

Operator Guidelines for the Youthreach programme

April 2015

Foreword

This document (to be referred to as the ‘Guidelines’) has been prepared by the Department of Education and Skills. It sets out guidelines for the operation of the Youthreach programme delivered by Education and Training Boards (ETBs). It outlines the procedures and policies for the administration and management of the programme in centres.

The Guidelines have been developed in response to a recommendation in the Value for Money review of the Youthreach and STTC programmes which was published in 2008.

The publication of these Guidelines is intended to establish common practices and procedures across the Youthreach programme. While acknowledging the need for flexibility and different approaches to the delivery of the Youthreach programme, these Guidelines are intended to bring clarity and direction to further enhance the day to day operation of the programme.

The Guidelines are designed to assist in the management and administration of the Youthreach programme. Consultation with the local ETB, National Youthreach Co-ordinator, SOLAS and the Department of Education and Skills should be undertaken where clarification is required.

These Guidelines will be reviewed by the Department of Education and Skills and SOLAS from time to time and updated as appropriate.

These Guidelines should be read in conjunction with a number of other documents including:

- Quality Framework (QF) documents (www.youthreach.ie)
- Circular letters issued by the Department of Education and Skills from time to time
- Internal Audit Unit – Education and Training Board (formerly VSSU) guidelines
- Guidelines on programme planning issued under the QF
- Child Protection Procedures for Youthreach Centres

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1. Introduction

1.1 The strategic framework

This publication sets out guidelines for the Youthreach programme as funded by SOLAS. The goals, objectives and modalities outlined in this document are intended to contribute to the delivery of a broad range of policies developed by the Government to address issues of national strategic importance. These include the National Development Plan, the National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion, the National Children's Strategy, the National Health Strategy, the Information Society Strategy, the National Spatial Strategy and the Future Skills Strategy.

The publication of *Learning For Life: White Paper on Adult Education* in 2000 marked the adoption of Lifelong Learning as a key framework for Further Education policy in Ireland. The policies outlined in the White Paper were complemented by the report of the *Task Force on Lifelong Learning* (2002) which focused on labour market needs. The need to continuously upgrade knowledge, skills and competencies across all occupations and workplaces is now generally accepted and this lifelong learning agenda is also regarded as key to delivering on employability and social inclusion since it enables individuals to access more and higher quality jobs (Ireland 2002: *Towards 2016* (2006)). In addition, the Expert Group on Future Skill Needs (2003, 2007) recommends that if Ireland is to attract and sustain a knowledge intensive industrial sector then formal education must be underpinned and enhanced by a commitment to lifelong learning which is complemented by a formal framework that encourages both a return to education and the constant upskilling of the workforce. In the National Action Plan Against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2003-2005 (p5) the effects on labour market participation of early school leaving are noted and among the policy tasks identified is 'to continue to address the issue of early school leaving and to further expand opportunities for lifelong learning'.

One of the key goals identified in the Department of Education and Skills' statement of strategy is to provide opportunities for upskilling and reskilling that met the needs of individuals and the labour market. The system of further education and vocational training is organised in a suite of programmes across NFQ¹ Levels 1-6, of which the Youthreach programme is one. Youthreach is intended as a key element of the Government's contribution to the achievement of a lifelong learning society.

It is also intended as part of the continuum of education and care provision for those of normal school-going age. In this regard its provision is also in accordance with legislation on children and general education such as the Child Care Act 1991, the Education Act 1998, the Education Welfare Act 2000, the Children Act 2001, the National Children's Strategy, and the Youth Justice Strategy etc. Accordingly, Youthreach is also regarded as a second mode through which young people may participate in education as well as an integral part of the wider framework of services for children and young people.

¹ www.nfq.ie

1.2 Further Education in Ireland

Further Education is a general term for programmes of vocational education and training and adult and community education delivered through agencies associated with the Department of Education and Skills. The programmes are, in principle, open to all, but a central purpose is to provide a range of supports to people who have left school early or who need further vocational education and training to enhance their employment prospects and to enable them to progress their education up to a standard equivalent to upper secondary level. Further Education courses are provided at Levels 1 – 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Many strands of activity come under the umbrella of Further Education in Ireland. They include the acquisition of skills and knowledge, responding to learner and community needs and in some courses a process of critical self-reflection that can lead to personal, political and social transformation. While vocational training is geared to the needs of the learner in a broad economic and social context, adult education empowers the learners to define their own needs, access their own resources and articulate their own identity within that of the wider community.

1.3 Principles underpinning Further Education

The following principles derive from the White Paper on Adult Education (2000) and underpin the provision of further education programmes, and therefore are the principles underpinning the Youthreach programme:

- The learner is the centre of learning in further education. Accordingly, provision should be built around the needs, strengths and goals of participants, especially at Levels 1 – 4.
- Increasing the skill levels nationally is a core objective of further education. Accordingly, provision should also be designed in accordance with local and national economic and skills requirements.
- Progression is a key part of further education. Accordingly, all learners should be offered support in choosing next steps at the conclusion of their programme.
- The principle of equality requires that all learners be afforded the opportunity of reaching their potential. Accordingly, as stated in the White Paper, ‘A key priority in promoting an inclusive society is to target investment towards those most at risk’.
- Stakeholders (learners, employers, communities) are entitled to a demonstrably high quality further education.
- Further education provision will be fair. Accordingly, procedures should be just and reasonable, policies will be documented and codes will be followed.
- Taxpayers are entitled to value for money and Further Education provision will be delivered with this in mind.

1.4 Value for Money Review of the Youthreach programme

In 2007, the Youthreach (and Senior Traveller Training Centre, STTC) programme was the subject of a Value for Money Review by the Department of Education and Skills. This Review was published in 2008. When examining the programme in the

current educational, social and economic environment, the following points were highlighted:

Notwithstanding the economic success that Ireland has enjoyed over most of the last decade a number of disadvantaged groups remain (including early school leavers) and their needs are recognised in national policy.

Allowing for a substantial range of preventive measures being in place within the education system, significant problems still remain regarding learner behaviour and motivation, special educational needs and early school leaving.

International experience supports the provision of an out of school mode by which young people may return to education in a non-threatening learner centred environment.

2. The Youthreach programme

Youthreach is the principal national response in Ireland to the difficulties faced by young people who have left school early. It is an education and training programme targeting in particular those between 16 and 20 years of age² who have left the mainstream school system with poor qualifications or none.

2.1 Programme aims and objectives

The Youthreach programme aims to provide early school leavers (16-20 years) with the knowledge, skills and confidence required to participate fully in society and progress to further education, training and employment.

