

ACT Youth Work Code of Ethical Practice (2021)

DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

This document has been released for consultation with the ACT Youth Sector. Feedback can be provided via consultation sessions (held in person and online) or via an online form for written feedback.

For further information on how you can provide feedback, visit
www.youthcoalition.net/ethics-consultation/

Written feedback must be submitted online by 12pm Monday 23 May

For more information about this project contact Hannah Watts
hannah@youthcoalition.net

ACT Youth Work Code of Ethical Practice

Introduction	1
Definitions	2
Young People	2
Youth Work	2
ACT Youth Sector	3
Ethical Practice Statements	4
Supporting Information for Ethical Practice Statements	6
1. Recognition and Respect of Indigenous Peoples and Culture	6
2. Primary Client	7
3. Conditions of Existence	9
4. Fair and Inclusive	11
5. Capability Approach & Empowerment	13
6. Duty of Care & Dignity of Risk	15
7. Integrity, Accountability, and Transparency	17
8. Confidentiality & Consent	19
9. Professional Competence	21
10. Self-awareness	23
11. Boundaries	25
12. Self Care	27

Introduction

The *ACT Youth Work Code of Ethical Practice* provides a framework for safe, ethical, and professional youth work practice. It articulates the principles and values that underpin youth work practice, the elements that characterise and distinguish youth work from other professions, and the responsibility of youth workers to maintain a high level of professionalism.

Young people are a distinct, but not homogenous, population group. Their specific interests and needs are frequently overlooked, and many experience disadvantage, discrimination and unequal access to valued resources. This means that there is a clear need for specific services to be delivered by professionals who are both knowledgeable and skilled in working with young people. Youth work is the only profession dedicated to young people, and is defined by relational practice, voluntary engagement, and a focus on acting in the best interests of young people, utilising distinct values, knowledge, and skills.

A code of ethical practice is a set of guiding principles that help professionals work with honesty and integrity. It is developed by a body of practitioners and outlines an agreed set of values and frameworks in which to make decisions. The *ACT Youth Work Code of Ethical Practice* underpins and informs youth work practice and conduct. Youth Workers have a responsibility to be aware of the spirit and contents of this code, and apply these principles even if a specific scenario or action is not outlined in the code. Individual organisations may have their own codes of conduct that more clearly define how their employees or volunteers should act in a specific situation. However, an individual organisation's code of conduct should not conflict with the overarching code of ethical practice that guides the professionalism of their Youth Work employees or volunteers.

This version of the *ACT Youth Work Code of Ethical Practice* has been developed for, by and with the ACT Youth Sector. It revises and builds upon the previous work done by the sector over 15 years ago to develop the first ACT Youth Work Code of Ethics, as well as work done across Australia and New Zealand to further embed professional and ethical youth work practice across the youth sector.

This document is divided in two sections:

1. Ethical Practice Statements. These statements provide the ethical framework in which youth workers operate in the ACT.
2. Supporting Information for each Statement. This section provides further context and understanding of each Ethical Practice Statement, and includes expanded commentary and case studies.

Additional supporting information about the Code of Ethical Practice is available at (*insert details of website at later date – will available after final document is released*). This includes:

- Fact sheets for employers to assist with integrating the Code of Ethical Practice into organisational policies including recruitment, supervision and support of youth workers
- Posters for display
- A more detailed history of the work to develop the code of ethical practice and implications for the sector
- Information about training for youth workers regarding the Code of Ethical Practice

We recommend that all youth workers and employers of you workers be familiar with this suite of tools.

Definitions

Young People

Historically, services which have been funded to provide support to young people have been focused on the age of 12 - 25 years. However, many youth services are now expanding the age demographic to which they offer their services, for a number of reasons. Biological and socio-cultural perspectives encourage us to expand our definition and understanding of 'youth'. With the emergence of earlier onset of puberty, our deeper understanding of developmental neuroscience, and an extended period of development lasting into the last 20's due to socio-economic factors, we have seen the development of youth programs and services engaging with those in the 'middle years' (age 8 - 11), as well as 'emerging adulthood' (age 18 - late 20s).

The unique relationship that youth workers develop with young people may mean that they are best placed to support young people as they transition from childhood to youth, and from youth to adulthood, through services that are targeted to their specific stage of development.

Youth Work

A Youth Worker is someone who is committed to the profession and ethics of youth work. Within Australia, Youth Work is defined as follows:

Youth work is a practice that places young people and their interests first. Youth work is a relational practice, where the youth worker operates alongside the young person in their context. Youth work is an empowering practice that advocates for and facilitates a young person's independence, participation in society, connectedness and realisation of their rights."

- Australian Youth Affairs Coalition National Definition of Youth Work, 2013

Youth work, by its nature, must be relational. It is characterised by the development of a professional relationship through which the youth worker is able to engage with the young person, providing support as they navigate the complexity of their internal and external worlds. Many young people have experienced harm through relationships - with family, community, and systems - and youth work provides an opportunity to heal through relationship. Youth workers practice in a range of settings, including community services, government services, and schools, and can work in frontline roles (directly providing support to young people), as well as management, advocacy, and policy roles.

Key practices that define youth work are:

1. a focus on acting in the best interests of the young person
2. the development of trust, rapport, and understanding between youth worker and young person as a foundation from which to address the young person's needs
3. the voluntary nature of the professional relationship

In the ACT, the Youth Work Code of Ethical Practice provides the framework for youth work. People who operate outside of these practices may still be part of the youth sector, but are not identified as a "youth worker". Those who support young people in other sectors or ways are encouraged to consider how they can embed these youth work practices into their own area of work.

ACT Youth Sector

The ACT Youth Sector encompasses a broad group of professionals who are committed to supporting young people and connecting them with the resources, community support, and empowerment they need to achieve success. The ACT Youth Sector is comprised of people from a broad range of backgrounds and qualifications, who work in a range of roles and contexts, with a diverse clientele. The varied nature of youth work means that the sector operates across a range of institutions, including government and community sector organisations, schools, recreation groups, and faith-based organisations. Volunteers also form part of the youth sector, as unpaid workers, or as part of youth-led organisations.

