they gave us those icebreaker bingo cards - you know - fill in the squares with the details of people you don't know who have blue eyes or are the same star sign as you!

**2.00pm** Head off into the workshops looking at whatever two topics you had picked. They keep saying we have to make sure our own comments get recorded - more scribbling on the paper tablecloths - saw some doodles creeping in now though.

**4.00pm** Heading for the finishing line now with the Edinburgh Youth Work Consortium telling us what was going to happen with all our comments and hard work and promising to come back to us to finalise a strategy for youth work in Edinburgh.

Very few folk had drifted off early ... must be cos the cunning swine had a conference pack of publications and leaflets and assorted info for us all - you only got it when you handed in your Evaluation Form at the door on your way out. Sneaky one!

**5.00pm** Bus back into Edinburgh - heard a couple of people chatting about how much they had enjoyed the day. Guy in front was like a kid at Xmas with his Conference Pack - Edinburgh Leisure had given everyone a free voucher to have a shot of their Arial Assault Course. He was definitely going to go back and try it.

**6.00pm** Just stuck the free EYWC pen drive into my computer - it's got loads of stuff on it! Publications, leaflets, websites for games and youth work ideas. It's even got a copy of the Child Protection Procedures on it - I didn't know there were new ones!

**7.00pm** Switched the computer off. More of that another time maybe. Time now for something to eat and go out to the pub! I've got a life too you know - I'm not just a youth worker!

# Youth Work . . .

## Hanging by a Thread?



**The Adrenalin Rush Conference** held at the stunning venue of the Edinburgh International Climbing Arena at the end of September was the height of the Edinburgh Youth Work Consortium's success to date . . . . 125 youth workers from across the city spent a whole Saturday talking about how to consolidate and improve youth work in Edinburgh.

The audience was evenly split with about a third from the statutory sector, a third from the local voluntary sector and a third from national organisations and other agencies.

Two thirds of the participants were the ones that 'walk the walk' volunteer, sessional, part time and full time youth workers. The remaining third were split equally between people from other professions, managers of youth work services and managers who still also had a youth work delivery role.

The informal atmosphere of the world cafe style event went down exceedingly well. The evaluations showed delegates were part of one youth work family able to share their passion and enthusiasm for youth work and share the diversity of youth work opportunities available to young people in Edinburgh.

They spoke clearly too about how to build a youth work strategy for

the city that emerged from the grass roots and raised the profile of youth work and youth workers across the professions and with the public at large.

Thoughts, ideas and details about increased levels of co-ordinated training and access to resources were recorded and the EYWC was sent homewards to think again . . . (and come up with a blue print for a youth work strategy for the city). With Scotland now out of Euro 2008 the EYWC will be coming down your road soon with a chance for you to play your part in shaping that strategy - this time we want to make it all the way to the finals!

Considerable thanks must go to Edinburgh Leisure for all they did to support the Conference. Their early commitment to give access to the venue and staff support in organising the event was invaluable. The venue staff were also excellent - we couldn't have done it without them! Not to forget the complimentary vouchers for the Aerial Assault that every participant received which many delegates and related youth groups have used since!

*The organisers would like to apologise to the small number of people whose vertigo prevented their involvement in the day - EYWC next ventures will be at ground level - promise.*

### NEXT ?

EYWC have been meeting since conference to pull together the draft strategy plan, how to take that forward and identify other areas of work.

Over the next few months EYWC will be:

- Briefing Cllr MacLaren, Convenor Education, Children & Families on the draft strategy
- Preparing and presenting papers to appropriate Council Committees

- Hosting a seminar for youth workers on fine tuning the strategy in February 08
- Providing direct feedback to youth workers as to how the strategy is developing

In addition, Seminars will be held on:

- Youth Work and Risk in January 2008
- Young People and Gambling in conjunction with TACADE in March 2008.

### Evaluations

#### Conference Ratings

Pre-event organisation	4.3 out of 5
Venue	4.6 out of 5
Food	4.5 out of 5
Programme	4.5 out of 5

Most comments were positive but participants were asked to identify one bad thing about the day. We will keep these in mind for future events. Here are some of the positive comments:

- Positivity and optimism in the height of a major funding shortage
- There are very few opportunities to network on this scale eg with scout leaders, Edinburgh Leisure staff, etc. I will take new contacts and increased knowledge in diverse work with me!
- Contacts with other organisations and hope for the future of youth work in Edinburgh
- Enthusiasm, new ideas for youth work and a renewed interest in improving services and Edinburgh youth agencies working together
- A lot of information about things going on for young people in Edinburgh
- Inspiration from the amount of enthusiasm from workers. 120+ people gathering for 1 cause
- Lots of new contacts and a much better understanding of the range of youth work provision delivered in Edinburgh
- People's enthusiasm for their work and fighting for the needs of young people. The need to raise awareness for youth work services and the work we do.
- The need for champions/ambassadors for youth work in Scotland/Edinburgh
- That if strategic planning is to be implemented efficiently, there needs to be much more stability and sustainability in funding at all levels - this came up in every group
- The need for a youth work strategy that cuts across statutory/voluntary sectors
- Will commit to following progress of EYWC and ensure we engage as far as possible

But enough of all this cosy comfortable feeling, EYWC was left with 2 ½ pages of comments about what we should be doing next . . . it's good to see that many of your 'other comments' suggest youth workers will be up for being party to that. Watch this space and sign up for details of future events.