The programme objectives are social inclusion and progression into further education and training opportunities and the labour market

For the participants, the programme aims to promote:

- personal and social development and increased self-esteem
- independence, personal autonomy, active citizenship and a pattern of lifelong learning

The programme is delivered in out-of-school settings nationwide. These are intended to be dynamic settings capable of innovation. A pillar of Youthreach is local centre management which enhances local responses to local social, economic and cultural environments and needs.

2.2 The Four Programme Phases

The Youthreach programme falls into four phases. They are not specifically time bound but should be organised to allow and encourage learners at various levels progress through the programme.

Induction/Engagement

The purpose of this phase – normally it will be brief – is to engage and ‘attach’ the learner, to introduce her/him to the centre and vice versa and to lay the groundwork for subsequent development. During this phase centres are to initiate the process of identifying the needs of learners. This should be done in partnership with the learners and based as far as possible on learner self-assessment. This process is to lead to the agreement (with the learner) of an individual learner plan which will be regularly reviewed and adjusted through each phase of the programme, within the bounds of the centre’s capacity. Other information to support this process may be circulated by the Department of Education and Skills and placed on the Youthreach website from time to time.

² See Section 8.2 for further elaboration of the target group.

Foundation

The Foundation Phase is to focus on personal and social development (soft skills development) and on “learning” or skills development (hard skills development). Among the intended outcomes of this phase are

- improvement in self-esteem and pro-social engagement
- self-identification of personal, social and learning difficulties and initial steps to address them
- development of self-confidence to enable learners to participate in society and
- acquisition of a range of competencies and basic life skills essential for further learning and participation in civic society and the labour market.

Typically, learners in this phase are likely to attempt certification programmes at NFQ Levels 2 and 3.

Progression

Learning from the Foundation phase is to be enhanced in the progression phase which continues the learner’s social and personal development but also provides a range of educational, training and work experience options to enable the learners to have the knowledge, skills and confidence to enhance their employability so as to progress to further education, training, employment or other life choices and to participate fully in society. Typically, learners in this phase are likely to present for certification at NFQ Levels 3, 4 with some modules at level 5.

Note: It is not intended that Post Leaving Certificate type courses be run as part of the Youthreach programme.

Transition

The Transition process is seen as a brief support mechanism in enabling certain learner’s progress effectively from the centre. It will focus on preparing and supporting the learner in his/her progression from the programmes to further education, training, employment or other life choices. This may involve, for example, key workers, using Youthreach Guidance/Counselling resources, and SOLAS-funded advocates working with participants in centres to ensure as effective a transition as possible from their centre.

It is also envisaged that the transition phase will involve learners meeting a key worker and/or advocate etc. from time to time over a short time period after completing their Youthreach programme.

This support may not be required by all learners. Learners involved in this process will not be equated to a part time place in the programme and will not receive any allowance.

2.3 Duration of the programme for learners

The normal duration of the first two phases should continue to be one year or the length of time needed by an individual to attain the required level based on their individual learning needs. The progression phase may be extended from one to two years for those pursuing the Leaving Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Applied or FETAC awards at levels 3 - 4. Due regard should be had for the timing of assessments and appropriate adjustments should be made in the best interests of the learners. **In the normal course of events learners will complete the programme in two years with a possible third year for progression.**

2.3.1 Tracking learners' progress during and after Youthreach

The baseline for assessing learner progress will be established by an initial assessment or screening (Youthreach Quality Standard 21³). Guidelines on initial assessment and screening will be available on www.youthreach.ie. Progress during the programme will be tracked by the implementation of individual learner plans and learner evaluation of their experience.

2.3.2 Exit interview

All learners should be interviewed on leaving the centre to evaluate their experience and the achievement of their agreed goals. Where possible learners should be contacted 12 to 18 months after leaving the programme and re-interviewed to monitor longer-term outcomes for learners completing the Youthreach programme and to identify issues, concerns and difficulties encountered by learners subsequent to Youthreach.

2.4 Key characteristics of Youthreach

The primary target group for Youthreach is young people between 16 and 20 years of age⁴. While some come within the ambit of children's legislation all are in transition to adulthood. This stage of development is described by some psychologists as 'emerging adulthood' and the programme is structured and delivered accordingly. In addition, they have often had poor experiences of school. They may present high levels of personal and education needs and challenging behaviours. The general methodology adopted is to take these factors into account and incorporate approaches from education (especially adult education), training and youth work. It is to be learner-centred and flexible and embrace formal and informal methodologies and contexts. Providers should place a strong emphasis on:

- Attachment and opportunities to belong
- Listening, respect, supportive relationships
- Personal and social development
- Basic skills of literacy/numeracy, communications and IT
- Guidance, pathway planning and progression and future skills needs.

³ www.youthreach.ie

⁴ See 8.2 below

2.4.1 The centrality of planning in Youthreach

Planning is central to how Youthreach fulfils its mandate and two slogans encapsulate the ideal approach:

One centre – one plan: planning, internal evaluation and integrated delivery are at the core of a centre's operation (see 2.5)

One learner – one plan: services for learners should be agreed with the learner and should be coordinated and consistent (see 2.7)

These are expressed in the Quality Framework and the key worker approach respectively.

2.5 The Quality Framework

Quality assurance in Youthreach is set out in the Quality Framework (QF) which provides a comprehensive quality framework of standards, planning and evaluation for Youthreach. All centres will engage in internal centre evaluation (ICE) or centre development planning (CDP) processes annually. External evaluation is conducted by the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills. (The QF is set out in detail on <http://www.youthreach.ie/>).

2.6 The key worker approach in Youthreach

As well as teaching, training and youth work, Youthreach comprehends other processes. The QF lists a number of quality standards relating to learner support, such as the provision of a positive, encouraging, safe, challenging and caring environment; a welcoming and informative induction programme; a broad ranging initial assessment; an individual action plan for each learner; and a broad ranging and integrated programme of social, personal and health education. These are most effectively provided through a key worker system of regular individual interview, planning and review sessions. The function of individual planning and review processes is to ensure learner engagement and programme relevance.

2.7 Individual learner plans

Using the key working process an individual learner plan should be developed for each learner during the induction/engagement phase and reviewed and adapted through her/his time on the programme. This plan should be informed by learners' own perceptions of their strengths and needs and be based on their own expressed personal, educational and vocational goals. The plan should describe the actions that will be taken in pursuit of these goals.

2.8 The importance of one to one work

Delivery of the programme includes all work with learners that contribute to achieving the aim of the programme. While much of this work will be delivered in a classroom setting through the provision of both certified and non-certified programmes, it is also important to recognise that one to one work is also an essential aspect of programme delivery. This may include key working, mentoring, dealing with behaviour through problem solving discussion, counselling, development and review of learning plans and literacy support and addressing emotional and social

issues as they arise incidentally, e.g. conflicts and crises. This one to one work with learners is essential for the development of the effective relationships which are the basis for the programme. It ensures holistic support for learners, addresses social and emotional needs and ensures that the programme responds to individual needs.

