



myplace
support team

Vocational Training and Awards

Introduction

It is a key priority for all local authorities to increase the participation of young people in education, training and learning. Your **myplace** centre offers an excellent opportunity to connect young people with the people, services and opportunities that they want and need to meet this requirement. This briefing provides some pointers and advice on how.

How to use vocational training and awards in non-formal educational settings

The world of training and qualifications changes frequently and fast. Young people need more skills than ever before, and it is estimated that two out of three jobs in the future will require a higher level of skills and better qualifications than previously. The good news is that we're all natural learners – and given the right environment and support, you can help put young people on the path to success.

As employers more and more look for people with higher-level skills and qualifications it pays everyone to keep learning. Encouraging young people to undertake the right vocational qualifications or non-formal educational awards can help to transform their lives and open up opportunities they may not have considered.

Put simply, vocational training prepares learners for jobs that are based on manual or practical activities, traditionally non-academic and related to a specific trade, occupation or vocation. It covers a wide range of subject areas from IT and construction skills, to dance, hospitality and catering, and tends to be more hands on than purely academic qualifications might be. Courses are mapped to a national framework – the Qualification and Credit Framework – and follow an approved curriculum. Upon successful completion candidates receive a nationally-recognised qualification. Courses cover almost every industry sector and every level of the QCF's eight levels.

So, vocational training can:

- › offer an alternative to full-time study for learners keen to progress and achieve qualifications;
- › build sound foundations for successful careers;
- › provide employers with competent, motivated recruits and staff; and
- › meet the employment needs of a wide range of industries across different sectors.

A key recent national development is the introduction of the Qualification and Credit Framework, which replaces the National Qualification Framework. This is at the heart of a major reform of the vocational qualifications system, which will become simpler to understand and use, more accessible to a wider range of learners and more relevant to learners' and employers' needs.

Vocational qualifications on the QCF are designed to be much more flexible than other work-related qualifications. They are made up of units, so young people can study at a pace that suits them. Over time, units can be combined in different ways to make up a complete qualification. This means that no learning young people do is ever 'lost' or counts for nothing. It also means they don't have to repeat learning unnecessarily. There are already lots of courses to choose from, over 5,000, in a wide range of subjects, and more are being added all the time. A register of Regulated Awarding Organisations and Qualifications, which contains details of these vocational qualifications, is on the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation website at www.ofqual.gov.uk. Providers will work in partnership with their local authority, other providers in their area, Connexions, other 'information, advice and guidance' (IAG) providers, support agencies, not-for-profit organisations and employer representatives.

If you wanted to provide some form of accreditation for the young people you work with in the **myplace** centre other than vocational training then you might want to consider non-formal awards – offered through a range of organisations as an alternative to formal education and training. Non-formal learning is particularly valuable in re-engaging young people who have dropped out of education to help them gain new skills and confidence and increase learner motivation, enabling them to move on to further learning. The awards have learning outcomes, clear content and assessment criteria.

They fit within the QCF, where there is a suite of learning called Foundation Learning, to provide personalised learning programmes for young people working at entry level and level one (for reference, there are eight levels to the QCF framework – GCSEs are level 2, A-levels are level 3 and a PhD is level 8). Foundation Learning courses are made up of three components:

- › functional skills – literacy, numeracy, IT;
- › personal and social development skills; and
- › vocational or subject learning.

Foundation Learning is one of the main qualification suites for 14 to 19-year-old learners, alongside GCSEs, Diplomas and Apprenticeships. It provides learners with choice and the opportunity to specialise – and a clear path towards level 2 qualifications or other goals. The government wants all local authorities to provide some Foundation Learning to 14 to 19-year-olds. So, it's worth considering what is it that local authorities will commission from providers to ensure that every young person aged up to 17 is engaged in education, training or work and consequently, what role can you play in your **myplace** centre to support their strategy?

A good way to start this, and to keep up with the constant evolution in the world of young people's education and training and find your way through the plethora of opportunities and suppliers available, is to build a partnership with those implementing the policy locally. Contact the 14 to 19 partnership coordinator in your local authority. Connexions Direct can also offer help and advice and your local online 14-19 area prospectus can also be a good starting point to see what else is on offer locally. You can access this through <http://yp.direct.gov.uk/14-19prospectus>. In return, you can offer excellent facilities in which training can take place, coupled with access to young people who will benefit.

Taking an active role in this fulfils two of the **myplace** key principles – supporting genuine cross-sector partnership working between local authority, third and private and other public sector partners in developing and delivering the project and making a serious impact on young people's lives.

