

We learned about the field of youth work in U.K.:

Youth work is a national system and is funded by the government through taxes – similar to healthcare or welfare in the U.K.

There are distinctions within the field of youth work in terms of the type of youth work. Play workers, community workers, Youth Workers, and national Youth Workers are defined by professional standards and have specific roles within the field of youth service in the U.K.

Play workers typically work with elementary-aged youth in order to enhance socialization and education of children. Youth Workers are trained to develop relationships with young people on their turf and targeted at harm-reduction. Community Youth Workers typically run youth centers and youth-serving organizations similar to a YMCA.

Youth Workers can either work out of a center or do detached youth work, directed by officers who dispatch street workers into various segments of the community where at-risk youth congregate. Detached Youth Workers are expected to engage at-risk youth and then offer them alternative activities which are educational, recreational and/or social.

Youth Workers in the U.K. are expected to conduct health and safety trainings as part of their work. While they have a broad range of education programs around human sexuality and disease prevention, their alcohol and tobacco cessation programs are limited.

The citizens of the U.K. have come to recognize youth work as a “diversionary measure” taken toward managing at-risk youth within their communities. Youth Workers have a new (union) contract and part of that was secured because of the anti-social behavior act. Troubled youth who are hanging out on street corners are now expected to encounter Youth Workers.

Much of a Youth Workers’ goal is to help young people become independent through employment, citizenship and youth voice.

Young people in the U.K. graduate at 16. They begin training as early as the 5th grade and are offered apprenticeships and skills-training early on. They are expected to move into higher education, trade-school or employment at the time of graduation. Youth who do not make this transition have very few options for positive activities.

Learnings

We learned about how Youth Workers are organized and compensated:

There are different levels of pay qualification in the U.K. for Youth Workers: part-time, full-time or an officer. Each position has an accompanying level of educational requirement and offers compensation commensurate with responsibility for the position.

Youth Workers have organized themselves into a professional trade union. The Union’s priority is to represent employment and professional concerns to employers and is represented to the government by bargaining teams. Contracts and compensation are negotiated and implemented regularly.

Youth Work is considered a profession in the U.K.. There are lots of men as Youth Workers – possibly because of a full compensation package that includes health care, 28 paid vacation days and a pension.

The retention of Youth Workers in the U.K. is well over 90%. Play, Community and Youth Workers are professionally recognized, credentialed and unionized in a way that they experience security and continuity in their jobs.

The union functions as a professional association as well and offers hundreds of free, accredited training courses on all aspects of the world of youth work to help develop the interests and raise the qualifications of Youth Workers.

Volunteer Play and Youth Workers are persons who do not (yet) have a professional credential from a recognized university. They also have their own compensation tier within the Play and Youth Work system although it is considerably less than that of the paid professional.

Qualified youth and community workers' salaries start on around £14,000 (\$28,000) a year. Experienced staff can earn around £20,000 (\$40,000). Senior workers can earn £28,000 (\$56,000). (2005)

The International Youth Worker Exchange



We learned about how Play, Community, and Youth Workers receive their credentials and degrees:

There are two types of qualification in the UK which compliment the compensation programs set forth by the Union. A [Youth Support Worker](#) has pre-professional/ vocational qualifications and a Play, Community or Youth Worker will have [professional qualifications](#). All qualifications are based on national occupational standards for youth work.

A Youth Support Worker would have a basic understanding of youth work concepts and enable you to undertake common youth work roles with limited supervision – similar to a trade certification. A professional qualified youth worker would have detailed knowledge and understanding of a wide range of youth work issues, and enable you to work with young people face-to-face with a reasonable amount of autonomy – this would be along the lines of an Associate’s Degree or possibly a Bachelor’s.

Higher Education Level qualifications are for those who want to make a career in youth work and may move into strategic management and development of projects and services. This would be the equivalent to a qualifications provide knowledge and understanding of theoretical concepts and the policy context for youth work, while testing ability to undertake youth work at a sophisticated and challenging level. They are the equivalent of a professional qualification in other fields, such as teaching or social work. This is a Bachelor or Master’s level work although it only takes two years to complete.

“The highlight of my trip was learning about their education system for youth workers. I would like to compare their systems with ours and I want to look at curriculum and see how we can encourage our own universities and community colleges to pick up this training. I believe that training will reduce burnout and the high turnover rate in the field of youth work in the U.S.”

Teri Lock

Journey Trailblazer, Current Youth Worker

“Every youth worker should have the opportunity to learn about youth work in other places. It helps bring our work into perspective and provides opportunities to exchange ideas,. Converse about issues, and understand the similarities and differences we face as global youth workers. The International Youth Worker Exchange builds a global community of people who are passionate about making a difference for kids.”

Naomi Milstein

Journey Trailblazer, Early Career Youth Worker