Based on the needs of the learners, the centre should at all times provide a balance of one to one and group based responses and allocate resources accordingly.

2.9 Teamwork and collaboration

The Youthreach programme is not simply about learning experiences. It also comprises the key working relationships established and maintained (sometimes in considerable adversity) both within the centre and without. It follows that staff have a responsibility to understand and contribute to the running of the centre, the development of policies and procedures, to evaluations and to planning. Accepting the learners as they present, including the difficulties that they are encountering outside of the centre, is also part and parcel of the work. Accordingly, members of staff in centres should endeavour to work in a collaborative and cooperative manner and should be provided by management with real opportunities to contribute to the work of their centre. Staff meetings should be held regularly and at least once each month as a minimum.

2.10 Staff as role models

Staff are responsible for building and modelling high standards of behaviour when dealing with learners and each other. Centre staff often become secondary attachment figures for learners because they provide support and stability. Therefore staff modelling good behaviour can be a powerful source of learning for participants and staff should model the type of behaviour that they want to see in learners, for example in communicating, showing respect, dealing with emotions, collaboration, preparation and organisation of work and addressing challenges.

2.11 Involvement of Parents/ Guardians

The involvement of parents/guardians (with regard to participants aged under 18) is one of the ways in which centre staff can support the participation of learners in the centre. If parents/ guardians are aware of the requirements of the programme and how it is responding to the needs of the learners they will be in a better position to support them in participating.

A working relationship with parents/ guardians should be developed from the start. Contacting parents/ guardians only when there are problems can result in resentment and poor co-operation and they should be kept abreast of learners' progress through parent/ staff meetings, open days and annual/ bi annual reports on progress.

2.12 Inter-agency collaboration

Many learners have needs beyond the capacity of the programme to address. Youthreach practitioners engage with others who provide services to young people on an ongoing basis. Accordingly, programme staff will actively collaborate with other agencies working in the best interests of participants.

3. The Youthreach approach

3.1 A synthesis of three disciplines

From the outset it was envisaged that Youthreach would synthesise the three disciplines of education, training and youth work and that best practice would be where these overlapped.

The *education* contribution to the Youthreach model derives from alternative approaches in mainstream schooling and adult education. *Alternative approaches in mainstream schooling* focus on different and ‘relevant’ curricula, in particular involving learner-centred methodologies, experiential learning and continuous assessment and profiling. Recent years have seen a growing emphasis on accommodating multiple intelligences. *Adult education* is itself a substantial and complex field. Among the characteristics often associated with adult education is that it:

- is pragmatic
- is learner-centred and learner-led
- encourages independent learning and
- uses the learner’s experience as a rich resource for learning.

In *adult education*, people learn what they need to know, and therefore learning programmes are organised around life application. Also, since people are performance centred in their learning, *learning is based around experiences* (rather than ‘subjects’).

Vocational Training has also made a major contribution to Youthreach. It is valued by learners as ‘useful’, practical, tangible and employment-focused (including links with employers). Its work/employment orientation develops marketable skills. Good training is highly organised, clearly setting out objectives, plans, methods and intended outcomes. In delivery it is incremental, cumulative and ‘doable’. It has also embraced methods like mentoring and has a strong problem-solving culture.

Adult educators and vocational trainers identify different types of learners, each responding to different kinds of learning experience and delivery. Tutors and teachers are expected to orient the learning programme towards the different learning styles in a given group⁵.

Youth work has significantly influenced Youthreach practice. Among the tenets for working with youth at risk listed by Brendtro et al (1983) are that *the relationship is primary; teaching is humanistic; crisis is opportunity* and *practice is pragmatic*.

These authors add (Brendtro et al, 1983:22) that ‘The quality of human relationships is the most powerful determinant of successful programmes for the education and treatment of troubled children; methodology is less important than relationships’. They cite the views of Fagen, Long and Stevens (1975) that:

- positive feelings about the subject matter enhance learning;

⁵ See, for example, David A. Kolb ‘The process of experiential learning’ in Thorp et al (eds) (1993) *Culture and Processes of Adult Learning* London: Routledge

- positive feelings about the teacher enhance learning;
- subjects that enhance self-esteem are more easily learned.

Key factors in High Quality Youth Programmes

The above characteristics are consistent with international best practice. The University of Arizona summarises the key factors in High Quality Youth programmes as follows⁶:

- **Physical and psychological safety** – staff create an atmosphere of physical and emotional safety
- **Appropriate Structure** – staff develop and provide a consistent system
- **Supportive relationships** – staff care and provide appropriate connections with youth
- **Opportunities to belong** – staff develop opportunities to instil a sense of belonging
- **Positive social norms** – staff reinforce positive social behaviours
- **Support for efficacy and meaning** – staff develop an environment where youth matter and make a difference
- **Opportunities for skill building** – staff engage youth in learning opportunities
- **Integration of family, centre and community efforts** – staff create linkages between youths' lives

3.2 General Methodology

As already stated, Youthreach is intended to embrace best practice from education, training and youth work. In these disciplines teaching and training are cooperative. There is no 'one right method'. Youthreach practice is pragmatic, always seeking out what works. It is a problem-solving, rather than a problem-identifying, approach.

Learning is seen as *construction* rather than *instruction*. The learner should be the driver of the learning process with her/his experience incorporated into the work that is done in classrooms and workshops. Staff in Youthreach must be able to listen empathically and constructively and staff recruitment processes must take account of this requirement. Staff will be expected to develop a picture of both the individual young person and the group from which the approach to personal development, teaching and training will derive.

It is a core requirement that staff know, and can explain, what they are doing, how they are doing it and why they are doing it as they are. This means that there is always evidence of thought and planning and structure and, if they have changed tack or approach, that they are clear about why.

As far as possible, every centre and every staff member should be able to deploy different methodologies (i.e. have a toolbox) and should be comfortable

⁶ Lauxman, Waits, Stuart, Tessman, Borden, Strickland, Norquest & Stone (2007) *Identifying high quality youth programs* (University of Arizona College of Agriculture and Life Sciences)

switching as appropriate. If something isn't working, staff should be ready to abandon that method and try another.

3.3 Programme/curriculum

In Youthreach, the curriculum is understood to involve the totality of relationships between staff and learners. It is the frame within which the needs of the learner are addressed. As such, the learner is at the heart of the process and the staff member is always a curriculum developer, designing and inventing learning situations rather than 'delivering' pre-packaged syllabi.

Providers are directed to the Programme Planning Guidelines developed under the QF (www.youthreach.ie).