“This project has given me a better chance in life of getting where I want to be. It’s opened doors.”

Lisa Tilstone, Skills for Employment,
Nottinghamshire County Council

Action planning

Young People

It is important to remember that before a young person embarks on any programme of learning there should be a ‘lead in’ time where the young person’s issues might need to be explored, a relationship built and trust and respect established. The needs, interests and concerns of the young person need recognising and taking into account. This can be a slow process, but it is a vital prerequisite for a successful learning programme.

Making a Difference

For many young people this may be the first time they have achieved any sort of qualification or indeed engaged effectively with the learning process – so don’t underestimate the significance of it or the impact it can have.

Vision and Values

Supporting genuine cross-sector partnership working between local authority, third and private and other public sector partners in developing and delivering a vocational training programme and providing improved life chances for young people should be central to your **myplace** vision.

Practicality

Know what is already available locally and do not duplicate this. Spot the gaps that fit with your ethos and concentrate your efforts on filling these.

Links and Further Guidance

The Association of Learning Providers aims to influence the education, skills and employment agenda to secure:

- › an integrated employment and skills strategy meeting employer and individual needs;
- › a 14 to 19 learning curriculum giving equal weight to the vocational and academic;
- › opportunities for lifelong learning and sustainable employment for all; and
- › a government-supported market open to all providers offering high-quality learning.

It is a national membership organisation and the recognised voice of independent learning providers who engage in government funded skills training and welfare to work programmes throughout England. The majority of its members are private, not-for-profit and voluntary/third sector independent training organisations delivering government-funded skills and welfare-to-work programmes. Find out more at www.learningproviders.org.uk

See also the Young People's Learning Agency website. The YPLA provides funding for 16 to 19 provision in further education colleges, sixth form colleges and to independent providers and aims to make a difference to all young people's lives by raising their aspirations and helping them get the knowledge and skills they need to prosper in today's economy and narrow the gaps in outcomes for different groups, recognising, valuing and celebrating the diversity young people bring to society. See www.ypla.gov.uk.

The National Youth Agency publishes Awards for Young People: Recognising learning in non formal settings. This book, available on its website at www.nya.org.uk, is for youth workers and all those who work with young people in non formal settings who want to provide young people with some form of accreditation. It provides a useful list of a number of organisations and the programmes they offer.

See too UK Youth's Youth Achievement Awards. The Youth Challenges and the Youth Achievement Awards are an activity-based approach to peer education. The Awards are designed to help develop more effective participative practice by encouraging young people to progressively take more responsibility in selecting, planning and leading activities that are based on their interests. The peer group model encourages the development of a wide range of life skills through a flexible and informal approach. The Youth Achievement Awards were initially established in the youth work sector as a means of recognising and accrediting young people's achievements. More recently, schools, colleges, national charities, youth offender institutions, youth offending teams, Connexions partnerships and training providers are finding them an equally valuable tool in motivating and engaging their young people. Find out more at www.ukyouth.org/whatwedo/Programmes/YAA

A recent review of vocational education, commissioned by government ministers, recommends a radical shake-up of vocational education in England. It says all pupils should study a core of academic subjects until they are 16. The Wolf Report, carried out by Professor Alison Wolf, an expert in education and skills, says the current funding system encourages providers to put students through a lot of qualifications - but not to continue to improve their core skills in English and maths if these are lacking. Find out more at the Department for Education website at www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-00031-2011

The Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) is the new framework for creating and accrediting qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It will give a wider range of learners the opportunity to get the qualifications they need, in a way that suits them. QCF qualifications are designed with the help of employers so learners can be assured that they're gaining skills that employers are looking for.

The QCF recognises smaller steps of learning and enables learners to build up qualifications bit by bit, helps learners achieve skills and qualifications that meet industry needs and enables work-based training to be nationally recognised. Find out more at www.qcda.gov.uk/qualifications/60.aspx

Ofqual is the body responsible for maintaining standards, improving confidence and distributing information about qualifications and examinations. It regulates general and vocational qualifications in England and vocational qualifications in Northern Ireland. See www.ofqual.gov.uk

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations) is a leading UK awarding body, providing qualifications that engage learners of all ages at school, college, in work or through part-time learning programmes to achieve their full potential. It offers a wide range of vocational qualifications to equip learners with the knowledge and skills they need for their future. See www.ocr.org.uk

Check your local authority area's 14-19 partnership consisting of representatives of local education and training providers. Check online or phone your local authority.