It is important to note that while many people who work with and support young people identify as being part of the youth sector, not everyone who works in the youth sector is a youth worker. This can include the broad range of roles that support youth work, for example administrative & human resources support, managers, and those from other professions who work alongside young people - such as health professionals or teachers. Youth sector workers may also operate in an environment where they are committed to several of the principles of youth work - such as ensuring young people have access to opportunities and the services they need to succeed - but are not able to work under the definition of youth work, which places young people and their interests first, or to work relationally alongside a young person in a way that best supports their individual needs.

DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

Ethical Practice Statements

The following statements provide the ethical framework in which youth workers operate in the ACT. This section provides the key statement for each ethical principle - for further context and understanding, the following section with expanded commentary and, case studies should also be read.

Recognition & Respect of Indigenous Peoples & Culture

Note: This statement will be written with local Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander youth services and youth workers.

Primary Client

The primary client of the youth worker is the young person with whom they engage. This means that a youth worker's key responsibility is to the young person they are working with, while maintaining consideration of the people and systems that the young person is also engaging with.

Conditions of Existence

Youth workers recognise the impact of social, cultural and structural factors that affect young people. Their work is not limited to facilitating change within the individual young person, but extends to the social context in which the young person lives.

Fair and Inclusive

All young people have the right to be treated in a fair and appropriate manner. Youth workers will respond in a manner that acknowledges and respects individuals' identity, culture, beliefs, attitudes, behaviours, and customs.

Capability Approach & Empowerment

Youth workers recognise that young people need opportunities that enable them to thrive, in order to increase their capability for social and economic participation. Youth workers presume that young people are competent in assessing and acting on their interests, and provide access to resources and opportunities that enable them to do that effectively.

Duty of Care & Dignity of Risk

Youth workers avoid exposing young people, colleagues, the community, and themselves to the likelihood of further harm or injury. However, youth workers respect the right that young people have to make choices and take risks in order to learn and grow.

Integrity, Accountability & Transparency

Youth workers hold themselves accountable to the values and ethics of Youth Work, and will not bring the practice and professionalism of youth work into disrepute. Youth workers will be open, honest, and clear about what young people can expect from them and their services.

Confidentiality & Consent

Information provided by young people will not be used against them, nor will it be shared with others who may use it against them. Young people should be made aware of the limits to confidentiality, and that informed, ongoing consent or assent can be withdrawn at any time.

Professional Competence

Youth workers have a responsibility to keep up to date with the information, resources, knowledge and practices needed to meet their obligations to young people. They are committed to continual learning, reflective practice, self care, and the ongoing professional development of their knowledge and skills.

Self-awareness

Youth Workers are committed to ongoing reflection of their own values, traits, personal history, behaviours and feelings, and how they impact young people, their employment, their own lives, and the profession of youth work.

Boundaries

The youth work relationship is a professional relationship, intentionally defined with clear boundaries to protect the young person and youth worker. The relationship between a young person and youth worker is an important source of support for that young person, and youth workers are responsible for maintaining the integrity of the professional boundaries within that relationship.

Self Care

Ethical youth work practice is consistent with preserving the physical & mental health of youth workers. Self care is the responsibility of both youth workers and employers, and should be embedded into professional practice.

DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

Supporting Information for Ethical Practice Statements

The following section provides an expanded commentary for each ethical statement, as well as case studies and questions for reflection.

1. Recognition and Respect of Indigenous Peoples and Culture

Note: This section will be written with local Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander youth services and youth workers.

Commentary

Case Studies

DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

2. Primary Client

The primary client of the youth worker is the young person with whom they engage. This means that a youth worker's key responsibility is to the young person they are working with, while maintaining consideration of the people and systems that the young person is also engaging with.

Commentary

Youth workers answer to a range of people: funding bodies, peers, management committees, parents, communities. This clause, which is at the core of the youth work relationship, keeps youth workers mindful of who they are there for.

Achieving positive outcomes for young people usually involves working closely with a range of people such as family or guardians, teachers, workers with other services and friends. Having young people as the primary consideration does not mean that youth workers should not be working with these other people, it just means that the key concern of a youth worker is achieving positive outcomes for the young person/people.

Ethical youth work means that the needs of the young person are the primary consideration in any shared support or collaboration between services. Many people working in the related fields do not recognise the young person as their primary client, but see them as one of many stakeholders. That's okay: it just means they are not a youth worker. But young people need to know that there is at least one person that they can rely on to uphold their interests.

Where conflict exists between obligations to one young person and another, it is resolved in ways that avoid harm and continue to support the person least advantaged by the resolution.

Case study 2a

Tim is a youth worker and provides individual case work support to young people. He is working with Georgie, who is 14. Tim receives a phone call from Georgie's dad Luis, who is estranged from the family. Georgie has not given Tim permission to speak to their Dad. However, Luis says he knows Tim is working with Georgie and that he is worried about Georgie. Luis wants to know Georgie's location, where they are staying, when they have contact with Tim, and what sort of support Tim is providing. Luis appears concerned for Georgie's wellbeing.

Tim informs Luis that he is not able to pass on any information about any clients without consent, and that he cannot confirm Luis if Georgie is a client, but he will speak to a manager and pass on Luis's concerns and see what they can do. This buys Tim some time.

Tim contacts Georgie and asks for their consent to let Luis know that Georgie is safe and being supported. Georgie does not want Luis to know anything. Tim explains that Luis may keep calling services and other people in Georgie's life if he can't get any information at all. Georgie is aware that Luis is concerned so agrees that Tim can tell him that Georgie is safe and is getting the support they need. Tim calls Luis and passes on this information, but informs him that he can not say any more.

Tim continues to check in with Georgie about the level of contact they would like to have with their Dad, and when Georgie is ready Tim supports them to call Luis and make contact.