3.3.1 Three characteristics of a high quality curriculum

In Youthreach, the curriculum is a flexible framework on which learning activities are built. However, three criteria in particular define a quality curriculum in Youthreach⁷:

1. It should be *relevant* to the culture of the learner, to the range of intelligences that learners display, to the present and to the future lives of the learners;
2. The curriculum should be *challenging*, in terms of setting high academic and vocational standards, of real-life applications and of personal ambitions;
3. The Youthreach curriculum should be *imaginative*, fostering the creative and expressive qualities of the learners and a sense of wonder, of fantasy and imagination.

Best practice in Youthreach:

- Starts from 'where the learner is at'
- Involves the development of an overall individual action plan
- Places the learners at the centre of their own assessment, planning and progression processes. Involves the learners in assessment, planning and progression
- Builds on interests and abilities
- Affirms and 'attaches' the learner
- Is experiential
- Is enjoyable
- Is structured, planned (short and long-term)
- Is to standard – high quality – and is consistent
- Balances safety and challenge
- Carries and communicates high expectations

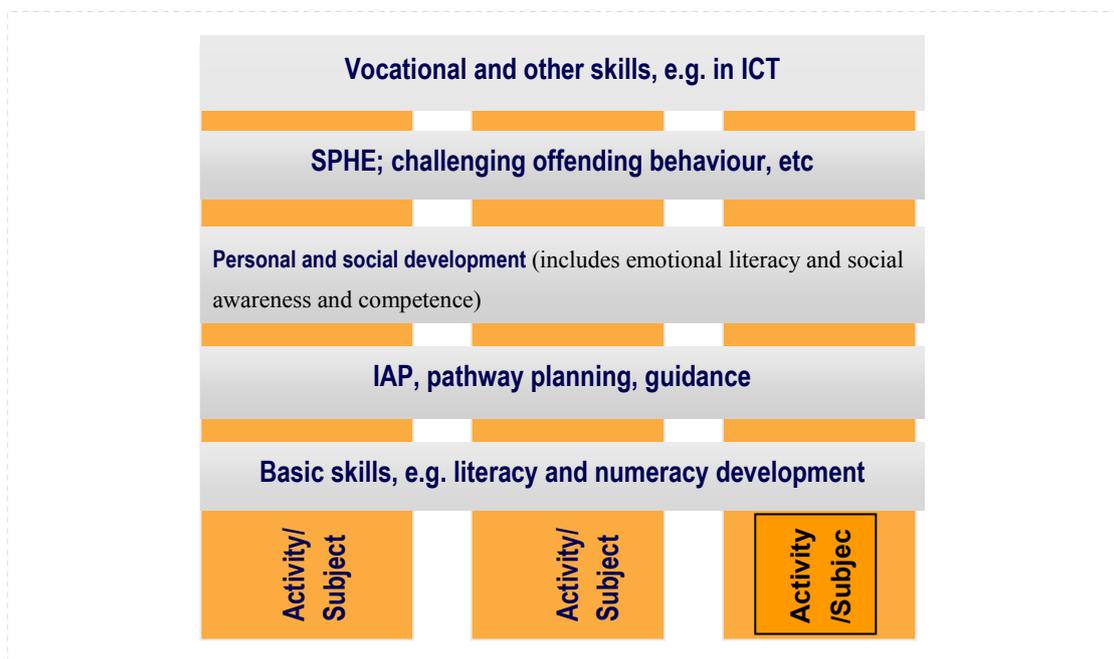
⁷ Hargeaves, A, Earl, L. & Ryan, J. (1996) *Schooling for Change: Reinventing Education for Early Adolescents*
London: Routledge/Falmer

- Embeds and integrates other skills and knowledge (this includes 1:1 and group delivery).

All staff should be engaged and work as a team. Multiple methodologies and integrated actions such as team and inter-disciplinary projects are used. Teaching and training should proceed at a pace that the learners can handle.

Transversal elements such as personal development, guidance, basic skills and health promotion are integrated in a curricular matrix as below. Cultural sensitivity is necessary. Integrated whole-centre approaches to literacy/numeracy and personal development are crucial. Innovation and creativity are encouraged throughout.

A curricular matrix



3.3.2 Programme content

The main programme/curricular elements will include general education, vocational training and work experience as well as a variety of complementary experiences that build confidence and broaden horizons.

The precise configuration of the programme in each location is a matter to be decided locally and will be determined by individual learner and community needs and potential. In a needs-based service it is the learners' needs that must define the curriculum rather than the competencies and preferences of providers. Innovation and creativity are encouraged in the development of centre programmes and should utilise

projects, collaborative learning and make extensive use of the physical and social environment in which the centre operates.

The curriculum/programme for Youthreach rests on ten building blocks:

1. 'Soft skills' development

Soft skills is a term relating to the cluster of personality traits, social graces and communication skills that characterise how we interact with each other and form relationships. The abilities involved include effective communication, creativity, analytical thinking, diplomacy, flexibility, problem solving and listening skills. Soft skills are essentially people skills rather than the technical skills required to perform particular jobs. But because a person's soft skills are central to how well they work with others or how they deal with customers face-to-face they are increasingly being seen as highly relevant to employability. They are also the kind of skills that are needed to perform jobs where job requirements are defined in terms of expected outcomes rather than the processes to be used.

The core elements of soft skills are:

- Emotional literacy
- Personal effectiveness
- Social awareness
- Interactional skills
- Cognitive skills (e.g. analytical thinking, creativity)

2. Basic skills

While basic skills can be considered context-specific (as in the basic skills for a particular job or occupation) the term is used most often to refer to the basic skills of oral communication, literacy and numeracy. Sometimes the communication skills involved in ICT are also included, along with sub-skill aspects of the above such as listening, punctuation, spellings, etc.

No learner should complete a period on the programme without appropriate attention having been paid to the development of basic skills and literacy in particular. A whole-centre and team approach to basic skills should be developed, in line with the programme fundamentals.

3. Personal, Social and Health Education

Personal, social and health education is a curricular approach to the teaching of a range of life skills. Life skills incorporate basic and soft skills and also the personal skill areas of self care and health. However, in Youthreach, personal, social and health education is *also* part and parcel of all processes and interactions between staff and learners. Formal programmes can be used which address specific aspects of personal, social and health education (e.g. to develop emotional literacy, to combat bullying, to challenge offending behaviour) or they can be developed in-house by staff to suit the specific needs of their learner groups.

4. Practical/vocational skills appropriate to the learners' needs, abilities and aspirations

5. Academic subjects appropriate to the learners' needs, abilities and aspirations

6. **New technologies and the technologies and media of youth** (including Digital media)
7. **Work experience** – All centres should have a programme plan for work experience. The purpose of work experience in Youthreach is to enable students to explore possible career paths through preparing and planning for, participating in and then evaluating a specific work placement. It is an important part of the programme and requires careful planning and execution to identify the most appropriate work experience options for learners – this will depend on their preparedness in addition to their vocational and career goals and should link to an individual learning plan as well as the local context.

