

# North-West #2: Making the 'business case' for youth work in the North-West

*Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> December, 1.30-3pm*

25 people from the voluntary sector, health, youth work, education, and local authorities across the North-West attended the workshop. The workshop explored how to make the 'business case' for youth work, and shared learning from speakers who have successfully taken their project from short-term pilots into established projects. This workshop was facilitated by the [Institute for Voluntary Action Research](#) (IVAR) who are supporting ICBs across the North-West to connect and share learning. This note aims to inform ongoing conversations about taking forward the ideas shared, both for those who attended the workshops and those who were unable to attend but are interested in collaborating. It outlines common themes and approaches that emerged from conversations in the workshop.

For more details on what was covered in the workshop, please find the recording of the session here: [North West Regional workshop 2 Making the 'business case' for youth work](#)

## How to successfully make the business case for youth work

This workshop focussed on three stories from speakers who all have experience on making the business case for youth work. Presentations focussed on challenges and successes or making the case, the positive impact it has had on children and young people, and key learning that can be taken forward.

### Getting people on board with youth work

*Nic Rigby, Youth Service Manager at Manchester University Foundation Trust (MFT)*

*'Making friends and influencing people so that people can't say no to us'*

#### **Experience of 'making the case'**

The MFT Youth Service is comprised of seven youth workers (growing from a team of one) and provides comprehensive support, including engaging young people in clinical appointments, one-to-one sessions, group sessions and youth drop-ins.

The service is heavily involved in healthcare transition and runs a full peer support programme. It established a Youth Hub at the Royal Manchester Children's Hospital for young people aged 11 and upwards, which provides both inpatient and outpatient youth club facilities, sensory sessions, and activities to promote self-care. It also promoted and encouraged disabled young people to take part in the Great Manchester Run, highlighting

that the services focus on the potential of young people – it is about what they can do, rather than what they cannot.

### Key advice for ‘making the case’

- **Recognise the value of youth workers:** Youth workers must advocate for their profession and overcome their own imposter syndrome. They should be proud of the specialised skills that they bring, and highlight how unique these skills are within healthcare team – you’re not “just a youth worker”.
- **Build relationships by connecting clinicians and young people:** Collaborating with clinical teams and young people to design and deliver sessions allows staff and young people to see each other in a different light outside of a formal clinic or appointment setting.
- **Talk their language:** Change your arguments and terminology based on your audience. Understand different groups concerns and address these in a way that reassures them (for example, Nic shared an instance of a nurse needing reassurance about medication administering during an offsite trip, and Nic was able to reassure them about their standard procedures). Additionally, linking youth work to NHS strategies (such as the 10-year Health Plan) helps to focus in on how youth workers can help.
- **Use models and frameworks to ‘professionalise’ youth work:** Use frameworks such as the [National Youth Standards](#) and [Youth Work Curriculum](#). Refer to models like the [Lundy Model](#), which is straightforward for both clinicians and young people to understand and relates to the UN Convention of Rights (which may make it more appealing to clinicians).
- **"Flaunt it":** Use exciting visual comms to present the service as a unique product and a positive story for the trust. Consider establishing a regular newsletter to "everybody, everybody" to update them visually on achievements and create a positive culture.
- **Governance and risk management:** Develop rigorous governance structures (such as Standard Operating Procedures, medication trackers, communication protocols with duty managers etc.) to cover youth work activities like residentials and community trips, which differ from standard hospital risks (like slip, trips, and falls).
- **Partnership programmes:** Work with external organisations to deliver projects and create a "buzz" without requiring internal funds.

## Establishing a CYP Diabetes youth worker

Dr Satish Hulikere, Clinical Lead for CYP Diabetes

*‘Build your evidence and make sure you’ve got enough data to support your case’*

### Experience of ‘making the case’

Dr Satish successfully made the case for a youth worker in the CYP Diabetes team, and after a 1-year pilot, successfully made the case for the need of a permanent post for a youth worker in this team. Dr Satish was able to make the business case by highlighting the importance of youth workers using both national and local data, and worked across departmental teams (finance, clinical team, transitional team etc) to *‘get their funding ask right’*. He was then able to argue for the pilot post to be made permanent by demonstrating the impact of having a CYP Diabetes youth worker, such as a reduction in Did Not Attend (DNA) rates, a reduction in diabetes-related admissions and Diabetic Ketoacidosis (DKA) and more youth engagement (for instance, when a young person

reported a pump failure whilst abroad, they reached out to the youth worker rather than the clinical team due to the rapport that had been built).