Case study 2b

Samir is a youth support worker in a high school. Ava is a student in year 9 who has not turned in any assignments this term, and recently began having aggressive outbursts in class. Samir meets with Ava to ask about her general wellbeing, home life, and if there is any reason for the change in behaviour, but Ava tells him that everything is fine and she doesn't need any support.

The next day, Ava is told off for eating in class and stands up and yells at the teacher, throws a book at her, and storms out of the classroom and school grounds. The teacher wants Ava removed permanently from her class. Samir meets with Ava again and Ava expresses regret, as she usually enjoys that class. Samir is concerned that something is going on that Ava is not disclosing. He advocates to the school for Ava to continue to attend all her classes. The teacher eventually agrees as long as a few conditions are met. This includes Samir attending class with Ava for the next few lessons, Ava agreeing to meet regularly with Samir to discuss her frustrations, and for Samir to make an appointment for Ava to speak with a counsellor.

Samir hopes that through this process Ava becomes comfortable with Samir or the counsellor to discuss what has led to this change in behaviour, so they can put any additional supports in place. He also uses it as an opportunity to discuss with the teacher how they can redirect Ava to Samir in the future when she can see that Ava is struggling with her mood or behaviour in class, so the other students are not disturbed.

Case study 2c

Komaki is a youth worker who sometimes provides court support for young people as part of his role. He attends court to support Luke, aged 16, who is charged with vandalism. Luke arrives with his mother who is berating him about the charges. Luke's mother sees Komaki's presence as an opportunity to pressure Luke to change his ways, to 'sort himself out'. She wants the court to ensure Luke is punished for what he did wrong, as she doesn't feel like she can control him any more. She attempts to influence Komaki to assist her to communicate this message to Luke.

Komaki is clear that Luke is his primary client. While family harmony is important for both Luke and his mother, the mother's interests come secondary to Luke's. With Luke's consent, the two of them instead use this as an opportunity to express the difficulties Luke has been having at school and home first to Luke's mother, and then to the court. Luke's mother and Komaki agree to support Luke to access additional supports to ensure he is able to meet the probation requirement that are set by the court.

Komaki also provides Luke's mother with information about a parenting support program that she can access which will help her address some issues at home, and will allow Komaki to continue to support and advocate for Luke's needs.

3. Conditions of Existence

Youth workers recognise the impact of social, cultural and structural factors that affect young people. Their work is not limited to facilitating change within the individual young person, but extends to the social context in which the young person lives.

Commentary

Youth workers are agents of change in a variety of contexts and conditions, both with individual young people, but also with the societal systems that can cause the problems in the first instance. Youth workers need to be very clear that it is of no use dealing with a young person in isolation.

Young people are part of communities and broader social contexts. Like all of us, young people are impacted by factors that are external to their own lives and decisions. Their families, community and the broader social context in which they live influence, shape, and to some extent control their lives.

This cannot be denied in the youth worker's approach to working with young people, so the context in which they live needs to be taken into consideration in the support that youth workers offer. It would be short sighted to think that young people can be dealt with in isolation, ignoring the complex myriad of influences all around them.

Youth workers are often in a position where they see the impact of decisions made which are outside of the young person's control - legislation, policy, funding, media rhetoric and community concern all impact young people, and youth workers have a role in recognising these structural factors, helping young people navigate them, and using their collective knowledge to effect change where possible.

Additionally, working within the context of a young person often requires collaborating with others who have a shared concern or responsibility for them. Many young people will require support from a range of youth workers or services, some of whom may be focused on a particular area of need or connect with a young person in a particular setting. Ensuring the needs of the young person are at the forefront can require collaboration between a number of youth workers and support services. Effective collaborative practice requires communication, coordination, mutual respect, and accountability. It can take more time and resources than working alone with the young person, but if it is in the best interest of that young person, it is worth the effort.

Case study 3a

Sara is a youth housing outreach support worker who has received a referral to work with Jedda. Jedda is 16 years old, Indigenous, and non-binary. They live with their mum and 7 siblings in a 4-bedroom ACT Housing property. Jedda was referred by the school, who have requested that Sara support Jedda to move into independent housing. Jedda has disengaged from school recently, and when they have been at school, they have been aggressive toward other students. The school believes that Jedda's home life is causing the aggressive behaviour and that they need to move out of that environment.

Sara meets with Jedda and asks them what they would like support with, despite the referral saying the primary need is to find independent housing for Jedda. Jedda informs Sara that they actually love living at home with their parent and all their siblings. They state that they are stressed and missing school as they need to care for their younger siblings due to Mum working extra hours in a new job. Jedda also states that they are getting targeted by bullies at school with lots of racial and gender discrimination, and they feel the school isn't helping and just punishes them for fighting.

Sara gets Jedda's consent to talk to the school, then Sara and Jedda meet with the school support staff to discuss Jedda's perspective and need for support from the school regarding the behaviour of other students. Sarah also meets with Jedda's mum to pass on information about additional support she can receive, and links Jedda with a young carer support program and a LGBTQI support and connection group at the local youth centre.

Case Study 3b

Luca is an intake worker who receives referrals for young men who are experiencing homelessness. Over the past few months he has noticed a significant rise in the number of young men who have full time jobs in apprenticeships but are looking for housing support.

Luca looks through the data he has collected and identifies that many of these young men have moved to the ACT from rural areas for their jobs, so they do not have any social or family supports around them. Rising housing costs have meant that many of them are unable to find share housing that is affordable, so they are sleeping in their work cars and paying for gym memberships so that they have access to showers.

Luca passes on this information to housing support services, and apprenticeship support services. He puts together the data and writes a formal letter to the government identifying this issue and advocating for better housing access and increased income support for young people who have to move away from home for education and employment opportunities. Luca also contacts a range of support services to find out how they can support these young men. He puts together an info sheet which he can pass on to the apprenticeship support services and employers, as well as directly to anyone referred to his service.

DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

4. Fair and Inclusive

All young people have the right to be treated in a fair and appropriate manner. Youth workers will respond in a manner that acknowledges and respects individuals' identity, culture, beliefs, attitudes, behaviours, and customs.

Commentary

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity legislation enshrines the right for all young people to be treated in a fair and appropriate manner, regardless of culture, ethnicity, religion, ability, class, gender or sexual orientation. This impacts directly on the youth worker's approach to young people. Regardless of a youth worker's personal beliefs, a young person has the right to be treated fairly and responded to on the basis of their need. If a youth worker is unable to detach their personal beliefs from the situation, and act in the best interests of the young person, they have the responsibility to ensure the young person is referred to someone who is able to deal with their needs in a non-discriminatory, supportive and sensitive manner.

Many services operate within particular inclusion and/or exclusion criteria – not all services are available or appropriate for all young people. Where young people are referred to or directly contact a service, but they do not meet the criteria of that service, they should be supported to make contact with a service provider who is able to support them. Where a youth worker is required to exclude a young person from their service, they should clearly communicate what their criteria is.

Case study 4a

Sara is a youth worker in a community organisation and has been working with Amy for a few months. Amy is 24 years old and has a history of being in a domestic violence relationship previously, and well as with her current partner. Amy told Sara that she recently felt so unsafe at her house that she has now left and is homeless. She wants to move interstate to Queensland, to a place where she remembers feeling safe. Sara feels that Amy will be putting herself at even more risk, as Amy does not have anywhere safe to stay if she moves to Queensland. Sara is uncomfortable supporting Amy to become homeless interstate. Amy insists that she thinks this is her best option, and is frustrated that Sara is not helping her organise to move. Amy thinks that Sara is being unsupportive and is not on her side.

Sara talk to her team leader about her dilemma. Sara is advised to listen to Amy to better understand her choice, behaviour and attitude towards the situation. Sara then helps Amy find temporary accommodation in Queanbeyan where she had a safe place to stay, as an initial step to finding long term safety and potentially moving interstate. She is still able to maintain support for Amy as needed.

Case study 4b

Brad is a youth worker at a youth centre, and also volunteers at his local football club where he has coached for a number of years. A 16 year old Indigenous young person, Damien, comes to see Brad at the youth centre. Damien has known Brad for a few years through footy. Recently, Damien's grandmother shared personal stories with Damien of her younger years, when she was part of the stolen generation. These stories have had a big impact on Damien, and he tells Brad that he is always feeling angry, especially when he sees "white people". He tells Brad that he has dropped out of school recently because of this. Damien tells Brad that he wants his help, and that he doesn't want to work with anyone else, especially other Aboriginal organisations, as some of his family members work there, and he knows Brad.

Brad needs to ensure that he is culturally sensitive. He explains to Damien that, as he is not Aboriginal, he would like to reach out to a local Aboriginal service to get some advice. Brad gets Damien's consent to talk to them about his situation, while maintaining anonymity. Brad is able to support Damien by working closely with the Aboriginal organisation, whilst respecting Damien's culture, beliefs, and request to work with Brad only.

DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

5. Capability Approach & Empowerment

Youth workers recognise that young people need opportunities that enable them to thrive, in order to increase their capability for social and economic participation. Youth workers presume that young people are competent in assessing and acting on their interests, and provide access to resources and opportunities that enable them to do that effectively.

Commentary

Youth workers adopt a capability approach to supporting young people - not only giving them effective access to resources and opportunities, but also ensuring they have the capability to utilise and enjoy them. Young people have a range of internal and external capabilities, and through a capability approach youth workers help them access the conditions they need to be successful, teach them the skills they need, and give them the opportunity to develop a sense of mastery so they can achieve their goals.

This principle tries to clarify what empowerment might mean in ethical terms, and what it means for youth workers. The youth worker seeks to enhance the power of the young person by making power relations open and clear, holding power-holders accountable, and by supporting the young person in the pursuit of their rights and claims. Youth workers encourage the independence and growth of young people by facilitating their transition away from dependence on the youth work relationship.

In this context, 'empowerment' also refers to young people's ethical and responsible action. Youth workers presume that young people are competent in assessing and acting on their interests. It may be that an individual young person is not a good judge of their interests. They may be experiencing a range of factors that can impact their judgement. A youth worker may find out about these sorts of things as they assess the situation, and then work to build the young person's capability to assess and address their needs. However, the presumption at the outset is that young people know what they are doing. Primarily this principle is about the assumption that youth workers go into a situation with; they need to assess the assumptions they hold about young people's competency in assessing and acting on their own needs.

Case study 5a

Phil is working with Jessie, 17, who is couch surfing with friends and has no income and no ID. Jessie presents as a very timid and quiet young person. Phil recognises that he needs to take small steps with Jessie. He starts by talking about possibility of getting her birth certificate from her parents and asks if she would like to ring them. Phil and Jessie work through what that conversation would look like, and role play what might be said. He sits with her while she makes the call to her parents.

Phil then talks about attending a Centrelink Office to start the claims process. Phil informs Jessie that he is happy to accompany her there. Phil talks about the Centrelink process, how much time it will take and what to expect. He makes a time to take Jessie and makes sure she has eaten before they arrive, as it could take some time. While at Centrelink Phil encourages Jessie to answer questions and is aware of not taking over. Phil provides Jessie with encouragement throughout the process and helps to address any barriers that would hinder Jessie's proceedings. Phil is also aware that Jessie needs to develop a level of independence and wants to empower her.

Once Jessie has her ID and a Centrelink payment, she indicates she no longer wants Phil's support. Phil would like to help Jessie move into more stable accommodation as she is still couch surfing, but Jessie

appears happy with her current arrangement, and stops turning up to appointments. Phil ensures she has information about housing options and that she knows of other support services she could access, but no longer continues to try and make appointments with her and closes her client file.