There is no set proportion of the programme that must be dedicated to work experience but it is recommended that no more than six weeks per annum per learner is spent on work experience.
8. **Active and Participatory Citizenship and Community Engagement**
9. **Energy and ecological awareness**
10. **Enrichment activities** including a wide variety of arts-based, cultural, sports and community-based activities.

3.4 Certification

It is understood that participants will join the programme at different stages of development. However, the availability of certification at all NFQ Levels from 1-4 through FETAC facilitates all learners in having achievement recognised. To the greatest extent possible programmes should lead to certification, These include Junior Certificate, Leaving Certificate, Leaving Certificate Applied and QQI certification, in particular Levels 1- 4.

Other certification, such as Safe Pass or the ECDL, is also available and is very useful for future employment. All certification should be regarded as a toolbox of options to be chosen or changed according to the needs of a given group. Staff may also provide some activities and programmes that provide positive experiences for the learners but do not result in certification.

With all certification, the needs of the current group of learners must take precedence over all other considerations.

4. Management

4.1 General

At national level, the Department of Education and Skills and SOLAS are responsible for the Youthreach programme operated by ETBs. At local level, the Chief Executive (CE) of the ETB will have executive responsibility for the Youthreach programme and for ensuring a co-ordinated approach to its implementation. The ETBs providing the Youthreach programme will have full responsibility for all aspects of the operation of the programme.

4.2 Boards of Management and ETB sub-committees

Each ETB should establish either a Board of Management (BOM) or an ETB sub-committee with responsibility for the Youthreach provision under its remit. The constitution of such boards or committees is a matter for individual ETBs. Where a number of centres exist in an ETB area, it will be open to the ETB to establish a composite board in place of individual boards or to delegate this function to its Adult Education Board.

The function of the Youthreach Sub-Committee/BOM is:

- to assist the ETB in carrying out its functions
- to develop vocational education in the communities served by Youthreach
- to provide a forum for dialogue for stakeholders in Youthreach
- to act as a link between the Youthreach centres, their communities and the ETB
- to make recommendations to the ETB as appropriate
- to advise on specific matters referred to it by the ETB

Such sub-committees/BOM will:

1. Advise the ETB on and review
 - policy and guidelines documents
 - staff development/support and training programmes
 - the overall development of the Youthreach programme
 - the management of resources
2. Meet with
 - DES Inspectorate undertaking whole centre evaluations (WCE)
3. Comment and respond as ETB Youthreach Sub –Committee/BOM
 - to individual WCE reports
 - to individual centre development plans (QF)

Terms of office, operational procedures and membership of the Boards should be appropriate to the execution of the functions set out above.

4.3 Reporting to the ETB

ETBs should maintain clear reporting channels between ETB management and Youthreach programme staff. In addition, Centre Development Plans and reports arising from Internal Centre Evaluations are to be submitted to the ETB annually for the purpose of reporting to ETBs and to assist ETBs in overall management of centres.

4.4 Consultation with learners/ Communication between learners and staff

Centres will develop and maintain clear, consistent and regular mechanisms for consultation and communication with learners. These may include a learner council, full centre meetings and feedback during 1:1 meetings.

4.5 Promotion and publicity

The Youthreach programme in certain ETBs is funded under the European Social Fund. As part of the EU Structural Funds Regulations, co-funded projects must comply with specific EU requirements. Such requirements have been notified separately to the individual measure managers concerned and should be strictly adhered to.

On an associated issue it is vitally important that centres actively promote the centre and the work of the centre in their local communities.

4.6 Statistical and financial returns to SOLAS

SOLAS requests both financial data and learner data on an ongoing basis. Regular financial reports are requested from ETBs on expenditure to date and projected expenditure. These returns from ETBs feed into the overall budget management process at national level.

All centres must provide essential information on the learners attending the programme, programmes offered and learner outcomes to ETBs for transmission to SOLAS.

4.7. Health and Safety

All centres should have an up to date health and safety statement, based on the ETB master statement, in place and staff should implement health and safety procedures, as required by legislation.

4.8 Child Protection – policy and procedure

All centres should have a child protection policy in place. This policy should apply the principles and practice outlined in Circular Letter 0065/2011, Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools, which issued in September 2011 and which are also intended for use in Youthreach Centres.

5. Programme structure

5.1 Programme structure

The Youthreach programme is a full-time programme.

The Youthreach year is 226 days per annum, 35 hours per week.

Learners must attend the programme for a minimum of 209 days per academic year and be timetabled for a minimum of 28 hours per week over 5 days.

Staff should schedule planning and evaluation, continuing professional development and general administration and management work for those days where the Centre is open and staffed but where learners are not scheduled to attend. It is recognised that the QF internal centre evaluation and centre development planning days may occur at any time during the year but staff should try to schedule these for days that learners are not in the Centre.

All full-time Co-ordinator and Resource staff are expected to be present on the days that learners are in attendance.

The short periods of closure at Christmas and Easter (concession days) are at the discretion of the CE of the ETB.

5.2 Breakfast Clubs and lunchtime

Breakfast clubs and lunchtime clubs may be included in the centre's operational hours to an aggregated maximum of 60 minutes per day for staff and 30 minutes per day for learners. Where breakfast clubs and lunchtime clubs are included in the centre's operational hours then:

1. breakfast/lunch must be provided in the centre
2. centre facilities must be available to learners during lunch time
3. centre staff must agree and implement a general social, personal and health education programme to maximise the impact of the learning which, it is widely recognised, takes place in such informal settings.

5.3 Summer provision

Youthreach centres may arrange programme activities over the summer period before the centre closes in addition to the minimum 209 learner days. The provision of such programmes / activities is not mandatory. Each ETB may decide if such arrangements are of benefit to their centres and learners. This decision should be made on the basis of the needs of the learners and take into account the estimated attendance over the period. Centres should also actively liaise with the Youth Work Sector where they are providing services locally.

6. Programme funding

Resources are allocated to each ETB by SOLAS specifically for the Youthreach programme. Such resources may only be expended on the Youthreach programme and not on any other programme nor may resources allocated to ETBs for other programmes be expended on the Youthreach programme. Resources are allocated for tuition, non-pay provision (which may include payment of ancillary staff), provision for allowances and learner supports, administration and rent.

6.1 Pay

Currently each ETB receives 4,200 tuition hours per group of 25 learners, with pro rata adjustments for smaller or larger groups. This allocation of hours translates into a total pay bill for centre staff which is funded by SOLAS.

Ancillary staff (bus driver, caretaker etc) cannot be paid from an ETB's Youthreach pay allocation.

