



THIS IS YOUTH WORK

Telling and sharing stories of practice

"The Storytelling method cannot be confused with day to day conversation... (It) builds on our conversational strengths, allowing us to capture our practice through a thought-out methodical approach. This involves a combination of strong facilitation, informed probing / questioning, peer interrogation and a thorough documentation of the stories... Being involved in the story telling workshop ... has been a unique experience." (Youth work co-ordinator)

Students were able to provide examples of practice in their own setting ... discuss flaws within their own organizations, the college practice and their own practice. (College tutor)

The staff found it really useful in dismissing the 'it comes naturally' myth as it showed the obvious learned conscious and unconscious behaviours youth workers model to reach their aims and objectives. (Full-time youth worker).

Working as a team on 'youth work stories' was such a useful and valuable thing to do... We should have done this a long time ago - we might have saved more of our service. If we are not clear about what makes youth work unique then how is anyone else going to know? (Team Leader, local authority Targeted Support for Young People Services)

An invitation to host a story-telling workshop

In Defence of Youth Work

The In Defence of Youth Work campaign was formed in 2009 with the aim of defending youth work as a democratic and emancipatory practice with young people. It defined this as:

- ⑤ taking place in open-access facilities and settings which young people choose to attend;
- ⑤ offering informal educational opportunities starting from their concerns and interests;
- ⑤ working with and through their peer networks and wider shared identities;
- ⑤ giving value and attention to their here-and-now as well as to their 'transitions'; and
- ⑤ rooted in mutually respectful and trusting personal relationships - amongst young people and between young person and adult.

This is Youth Work workshops – so far...

⑤ In 2011, IDYW published *This is Youth Work* - twelve 'stories from practice' written by young people and youth workers - downloadable at http://www.indefenceofyouthwork.org.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/20252-Youth-stories-report-2011_4th-1.pdf The book has been widely read and used, including in a number of European countries, Australia and Japan.

⑤ In the last four years IDYW has facilitated 35 workshops initially drawing on stories in the book and then on participants' own practice experience. They have been attended by over 750 participants – paid workers, volunteers, students, managers and tutors.

⑤ IDYW's an online resource, 'Story-Telling in Youth Work', is now available at <http://story-tellinginyouthwork.com/>. This includes examples of how story-telling has been used in a range of settings, case studies of the process in action and materials IDYW has developed.



The workshops

Aims

Tailored to meet the needs of different organisations and situations and starting from where practitioners are now in their work, the workshop:

- ⑤ provide opportunities for participants to explore what open access youth work means for them;
- ⑤ through story-telling, describe, 'unpick' and analyse examples of that practice;
- ⑤ reflect on the relationship of these examples to the open access youth work advocated by IDYW – as set out at <http://indefenceofyouthwork.com/idyw-statement-2014/>;
- ⑤ encourage practitioners to contribute to a wider sharing and defence of practice.

Method and process

Workshops normally lasting between two-and-a-half to three hours draw on a 'dialogical' process of discussion and debate developed by Professor Sarah Banks of Durham University. In small groups participants:

- ⑤ choose a story offered by a group member as an example of their practice as a youth worker;
- ⑤ 'unpick' this story in depth to clarify what makes the practice described distinctively youth work – and if and how it is not;
- ⑤ consider possibilities for and barriers to this practice in their own work situations.

Follow up

- ⑤ Support is available for participants who want to write up their stories.
 - ⑤ Provide opportunities for participants who want to run story-telling workshops in their own projects and organisations to get facilitation experience by working alongside IDYW facilitators.
- It is hoped in the future also to offer facilitating training to those wanting to use it in their work.

Who are the workshops for?

The workshops are aimed:

- ⑤ at practitioners and managers in the statutory and voluntary sector – in particular:
 - those working in open access settings where voluntary attendance is assumed;
 - those who identify themselves as youth workers but who now have other job titles and are working in targeted projects which young people may be required to attend.
- ⑤ youth work students and course tutors.

Arranging and running workshops

IDYW will:

- ⑤ publicise workshops on its website and via its mailing and contact lists;
- ⑤ provide facilitators for each workshop – on the basis that one will be needed for each 10 participants;

Workshop hosts will be expected to:

- ⑤ provide the venue and some photocopying facilities;
- ⑤ publicise the event and recruit to it via their own websites and contact lists;
- ⑤ pay travel expenses for facilitators, all of whom are volunteers, and donate a fee of £100 per facilitator to the IDYW campaign.



If you are interested in hosting a youth work story-telling workshop, contact Bernard Davies (davies@vip.solis.co.uk)

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