Case study 5b

Ling, who is 16, approaches her youth worker, Harry, about her recent mistreatment by a security guard at the local shopping centre. Harry is clear on his ethical commitment to empowering young people. He talks with Ling about what happened and what she would like to do about the situation. When Ling says that she wishes to make a complaint, Harry offers to support and assist her with the complaints process. He presumes that Ling is competent to decide on what course of action she wishes to take.

Harry explains the complaints process clearly, including how to access this process. He encourages Ling by discussing the details with her, emphasising the injustice of the security guard's actions. Harry encourages Ling to do as much as she can in the complaints process for herself, and in the areas where Ling says she feels out of her depth, Harry acts in an advocacy role on Ling's behalf. He regularly checks in with her to make sure she is happy with the actions he is taking.

DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

6. Duty of Care & Dignity of Risk

Youth workers avoid exposing young people, colleagues, the community, and themselves to the likelihood of further harm or injury. However, youth workers respect the right that young people have to make choices and take risks in order to learn and grow.

Commentary

'Duty of Care' recognises that sometimes people can do more harm than good by intervening in a situation: that intervention carries some risk with it. Youth workers seek to minimise physical, psychological and emotional harm or injury, and recognise that risk comes in many different forms. Alongside avoiding physical risk when engaging in activities, youth workers have a duty of care to protect young people from the impact of cultural abuse, racism, ageism, and vicarious trauma.

Risk assessment and management needs to be thorough and ongoing. Equipment needs to be well maintained, and staff need to be properly trained and supported. Youth workers will assess risk and manage safety, while also encouraging young people to safely participate in challenging activities.

Youth Workers are motivated to help young people, utilising their passion, skills, and the resources at their disposal to bring about change, but what the youth worker wants may not always be the right thing for the young person at that time. When running an activity, making a referral, or engaging a young person in a program, youth workers have a responsibility to make sure that the activity, referral or program is safe in general and for this particular young person, and there will not be further harm that results from their involvement. Youth workers also need to be aware of the potential long-term impact of involving young people in media reports about youth issues, or their service/program.

Duty of care to young people means that organisations have to exercise care in the employment of staff, whether paid or voluntary, full time or part time. Abuse of young people is not rare, and youth workers are careful about who has access to the young people they work with. Proper investigation needs to be made of people's work and criminal histories, even if they are volunteers.

Youth workers have a duty of care to colleagues and themselves, as well as the young people and families they support. Vicarious trauma can impact on the ability to support young people, as well as have an impact on the youth workers personal life, and physical & mental wellbeing. Youth workers have a duty of care to themselves and their colleagues to understand and recognise vicarious trauma and its impact, to take time out to reflect on their practice, learn from others, and receive support when needed. Youth workers must also recognise situations where they may be at risk from a young person, and put appropriate measures in place to mitigate risk of physical or psychological harm.

'Dignity of Risk' refers to the concept of affording a person the right to take reasonable risks, and that impeding this right by being overly cautious of a duty of care can suffocate personal growth, self esteem, and overall quality of life. A dignity of risk framework provides balance to the youth workers duty of care to young people. It can help ensure that youth workers respect the autonomy of young people, and recognises that their role is to assist them to live the best life possible. A dignity of risk approach means that youth workers support young people to navigate decision making processes and safely take risks where appropriate. Harm reduction principles can provide balance between Duty of Care and Dignity of Risk.

Case Study 6a

Amelia is a new youth worker to the sector. She has started a job at a youth mental health clinic, helping with initial appointments with young people and providing ongoing support if needed and requested by the counsellors. During the initial assessments, Amelia listens to young people share about their experiences across a diverse range of topics, including family violence, AOD use and thoughts about suicide. There are days when Amelia finds it hard to sleep and is quiet in the office.

Harry is also a youth worker at the same organisation with more than 15 years of experience. He starts to notice that Amelia is very quiet at work sometimes and doesn't share much at staff meetings or debrief sessions. Harry is concerned that Amelia might be experiencing vicarious trauma (especially being new to the sector) and finds a time when Amelia is alone to casually ask if she is doing ok. Harry talks to Amelia, explaining that it can be quite challenging at times listening to the experiences of young people and talks to her about EAP and self-care options. Harry also lets the team leader know about what he has observed and his chat with Amelia so that she is also aware of what is going on and can provide extra support to Amelia.

A few weeks later Harry notices that Amelia is talking more to her colleagues about client sessions and reaching out to the team leader for support when needed.

Case Study 6b

Sam is a youth worker at a youth centre. They have organised a school holiday program, which requires a parent or guardian signature for any young person under the age of 18. Sam has made sure that the permission note and program have very clearly indicated what time the program will finish.

On Thursday Sam, the other youth worker and a group of young people went on an excursion and returned back at the youth centre on time at 5pm. Sam and the other youth worker go inside to pack up and debrief. When they lock up to leave 30 minutes later, they see Laila, a 16 year old young person sitting at the front of the youth centre. Sam asks Laila if she is ok and she mentions that her parents haven't come yet to pick her up even though they had told her they would in the morning. Sam offers to try and call them from her work phone, but they do not pick up the call.

Sam and the other youth worker offer to stay with Laila for another 30 minutes to see if her parents show up, however by 6pm her parents have still not arrived. It is against their youth centre policy to drive young people home. Laila tells them that she will catch the bus home, which she has done from the youth centre before. Sam and the youth worker wait until Laila is on the bus before leaving for home.

7. Integrity, Accountability, and Transparency

Youth workers hold themselves accountable to the values and ethics of Youth Work, and will not bring the practice and professionalism of youth work into disrepute. Youth workers will be open, honest, and clear about what young people can expect from them and their services.

Commentary

Youth workers are loyal to the practice of youth work. This means they are self aware of their own role and the expectations that are placed on them by themselves, young people, and other stakeholders. Youth workers should be held accountable to the values and ethics of youth work, and adhere to the principles of this ethical framework. Acting with integrity means that youth workers are trustworthy, reliable and honest. The professional relationship between youth workers and young people is built on a foundation of trust, and the youth worker will be honest with young people, enabling them to access information and always working in their best interest.