6.2 Non pay

In addition, each ETB is allocated a non pay grant on an annual basis. This is based on a learning unit of 25 learners, with pro rata adjustments for groups of greater or lesser size. These funds can be used to cover the cost of overheads for the running of a centre such as rent, light, heat, materials, equipment, insurance etc as well as ancillary staff, other than administration staff.

6.3 Administration support

ETBs can claim up to the equivalent of 15% of the non pay allocation (15% of €48,360 per group of 25 at present) towards the cost of administrative support and SOLAS will cover the cost. The claim should be submitted under the 'pay budget' heading.

6.4 Supplementary Rent Allocation

It is acknowledged that some ETBs may have to rent premises in which to deliver the programme. An allocation of €4,500 per group of 25 learners is allocated to ETBs as part of the core non pay allocation of €48,360 towards rental costs. SOLAS will consider claims for a supplementary grant to cover rental costs above this allocation on a case by case basis. Such claims must be reasonable. Each ETB should maximise the use of existing premises they own or other publicly owned premises. Where an ETB rents premises every effort must be made to secure value for money. Where leases are being renewed every effort should be made to seek a reduction in the rental costs. Sanction must be sought in advance from the Department for any changes in existing lease arrangements and for any new leases.

6.5 Allowances

Each VEC receives an allocation from SOLAS to cover learner allowances. This allocation will be based on the actual verified costs of paying allowances and will therefore be based on attendance levels in the centres in an ETB (see section 9 re allowances).

6.6 Learner supports

6.6.1 Youthreach guidance, counselling and psychological services

Funding is provided annually for guidance, counselling and psychological services. In using this budget providers may prioritise from a spectrum of provision. Guidelines on the use of this provision were issued in January 2013 and are available on the DES website.

6.6.2 Childcare support

The Childcare Education and Training Support (CETS) programme operated by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs supports students and trainees participating in certain SOLAS and ETB further education and training programmes, including Youthreach.

Under the CETS programme, qualifying students and trainees can avail of childcare places at a small fee in day care services across the country, including those operated by ETBs, for the duration of their courses.

7. Programme staffing

7.1 General allocation of staff resources

Currently each ETB receives 4,200 tuition hours per group of 25 learners, with pro rata adjustments for smaller or larger groups.

7.2 Staff qualifications requirements

The programme requires staff who are flexible, multi disciplined and experienced. A high degree of motivation and commitment to the model of education described in Chapters 2 and 3 above is essential.

Staff should have a combination of qualities and skills including broad educational and vocational experiences, a proven track record of performance in their career to date and confidence in their abilities to relate to disadvantaged young people. They should also be able to work with groups of learners with various educational attainment levels and degrees of motivation. Youthreach staff should be able to convey and raise expectations, deploy counselling and/or mentoring skills and both build and model appropriate adult professional relationships of respect and collaboration with students. They should also be aware of community issues and opportunities and the world of work and career opportunities.

Staff should also be willing to be flexible and to take on various projects based on the needs of the learners.

While relevant qualifications are desirable, no qualifications are specified for staff working in the programme. This is intended to give ETBs maximum flexibility to recruit staff with the combination of personal qualities and professional skills most likely to meet the often complex needs of participating learners.

7.3 General staffing profile - requirements

Each centre should have 1 full time Co-ordinator working 37 hours per week, made up of up to 15 hours of direct contact with learners on a group or 1:1 basis with the balance devoted to other duties as laid out in Circular 12/2003.

Each centre should have at least 1 full time Resource Person per group of 25 learners. Resource Persons work for 37 hour per week, made up of up to 20 hours of direct contact with learners on a group or 1:1 basis with the balance devoted to other duties including key working, as set out in Circular 12/2003.

With the remaining hour's allocation, ETBs may employ full-time or part-time staff, as required and appropriate. Such staff may be employed as pro-rata resource persons or part-time teachers depending on the needs of the programme.

7.3.1. Annual leave

Annual leave entitlements for Co-ordinators are 30 days and Resource Persons are 35 days as set out in Circular 12/2003. For annual leave purposes, the Youthreach year begins on 1st September and ends on 31st August.

7.3.2 Other leave

This issue is also dealt with in relevant Department circulars.

7.3.3 Garda Vetting

Centres should familiarise themselves with and apply Child Protection Guidelines in relation to Garda Vetting of staff.

7.4 Staff support and continuing professional development

The support of staff and the maintenance and development of their skills are the responsibility of ETBs. ETBs are allocated an annual budget for Continuing Professional Development. ETBs should use this budget to provide training and upskilling opportunities for their programme staff based on an assessment of local needs.

8. Recruitment of learners to the programme

8.1 Enrolment protocol

Normal practice for recruitment to Youthreach should now include:

- for those who self-refer and are under 18 years of age, confirmation by centres with the last school attended that the young person has left school and there is no possibility of them returning and/or confirmation of same by the Education Welfare Officer,
- for those referred by external agencies such as schools (e.g. School Completion Programme or Home School Community Liaison), executive agencies (e.g. Education Welfare Service (EWS) in TUSLA, DES, SOLAS, HSE, Gardaí, Probation Service) and NGOs (e.g. youth service, Barnardo's, St. Vincent de Paul, etc), written confirmation by the referring agency of the young person's status as an early school leaver.

Any cases of prospective learners who are under 16 years of age should be referred to the CE of the ETB. The CE may refer the case to the EWS or other relevant agencies. If, following consideration of the case, the CE is of the view that he/she cannot return to school and that there is no viable or appropriate alternative to Youthreach, he/she may be considered for enrolment. However no allowance can be paid to such learners.

8.2 Eligibility of Learners

8.2.1 Standard Eligibility

To be eligible for the Youthreach programme learners should:

- be aged between 16 and 20 years of age at the commencement of their engagement with Youthreach. Those aged 15 years of age may, as an exceptional measure, also be considered eligible subject to processes outlined in 8.1;
- have left school with no possibility of their returning to school
- be unemployed
- have less than upper second level education and otherwise lack competencies or skills in the area of inter-personal communications, enterprise or motivation

Centres must ensure that this core group of eligible learners are prioritised when allocating places.

The age eligibility criteria may be extended exceptionally in the case of lone parents, learners released from detention, Drug Court participants and individuals who have less than upper second level education and whose personal circumstances are such that the centre programme is the most appropriate option for them to pursue up to age 25. Exceptions must be authorised by the CE or her/his nominee. In all such cases the grounds for making an exception must be documented and should establish how and why Youthreach is the most appropriate option.

8.2.2 Eligibility of non-EU Nationals

Admission criteria for non-EU Nationals are documented in a letter dated 27 September 2001 which was issued by the Department of Education and Skills. This

sets out that learners age 15 to 18 with less than upper second level education may not be enrolled in Youthreach except as an exceptional measure where it is deemed that school is not a viable option and with the prior approval of the Further Education Section of the Department. These learners will not be paid a training allowance.

