

Worker competency – training, qualification, experience and personal attributes

Guidance

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This section provides an outline for organisations regarding what to look for when considering the competencies of individual workers. Larger organisations who have human resources professionals or other workers skilled in learning and development should consult those workers when considering the competence of individuals for different roles.

When recruiting or allocating workers to particular roles or responsibilities, youth work organisations should consider their competencies as well as principles of safer recruitment. Youth work organisations are responsible for ensuring that workers are assigned roles and responsibilities that match their level of competence and potential.

Competence refers to a worker's ability to carry out responsibilities or specific tasks to a defined and accepted level on a regular basis. A combination of a worker's skills, knowledge, experience, qualifications, training and personal attributes such as awareness and judgement can affect their competence in relation to a nominated role, responsibility or task.

It should be noted that one of these elements alone does not necessarily constitute competence. For example, a qualification or attendance at a training course without practical application or experience may not constitute sufficient competence. Conversely, a worker with many years experience in a task may be more competent to fulfil the work than someone with minimal experience but who has recently completed a training course.

Competence is situational. This means that a worker who is competent in one role, activity or in working with a particular group of young people may not be competent in another. Competence should be considered in relation to specific workers, with specific groups, on specific programmes, in specific environments, undertaking specific activities.

Factors affecting competence:

1. *Experience and knowledge:*

- a. How much and how broad is the experience?
- b. How relevant is the experience to the role/responsibility to be undertaken and the specific needs of the programme?
- c. How current is the experience? When was experience gained and how recent is it?
- d. Are there any transferable skills or experience in other areas such as teaching, sports coaching, therapy, adult services, risk management or safeguarding

2. Qualifications and training:

- a. What qualifications are held or training has been undertaken?
- b. How relevant are the qualifications or training to working with young people? If relevant and considered necessary, are youth work practice certificates held?
- c. When were they undertaken? Has there been a practical application since?
- d. Is it possible to evidence or verify the training or qualifications?
- e. Are there any transferable qualifications or training in other areas such as teaching, sports coaching, therapy, adult services, risk management or safeguarding, first aid & medical?
- f. Is there evidence of any other relevant professional development or memberships?

3. Personal attributes:

- a. Does the individual display an awareness and understanding of their responsibility?
- b. Does the individual accept and understand their own limitations and know when to seek advice?
- c. Does the individual have time to dedicate to professional development?
- d. Is it assessed that the individual has good judgement and are they trustworthy?
- e. Do the individual's behaviours suggest an awareness of the balance between confidence and complacency?

Youth work organisations should look to make an informed decision about an individual's competence through a combination of;

- Evidence or verification of relevant qualifications and training
- Evidence and understanding of relevant experience and the practical application of skills needed
- Observation of their practice
- Understanding of their individual attributes relevant to the proposed programme

Where sufficient competence is deemed not to be met for a particular role or programme, internal or external training may be provided to bridge the gap, and/or external expertise should be sought, i.e. outsourcing delivery of a particular activity. Where sufficient competence cannot be met by training or external support, adaptations should be made to the proposed programme or delivery to maintain an acceptable level of risk.

Health and safety competency

There are various professional health and safety qualifications and other youth work training courses will normally include risk management as part of their specifications. Youth work organisations may need access to individuals with formal health and safety qualifications and specialist advice for some specific functions but for much youth work service delivery, workers will not need such specialist training.

It is an organisation's duty to assess what training is required and to provide suitable access to this, whether this be conducted 'in house' or externally. Such training is likely to be best delivered in a practical way that is designed specifically for the youth worker and the roles they are assigned. A key component of any such training will be in how to conduct dynamic risk assessments in a setting and activity that is relevant to the individual's role. Workers' training needs should be reviewed periodically and key training requirements should be repeated at a frequency identified by their employer.