Whilst undertaking a role that may be different from others, youth workers will value and respect difference in other approaches. Through continuing to portray youth work in a professional manner, youth workers will be mindful to not act in a way that can bring their role into disrepute.

The contract established between a youth worker and young person, and the resulting relationship, will be open and truthful. Youth workers and youth agencies will not advance themselves or other stakeholders at the expense of young people. They will be clear and honest about the support they are able to offer, and the limits to that support. The interests of other stakeholders will not be hidden from young people.

Youth workers don't deceive young people, either by saying things that are untrue or by withholding information. This applies to various areas of practice, agency policy and law. In some situations, youth workers will have a role in explaining the nature of other stakeholders' relationships to them, and the expectations this may place on them. In situations where things are going on behind the scenes that can't be disclosed to the young person, transparency is balanced by integrity and working in the best interest of the young person.

If a youth worker makes a mistake, or does not fulfil their commitments to a young person they are supporting, they will acknowledge this to the relevant people - this could be their manager, the young person, or other stakeholders.

Whilst being open and truthful, workers should be mindful of issues of confidentiality, disclosure, health and safety, who the youth worker is employed by, and what the agency is funded or contracted to provide.

Case study 7a

John works for a youth case management service. Felicity, a 16-year-old female who is staying in emergency accommodation, tells John that she wants to talk to someone about options for contraception. John explains there is a youth health service who would be able to talk to her, and that he is certain she could see them next week as he has a contact at the service, and offers to organise this.

John calls the service only to find out they have no appointments available for the next month. Although it means John will disappoint Felicity, he lets her know that there may be a month long wait. In the

meantime, he looks into alternative options for her to see another service. He passes on some online information from the health service about contraception, so she can look into some options while she is waiting to see a health professional.

John realises that he may have caused additional stress to Felicity by promising access to a service, so he ensures that he is more realistic about the timeframes for accessing other services in the future.

Case study 7b

John is also supporting Bruce, a 19-year-old male living in private share accommodation. During the first appointment, Bruce explains privacy, confidentiality, and the limitations to confidentiality. Bruce shares that he had a drug overdose about 3 months ago. After being revived, he was referred to an AOD service that he has accessed and found useful in his recovery. He then explains he would like that information to stay “just between you and me” and not be in the notes. John explains that it is important for the service to record the information shared, but he will talk to his supervisor about the request. He speaks to Bruce about confidentiality being between him and the service, not just John as a worker.

After talking to his manager, it is deemed important information to have in the notes. John calls Bruce to inform him of the decision and to discuss privacy again. Bruce and John workshop the wording of how this situation is recorded in the case notes together, so that the facts are recorded but Bruce doesn't feel like it portrays him in a negative way.

A few weeks later, John receives a call from Care and Protection service saying they are concerned Bruce may be smoking marijuana, and it is part of his restoration plan for his 2-year-old daughter that he does not use any substances. They would like John to do an unannounced home visit to check the home and report back to them what is happening. John explains that it is outside of his role as a youth worker, and against his organisations policy to do unannounced visits outside of safety concerns. The CYPS worker becomes frustrated and wants to complain about John, saying that he needs to help them. John refers them on to talk to his manager. The manager explains how their organisations policy aligns with the code of ethical practice for youth workers, and that they will not be able to meet the request for an unannounced home visit.

DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

8. Confidentiality & Consent

Information provided by young people will not be used against them, nor will it be shared with others who may use it against them. Young people should be made aware of the limits to confidentiality, and that informed, ongoing consent or assent can be withdrawn at any time.

Commentary

Youth work relationships are founded in trust. Sometimes it is in the best interest to share information about the young person, but permission must be sought for disclosure. Until this happens, the presumption of confidentiality must apply. Privacy implications may not always be clear, and youth workers are encouraged to assist young people to fully consider the current and potential future implications of giving consent. This informed, ongoing consent can be revoked by the young person at any time.

Youth workers are to avoid any undue invasion of privacy when collecting or sharing information about a young person. They should consider the full extent of privacy implications of activities that a young person may engage in, in the immediate future and long term.

In accordance with National Privacy Principles, youth workers presume that young people expect their information to be kept confidential. Perfect confidentiality is of course not possible or even desirable: there are always limits. Youth workers need to know what these limits are, and communicate and clarify them to young people at the onset of the relationship, keeping in mind that the best interests of the young person are paramount.

Even where a youth worker thinks it might achieve good outcomes, they do not provide names or other details about young people to schools, other government or community services, police, other young people or anyone else, unless the young person has been made aware of why there may be a need to give private information to others and their permission has been given.

In some situations, young people are not able to legally consent to the support that is being offered to them, and require consent from a parent or legal guardian. Within the context of youth work, and the young person being the primary client, it is important that youth workers also gain the informed assent (agreement) of the young person.

Youth workers should be aware of any safety concerns or implications that may arise when sharing sensitive information to a third party. These should be discussed with the young person, and where required, youth workers should seek further advice from their employer or a legal service, keeping in mind the best interest of the young person.

Case study 8a

Meg is a youth worker at a local youth refuge. Sally, a 16 year old, is a resident at the refuge and does not want her location disclosed due to family violence. Her mother calls the refuge concerned about Sally. Meg informs Sally's mother that she cannot disclose any information about any young people at the refuge. Sally's mother is very concerned and keeps calling.

Meg speaks to Sally and asks for one-off consent to let her mother know that she is safe. Meg explains that one-off consent means that will be the only information and the only time that she will share information about Sally to her mother. Meg also offers for Sally to be present for the conversation if she would like to hear exactly what Meg says.

Case study 8b

Tom is a youth worker in a youth centre. Mary, a 14 year old young person who is known to frequently use ice, discloses to Tom that she is pregnant. She says that she is in a relationship with her dealer, who is aged 31, and that she does not want Tom to tell anyone about the pregnancy. Tom understands that what Mary has disclosed to him is confidential, however because of her age he must do a mandatory report. He also needs to make a note of her pregnancy disclosure in his case notes. He explains this to Mary, who becomes distressed and angry.