Non EU Nationals aged over 18 are not eligible for enrolment in Youthreach.

8.3 Admission procedures

Centre admission processes should be clear and learner-friendly. All staff should be familiar with each stage of admission. Application forms should be clear and user-friendly. Particular attention should be paid to reading levels required for completion and staff should be on hand to assist potential learners. On completion, forms should be date-stamped and reviewed by/with the co-ordinator.

Each ETB may develop its own form but all should record the applicant's name, address, date of birth, reasons for wishing to attend the centre, background information such as education, work history and details of attendances at other centres, PPS Number and any other relevant information.

The application form must be completed in respect of each applicant and should be signed by the applicant. The application form should also be signed by a parent / guardian where the applicant is under 18 years of age.

On enrolment learners must also complete such forms and mandates as are recommended by ETB administration, the VSSU, etc.

Individual files must be maintained for each applicant to contain all personal and essential information.

8.4 Learner Contracts

It is recommended that all participants (and their parents or guardians if they are under 18) sign a contract on recruitment setting out the responsibilities of the programme team and the participants. It should register their commitment to observe codes of behaviour and include grounds for termination of contract by the provider.

The contract should refer particularly to:

- Key working and counselling
- attendance
- participation requirements
- assignment and other work requirements
- health and safety
- IT policy
- bullying policy
- sexual harassment policy
- child protection policy
- emergency medical attention (if required)
- referral to local services (if required)
- grievance procedures

- other issues decided on by the ETB.

9. Learner allowances

Learners participating in a Youthreach programme are entitled to a range of supports.

9.1 Training allowance

Learners participating in Youthreach will have trainee status and will be paid the appropriate allowances which are set by SOLAS, which has statutory responsibility for the setting of allowances. Learners should only be paid for actual hours attended on the programme. Allowances are paid on a weekly basis in arrears.

Persons in receipt of D/SP payments such as One Parent Family payment and Disability Allowance will continue to receive their payment from D/SP and will not receive any training allowance from the ETB. ETBs must verify that learners are not in receipt of any payments from D/SP before paying them a training allowance.

Note: no allowances will be paid to learners under 16 years of age enrolling in Youthreach or to no-EU learners enrolled in Youthreach.

If an individual absents him/herself without authorisation, the Co-ordinator may deduct the allowance for the period of absence on a pro-rata basis (calculated in terms of hours missed)

In certain limited circumstances an individual may attend on a part-time basis but this must be sanctioned by the CE or his/her nominee. This should always be a temporary, interim arrangement (e.g. as a young person familiarises him/herself with the centre, or because of behavioural issues where a person cannot participate for a full day, etc). In such circumstances the allowance should be paid pro-rata.

It is permissible to pay an allowance to a parent or guardian of a minor. This must be authorised by the CE of the ETB.

9.2 Travel allowance

Learners may claim for the cost of travel to and from the centre. Rates are set by SOLAS and are advised to the ETBs by SOLAS from time to time.

9.3 Meal allowance

Learners may claim an allowance towards the cost of lunch each day. Rates are set by SOLAS and are advised to the ETBs by SOLAS from time to time.

Alternatively, ETBs may decide to hold meal allowances due to learners centrally and use the money to provide lunch in their centres for learners.

This is a matter for decision by each ETB locally. In order to hold meal allowances centrally the ETB must get the learners' permission to do so. This is usually through a signed agreement on enrolment.

9.4 Accommodation allowance

Certain participants may be entitled to an accommodation allowance. This is payable to those who must live away from home in order to participate in the programme. An example would be someone who lives in a remote area, too far away or too isolated in transport terms to commute from, and moves to digs or Bed and Breakfast or other

rented accommodation while on the programme. In other words, an accommodation allowance is payable on distance/logistical grounds and is towards the cost of rent. Accommodation allowance rates are set by SOLAS.

In general, those whose family circumstances are such that they have to move out of home are catered for by the HSE if under 18 or by the Community Welfare Officer if over 18.

9.5 The administration of the payment of allowances

Providers should apply arrangements and controls as set out in VSSU guidelines.

10. Learner attendance

While it is understood that many participants may have had poor attendance when at school regularity of attendance and punctuality are fundamental to employability and it is imperative that centres have strategies in place to promote learners' attendance and retention in the programmes.

All providers are required to maintain learner attendance records (roll book or similar). Daily attendance must be recorded and certified by the Co-ordinator or a Resource Person. Each week a Co-ordinator or designated Resource Person should collate and review attendance records to satisfy him/her that the records are being correctly maintained and that learners are attending on a regular basis, taking appropriate action where necessary. Where a learner's participation is judged to have terminated providers should recruit to fill vacant places.

There is no provision for time off in lieu for learners for attendance at out of hour's activities.

10.1 Annual leave

Learners are expected to attend the programme for a minimum of 209 days. There is no entitlement to annual leave other than for such periods of holiday and centre closure as are set out by the ETB.

10.2 Payment of allowances at Christmas, Easter and summer

Payment of training allowances at Christmas and Easter should continue as normal. Payment of training allowances during the summer may be paid where a learner is continuing in the programme – i.e. progressing from Year 1 to Year 2. Where learners have completed the programme their entitlement to an allowance ceases on their last day in the centre.

10.3 Sick leave

Learners are required to submit a certificate from their doctor in respect of all illness-related absences of 3 or more days, unless the Co-ordinator is satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances, details of which he/she will record.

10.3.1 Certified Sick Leave

Learners are entitled to claim up to seven full days certified sick leave during each academic year. This may be claimed in respect of full or half days. Certificates must be filed and available for inspection. For any certified absences in excess of this a commensurate deduction of training allowance should be made.

10.3.2 Uncertified Sick leave.

Learners are entitled to claim up to three full day's uncertified sick leave during each academic year. This may be claimed in respect of full or half days. Explanatory letters from learners must be filed and available for inspection. For any illness related absence in excess of this a commensurate deduction of training allowance should be made.

10.4 Maternity Leave

Learners are not entitled to a training allowance while on Maternity leave. Centres should have a place available for learners who wish to return to the programme following maternity leave. Centres should have regard to Health and Safety Guidelines in respect of attendance of learners who are pregnant.

10.5 Other absences / leave

10.5.1: Appointment days

No limit is set regarding the number of days on which a learner may (i) meet with social workers, other health or social care personnel or members of the Garda Síochána or (ii) attend court. All meetings should be notified to the key worker or co-ordinator. Explanatory letters with proof of appointment from participants must be filed and available for inspection.

