

Youth Work Profession Code of Ethics

The purpose of this Code of Ethics is to provide youth workers with a benchmark for good professional behaviour and practice. It is intended to guide and support youth workers in fulfilling their professional duties and responsibilities and to uphold professional standards and the continuous improvement of such standards.

1. The Youth Work Profession

Youth work in Malta is a non-formal learning activity aimed at the personal, social and political development of young people.

Youth workers engage with young people within their communities, including the voluntary sector, and support them in realising their potential and addressing life's challenges critically and creatively to bring about social change.

Youth work takes into account all strands of diversity and focuses on all young people between thirteen (13) to thirty (30) years of age.

Youth Work strives and has a commitment to involve all young people and thus create equal opportunity for participation in areas of learning and decision-making.

Youth Work explicitly commits to:

- i. offer programmes and services in which young people can participate voluntarily;
- ii. advocate with and on behalf of young people at all times;
- iii. provide stimulating environments by offering challenging experiences through non-formal education;
- iv. help and encourage young people to make informed choices and take personal responsibility for their decisions and actions;
- v. work with young people as young people first and foremost and not by any pre-defined label recognising their needs, interests, lifestyles and perspectives;
- vi. cooperate with other institutions and agencies in responding to the needs and aspirations of young people.

2. Principles of ethical conduct and practice youth workers

2.1 Treat all young people with dignity and respect by

- i. behaving and acting in a way that does not negatively discriminate against any young person on the basis of ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, physical and intellectual capacity, political beliefs and socioeconomic status
- ii. valuing young people for who they are and by not using them as a means to an end
- iii. not intentionally exposing young people to embarrassment, disparagement or ridicule
- iv. respecting and promoting young people's right to determine their own future and happiness
- v. by explainig limits of confidentiality:

- a. the Youth Worker is to respect the privacy of the young person.
- b. the Youth Worker is to hold in confidence all information obtained in the course of professional service within the parameters of the Law.
- c. no information is to be released without the prior knowledge and informed consent of the young person except where the life of the said young person and/or that of others may be seriously jeopardised.
- d. confidential information clearly entrusted for one purpose should not be used for another purpose without the agreement of the young person, except where there is clear evidence of danger to the young person, worker, or other persons in the community.
- vi. supporting young people's right to have their voice heard and to be informed and consulted on all issues that concern them
- vii. making young people aware of the choices and decisions open to them and by creating opportunities for discussion and debate on the possible outcomes of particular choices and decisions
- viii. offering learning opportunities for young people to develop their ability and confidence in making choices and decisions that impact on their lives and
- ix. respecting the choices and decisions young people make, except where such choices and decisions adversely affect the lives and well-being of others.

2.2 Promote equality and social justice for all young people and society in general by

- i. actively influencing policies and social conditions to achieve the maximum benefits for young people and all others in society
- ii. challenging any discriminatory, xenophobic or anti-social behaviour where and when it takes place
- iii. instilling in young people a belief in the attainment of a fair and just society
- iv. drawing attention to unjust and discriminatory policies that adversely affect young people and actively seeking to change them
- v. valuing collective action and encouraging young people and others to work together on issues of common concern.

3. Professional principles for upholding, maintaining and promoting quality standards in youth work.

3.1 Recognise the boundaries between personal and professional life by

- i. maintaining a professional relationship in working with young people
- ii. adhering to the aims and purposes of youth work and not pursuing self-interest or promoting personal views and agendas.
- iii. not engaging in work-related commercial activities for personal gain, or accepting gifts or favours from young people and/or others that might compromise professional integrity.

3.2 Be accountable to young people and others in the community by

- i. acting responsible and within the confines of the law at all times;
- ii. recognising his/her responsibility for his/her own actions and judgements and being prepared to stand by the consequences;
- iii. ensuring that all resources available to the Youth Worker are distributed and utilised fairly and effectively;
- iv. ensuring that work undertaken is as effective as possible;
- v. being honest and open at all times, in all dealings with young people, enabling them to access information they may use in their life or in relation to participation in youth work activities;
- vi. being aware that accountabilities and/or loyalties to different groups may cause conflicts of interest;
- vii. referring to the appropriate authorities any suspicion of young persons being at risk of serious harm, danger or abuse;
- viii. making the most of any opportunity to collaborate with colleagues, professionals from other agencies and in the community and beyond in order to enhance the service given to young people;
- ix. recognizing that he/she should work with parents/guardians to promote the welfare of young persons, particularly by consulting and involving said parents/guardians whenever this is desirable;
- x. seeking advice and guidance from appropriate authorities in instance of doubt;
- xi. refering young people to other professionals when necessary and commit to work in interdisciplinary teams.

3.3 Develop and maintain the skills and competencies required to maintain professional standards

- i. by only undertaking work and/or responsibilities for which youth workers have the necessary skills, knowledge and competences;
- ii. by obtaining training, education, supervision, experience and /or advice to assure a competent service;
- iii. by keeping up-to-date with knowledge, skills, research and any new developments in youth work practice.

3.4 Support and engage with colleagues and other professionals by

- i. treating colleagues and other professionals with respect for their professional competence and integrity
- ii. helping those undergoing training or retraining and responding positively to requests for advice and support
- iii. Refrain from making comments in public, in the media, or in the presence of young people that bring the profession, or members of the profession, into disrepute.