Tom explains to Mary that she can be with him while he makes the report so that she hears and knows what he is saying. Mary agrees that she would like to be with Tom when he makes the call. He explains why this situation needs be recorded in her case notes, and that he would like to speak to his Team Leader about what other supports they can provide for Mary, and help her to access.

DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

9. Professional Competence

Youth workers have a responsibility to keep up to date with the information, resources, knowledge and practices needed to meet their obligations to young people. They are committed to continual learning, reflective practice, self care, and the ongoing professional development of their knowledge and skills.

Commentary

Youth workers have a responsibility to maintain a high level of competence. An ongoing commitment to being informed and skilled in relation to evidence based, best practice contemporary youth work is essential. This is a standard requirement of most professions. Youth workers and their employers are responsible for ensuring they keep up to date in the knowledge, skills, and resources required for their role. This includes recognising when new skills and knowledge are required, and seeking relevant education and training as well as feedback from service users and colleagues on the quality of their work. This also requires engaging in opportunities to reflect on practice.

Youth workers will only undertake work or take on responsibilities for which they have the necessary skills, knowledge, training and support. They have a responsibility to undertake appropriate training in relation to the specific service they provide, as well training regarding diversity, inclusion, and cross-cultural training.

Maintaining records is an integral part of practice for youth workers. Record keeping practices have an impact on client outcomes, as well as providing a reliable and objective record of work carried out by the youth worker. Information about clients and programs should be recorded impartially, accurately, and include essential and relevant details. Case notes, client records, and/or program records must be maintained and stored in line with the applicable legal frameworks and organisation policies.

Youth workers should be committed to reflective practice, engaging in a process of continuous learning through reflection on their own actions. This can include seeking opportunities for feedback from colleagues and other youth work professionals, being willing to take on criticism, and learning from the experience and practice wisdom of other youth workers.

Youth workers have a commitment to the sharing of knowledge and skills with other youth workers. Through connection, sharing of information, and building the collective knowledge of the youth sector, youth workers contribute to the further development of the profession of youth work.

Professional and ethical youth work practice is consistent with preserving the physical, mental and emotional health of youth workers. This means that both youth workers and their employers need to prioritise the practice of self care, to assure longevity of career and continued high quality service provision to young people.

Case study 9a

Annika moved to Australia 12 months ago from England and recently completed her Certificate IV in Youth Work. She has just started working at the Youth Engagement Hub and is meeting with her supervisor to discuss training and development over the next 18 months. Annika was interested to join the Youth Worker Practice Network to grow her professional network and her reflective practice. She was next looking at doing cultural awareness training through an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

owned company. Through the discussion, Annika reflected she would like to know more about some specific client needs, the first two being Alcohol and other Drugs, and Mental Health. With her supervisor they made a training and development plan for Annika to take to her manager for approval.

Case study 9b

Annika has now been with the Youth Engagement Hub for a while and is promoted to team leader. While looking through the policy and procedures and records and case notes she discovers one of the workers, Dave, has not been keeping up to date in a timely manner. Annika approaches Dave to discuss the issue. Dave feels busy and cornered, he expresses that he has too much to do to talk about this let alone finish his notes, and that he does not agree with the timeframes in the policy. Annika suggests Dave talk to his supervisor to reflect on how things are going and what he thinks is reasonable going forward, and Annika will do the same, and then they can have an organised meeting to talk about it.

When they come back together to talk it through, Dave is able to explain he has too high a case load to get all the notes complete, so Annika temporarily reduces his case load to ensure the notes get up to date. Dave is happy to go to training on case notes to build his skills and competence in this important area.

DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

10. Self-awareness

Youth Workers are committed to ongoing reflection of their own values, traits, personal history, behaviours and feelings, and how they impact young people, their employment, their own lives, and the profession of youth work.

Commentary

Youth workers are conscious of their own values and interests, and approach differences in those with whom they work with respect. This means that youth workers will take into account the diversity of values and interests that young people may present with, and recognise their own may be different in comparison. Respect and dignity are crucial to being able to accept these differences between self and the young person, whilst also recognising that universally accepted concepts of human rights cannot be compromised in doing so.

At times young people may not like or connect with their youth worker, and that is ok. Youth workers respect the choice and values of young people, and do not take it personally if they are unable to establish the trust and connection that a young person requires to receive support.

Self awareness requires an ongoing and continuous process of reflection and action. Within youth work, it is not possible, nor healthy, to separate your work and personal life completely - each has an impact on the other. Youth workers need to reflect on their own experience, history, and self, and acknowledge and be aware of the impact of the intersection of their work and personal life. Professional supervision is a tool that youth workers should access to engage in self awareness and reflection.

Youth workers are aware that things that happen in their personal life, historically or currently, can have an impact on their work. In the same way, work situations can have an impact on their personal lives and relationships. Self awareness allows the youth worker to be aware of and acknowledge triggers that may impact their mental and emotional wellbeing, and their capacity to respond to others - at work, and outside of work. While youth workers operate in an environment of optimism and hope, they do not emotionally over-invest, but recognise the reality of the context in which they work.

Case study 10a

Sue is a newly graduated Youth work student who has taken a role at the Youth Refuge. Sue is only 23 years old. Sue will be a sole worker in this role, but has access to on call at any time. Sue is working with a number of young people who have very complex and at time challenging behaviours. One young person in particular, Joe, has had a history of neglect and has taken a liking to Sue. Joe is also 23 years old.

As it is a residential service, one of the biggest roles of the Youth Worker is the engagement with young people. Sue has been working with Joe on his resume and basic living skills. Joe is a fun and entertaining young person who is very easy to engage with. Sue recognises that she may be developing more of a friendship than a professional relationship with Joe, by the conversations she is having and the information that she is sharing with Joe.