10.5.2 Bereavement leave

Learners are entitled to up to 3 days bereavement leave following the death of an immediate relative. One day may be taken for funerals of other relatives/friends at the discretion of the co-ordinator. Further leave may be granted at the discretion of the co-ordinator where this is deemed necessary. Records must be kept of all such absences and these must be available for inspection.

10.6 Procedures in the event of unapproved absences

In the case of unapproved absences (not covered above), the Co-ordinator should write and request the participant to make contact to arrange return to/withdrawal from the course, informing them that their place will be forfeit. Payment should cease from the first day of an unapproved absence.

If the unapproved absences continue into a second week, in the absence of contact from the participant or arrangements being made to return to the course with assurance of future attendance, the participant will be informed that his/her place has been forfeited. The Department of Social Protection should be notified accordingly if the participant is aged 18 and over.

These provisions also apply to participants who have regular absences on an ongoing basis.

In such circumstances learners can be invited to reapply for a place on the programme and take his/her place on the waiting list.

10.7 Emergency suspension of programme activities

From time to time it may be necessary or beneficial to suspend normal programme activities, for example as a result of a critical incident, an outbreak of illness or a tragedy involving members of the centre community. Where such is the case, arrangements are at the discretion of the ETB. It is recommended that critical incidents be used as opportunities for building resilience in the learners and helping them as a group to develop the ability to recognise and cope with serious emotional upsets and practical challenges.

With regard to **critical incidents**, providers are referred to guidelines on responding to critical incidents published by the Department of Education and Skills which are available on the Youthreach website, under WebWheel Resources (www.youthreach.ie/webwheel).

11. Supporting good behaviour among learners

Supporting good behaviour among learners is a core element of the programme provided in Youthreach. It is important firstly, because centres need to be a safe place for all learners and secondly, because helping learners to deal with emotional and behaviour problems is a key starting point in meeting the holistic needs of learners and improving their successful participation in the subject based aspects of the programme.

The centre ethos and development by staff of supportive relationships with learners is the basis for encouraging learner co-operation and dealing with behaviour problems. Staff should deal with behaviour problems through:

- meaningful communication
- respectful relationships,
- creating high expectations,
- modelling good behaviour
- using engaging and varied teaching methods
- using a variety of problem solving approaches.

(In this regard, providers are referred to QF guidelines).

Prevention is important but when behaviour problems arise staff should recognise these as opportunities to support learners to find more effective ways to meet their needs.

Staff may require training in order to respond appropriately. Training in this area may be carried out under the CPD budget allocated to ETBs.

Staff should avoid using punishment as the basis for managing behaviour. Research has shown that such approaches are not only ineffective as they only achieve short term conformity at best, but of more concern is that such approaches actually reduce the desire to learn and can damage the relationship between staff and learner.

11.1 Code of Behaviour

Each centre should develop a code of behaviour which outlines expectations for learner behaviour. Such expectations are usually based on values such as respect for self and others, fairness, kindness and helpfulness. Learners joining the programme should be made aware of the code and commit to following the code.

11.2 Suspension/ exclusion process

The suspension or expulsion of learners from the programme should only occur where other interventions have been tried or if the safety and welfare of staff or learners is a concern. The suspension or expulsion of any learner should be carefully considered and should be the exception not the rule. Where suspension occurs, it is recommended that the staff and learner agree a plan for re-entry and therefore support the best chance of a successful return. Termination of a learners place will occur where:

- learners are not eligible/become ineligible for a Youthreach course

- learners have had unapproved absences to such an extent that their place on the programme must be forfeit – refer to section 10.6 above
- learners have breached the agreement (signed when joining the programme) to the extent that their place on a Youthreach programme must be forfeit
- the learner chooses to leave the programme if s/he is unable to commit to the requirements of participation.

Records must be maintained in relation to suspensions and expulsions.

11.3 Breaches of codes of behaviour

Deduction of allowances for any reason other than non attendance is not permitted. Breaches of codes of behaviour should be dealt with through fair, transparent and clear procedures in order to preserve the ethos of the programme and the supportive relationship with learners that the programme encourages. Providers are directed to the QF programme planning guidelines and to QF guidelines on managing behaviour

11.4 Appeals procedures

Youthreach is a vocational education and training programme and participants are paid an attendance-based training allowance. Section 29 of the Education Act does not apply in centres providing the programme. However, each ETB should have clear appeal procedures for its Youthreach programme(s). This may involve a BOM or ETB sub-committee but in all cases the final responsibility rests with the CE.

12. Links with external agencies

It is essential that mechanisms for co-operation and sharing of information exist between centres and the post primary schools in their locality. Equally essential is the establishment and maintenance of liaison, referral and collaborative links between the centre and all local bodies and agencies that can provide services to the learners in the centre. Interagency work is included in the quality standards (Quality Framework www.youthreach.ie). It is also part of the job description of a Youthreach co-ordinator. In particular, links should be established and maintained with schools, the EWS, other Department of Education and Skills related agencies and initiatives (NEPS, SCP projects, etc), INTREO employment services, the HSE (social care and health promotion) and other services targeting the same young people such as Youth services, Young Peoples' Probation and an Garda Síochána. Other services, agencies and organisations should also be involved with centres' activities including libraries, sports organisations and facilities, local enterprises and employer organisations such as chambers of commerce, etc.

Appendices

1. Useful Links

- Anti bullying: guidelines on countering bullying behaviour – Department of Education and Skills (DES) website
- Child Protection Guidelines
(http://www.dohc.ie/publications/children_first.html)
- Guidance plan – post primary – DES website
- Internet Safety: Acceptable use policy – DES website
- Substance Use – DES website
- Relationships and Sexuality Education – DES website
- Student Council: Student Councils – A voice for students – DES website and www.studentcouncil.ie
- Data Protection Policy – DES website
- www.SOLAS.ie
- www.ncge.ie

2. List of Abbreviations / Acronyms

BOM	-	Board of Management
CDP	-	Competency Development Programme
CE	-	Chief Executive
CPD	-	Continuous Professional Development
DES	-	Department of Education and Skills
ECDL	-	European Computer Driving Licence
ESF	-	European Social Fund
ETB	-	Education and Training Board
EU	-	European Union
EWO	-	Education Welfare Officer
EWS	-	Education Welfare Service
HSE	-	Health Service Executive
IAU - ETB	-	Internal Audit Unit – Education and Training Boards (VSSU)
ICE	-	Internal Centre Evaluation
ICT	-	Information and Communications Technology
NFQ	-	National Framework of Qualifications
NGO	-	Non-Governmental Organisation
PPS	-	Personal Public Service
QF	-	Quality Framework
QQI	-	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
SCP	-	School Completion Programme
SOLAS	-	Further Education and Training Authority
WCE	-	Whole Centre Evaluation