### Key advice for 'making the case'

- **Know your data:** Use external sources like the National Paediatric Diabetes Audit (NPDA) and internal reports/local audits to define the context. Dr Satish was able to use this to highlight how many children and young people are managed by paediatric diabetes services, how many go on to access additional psychological support and why employing a youth worker is critical to bridge the gap left by a national shortage of psychologists.
- **Focus on Return on Investment (ROI):** Crucially, highlight how the youth worker role reduces cost by reducing DKA admissions and improving clinic attendance (i.e. reducing Did Not Attend (DNA) rates). Reduced Diabetic Ketoacidosis (DKA) admissions save the best practice tariff money.
- **Align with NHS strategies:** Demonstrate how your proposal aligns with national priorities (like Core 20+5, or the NHS 10-year Health Plan), such as promoting the voice of young people, valuing differences, fostering self-confidence and encouraging independence.
- **Collaborate on with teams to create 'funding ask':** Work with the commercial development, transformation, and finance teams to accurately determine the funding request, including salary bands and associated employer costs/inflation.
- **Measure impact:** Define clear objectives using primary outcomes (such as HbA1c levels) and secondary outcomes (like hospital admissions, clinic attendance, and quality of life indicators) to measure and demonstrate impact.

## Degree Apprenticeship in Youth Work and Community

Janet Soo (Lead Nurse Children's Diabetes Team East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust) and Paula Smith (Trainee Health Based Youth Worker)

*It's those everyday things, but making it into a fun thing. The kids don't know that they're actually learning how to manage their diabetes*

### Experience of 'making the case'

Janet had identified Paula (who was working as a Healthcare Assistant) as someone who had good rapport with patients, and someone who was uniquely positioned to gather 'intel' on patients' issues and gain trust of young people during brief clinic interactions. This indicated that Paula may thrive in a role beyond her Healthcare Assistant (HCA) duties. Janet was able to identify training, source funding for this and 'make the case' for Paula to enrol in the Degree Apprenticeship Programme. As a result, Paula is now in her third year of her apprenticeship course, and is employed as a Band 4 Paediatric Diabetes trainee youth worker (and will be Band 5 on completion).

Paula reflected on her personal growth during the course, and stated that the role has increased her confidence, resilience, job satisfaction and given her a clear professional identity as a health-based youth worker. She has particularly enjoyed learning from other people on the course, learning about academic models (e.g. the Lundy Model) and applying these practically. Some key achievements include:

- Leading a 'youth interview panel' for a new paediatric consultant
- Running a girls group to empower young people to overcome diabetes stigma
- Moving Type 2 diabetes clinics into Blackburn Youth Zone to link health, activity, and community

- Organising successful family fun days (e.g. Moana Film Day for diabetes management education, and securing 100 tickets to an Accrington Stanley Football match for families etc.)

### Key advice for ‘making the case’

- **Identify and nurture talent in your team:** If there isn’t capacity to bring a youth worker role in, consider developing someone in your team who shows potential for youth worker training.
- **Think outside the box when securing funding:** In order to secure funding for the Degree Apprenticeship Programme, they used consultant money to cover the salary difference and displaced Paula's HCA post to advertise the new Youth Worker post.

## Key takeaways

Across all three presentations, several common themes and essential pieces of advice emerged regarding making the business case for youth work within healthcare settings. Some key takeaways from the speakers include:

### Show them why youth work matters

Be vocal about the unique skills youth workers bring, back it up with data, and link it to real outcomes/ impact. Use national frameworks and NHS priorities to highlight credibility and relevance of youth work.

### Make it easy for clinicians and leaders to say yes

Build strong relationships, translate your message into their language, and address their concerns directly. Good governance, clear procedures, and well-defined impact measures help people feel confident that youth work is safe, intentional, and worth doing.

### Be engaging

Use visual comms, real examples, and co-production sessions that show clinicians the value of working with young people and bringing in a youth worker. Share achievements widely, create a buzz through partnerships, and present youth work as something the organisation can be proud of.

### Be creative and strategic about funding and talent

Explore unconventional funding routes, and develop people who have the potential to grow into youth work roles when you can’t recruit externally.

## Additional resources

- [Do youth workers have a role in improving diabetes transition services?](#)

## Next steps

- For more details on what was covered in the workshop, please find the recording of the session here: [North West Regional workshop 2 Making the 'business case' for youth work](#)
- The second webinar exploring the National Youth Strategy and its impact on young people across England will be taking place 10<sup>th</sup> February, 12.30-1.30. Please [sign-up](#) to register.
- We have set up an online space on [Future NHS](#) to continue the conversation.