Sue is responsible for writing case notes on each young person at the end of her shift. Her manager reads the notes and is concerned about the over sharing of Sue to Joe. Sue's manager provides her with

feedback and the importance of understanding her role as a worker and the professionalism needed in the role. Sue understands this and recognises that she may have over stepped her role as a worker. Together they clarify the boundaries of what and how Sue should interact with Joe. Sue is reminded of the importance of reflection and self-awareness when working with young people.

Case study 10b

Jane is an experienced worker who has had many years working in the Youth Work field. Her current role sees her working directly with young people who have had an out of home care experience. Jane recently went through a marriage break up and she thinks being at work is the best thing for her, as it keeps her busy and she feels like she has more time to support the young people.

Jane has a regular meeting with a young woman, Maliha, who recently reconnected with an aunt. Maliha was meant to spend the weekend with her aunt, however the planned weekend was cancelled. Maliha became very emotional and upset when telling Jane about this, and Jane then also became upset. Maliha felt she needed to apologise and support Jane and said that since Jane was such a good support to her it was ok for Jane to need her support for once. Jane recognised that this was not ok, and that her own life situation was affecting her ability to be a competent Youth Worker. She speaks with her professional supervisor, then decides to take some time away from working with young people, as well as get the support she needs through her personal networks.

DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

11. Boundaries

The youth work relationship is a professional relationship, intentionally defined with clear boundaries to protect the young person and youth worker. The relationship between a young person and youth worker is an important source of support for that young person, and youth workers are responsible for maintaining the integrity of the professional boundaries within that relationship.

Commentary

Maintaining professional boundaries means that youth workers will recognise that the relationship between themselves and a young person is a contracted relationship and therefore needs to be non-exploitative and limited. This ensures the relationship and subsequent service or intervention is not compromised, a consideration that is particularly important in work with young people who have less access to knowledge, resources, and skills than the youth worker does.

There is a broad range of areas that fall within the scope of boundaries that youth workers need to be aware of and maintain. This includes being aware of the power imbalance and ensuring the young person is not exploited, sexualised, or used to promote the youth workers career. It is the youth workers responsibility to set, communicate and maintain clear and appropriate boundaries, in regard to all types of engagement and communication - including face to face, written, phone, and online.

Youth workers must actively work to maintain the balance between genuine care and professional boundaries. Maintaining boundaries does not mean being detached. While youth workers are not friends with the young people they support, they are friendly, caring, and acknowledge that they are often a significant adult in that young person's life. The youth worker / young person relationship is important for modelling positive attachment and interactions, and may be a primary example of a caring relationship for a young person. Care should be taken when the young person is transitioning away from support to model healthy boundaries within the context of a relationship ending.

Boundaries are also important in areas where there may be an intersection between work, and life outside of work. Cultural responsibilities, involvement with communities (such as arts, sporting or religious communities), and volunteer roles in other organisations may involve interactions or a relationship that sits outside the professional setting. At times this can cause tension for the youth worker and/or the young person. When these tensions arise, it is the youth workers responsibility to be open about the situation with their employer, and to use clear strategies and communication with their communities and young people to make these boundaries clear, in a way that respects both the youth workers and young person's integrity and autonomy.

A common sense approach and clear communication should be used to ensure young people are aware of the boundaries of the relationship, and are supported to respect those boundaries.

Case study 11a

Sally is a Youth Worker who runs a group for young people from separated families. The group is run at the local Youth Centre every Tuesday evening. Lily is 14 years old and attends the group. Lily needed to leave group on time to catch the final bus home.

One evening, Lily decided to hang around and chat with other young people, knowing that she would then miss her bus. Lily then asked Sally for a lift home. Sally has arrived by personal car and has already been told by management not to transport any young people in her car. It is getting dark and Sally is concerned about Lily's welfare, and wants to say yes as a one-off. However, she is aware that if she has

an accident, there is huge implications for the young person, Sally and her employer. It would also set a precedent for other young people and Lily.

Sally explains this to Lily. They call Lily's parent and Sally agrees to wait with Lily till she can be picked up. Sally has access to an emergency taxi voucher that she could use to have Lily driven home if needed. The next week Sally makes sure all the young people who need to catch the bus home get to the bus stop in time.

Case study 11b

Kim is a new Youth Worker at the local youth centre. On her second week of work, she is driving Amber, a 16-year-old girl, to a refuge. Amber can't return home due to family conflict and is crying for the whole drive in the car. Amber tells Kim she is really scared and doesn't want to go to the refuge. Kim feels torn as she feels she made a connection with Amber and is worried that if she forces her to go, it will damage their relationship. Kim knows how Amber feels, as she was in a similar situation when she was younger, and she had wanted someone to look out for her.

Kim thinks about other options, which include Amber sleeping in the studio attached to her house. However, Kim realises that this would be a huge boundary issue. Kim reassures Amber that it will be OK, and that the refuge aims to provide a safe and supported space for all young people. She does not tell Amber about her own previous situation, but she lets her know that she understands that it is an anxious time and that they can put supports in place for her.

Kim offers to sit with Amber and the refuge staff during intake, so Amber is not so overwhelmed. Kim lets the refuge staff know about Amber's concerns. She ensures that Amber has her work mobile number, and that she will check in with her via text message in the morning during working hours. She lets Amber know how she can contact the on-shift worker at the refuge at any time if she needs to.

Case study 11c

Kenny is a youth worker in a rural area. He meets Michelle, aged 23, at the local drop in centre where she has come for assistance with a domestic violence situation. Kenny has also seen Michelle at the local pub a few times. Kenny becomes aware that Michelle is attracted to him - her suggestive comments during their appointments make it clear she wants more from the relationship. Kenny initially ignores the comments, but she approaches him while he is with a group at a local footy match. She asks if he would like to walk do the kiosk and get a drink then come back and hang out with the group, as they have some shared acquaintances. Kenny declines and moves away from the group.

Kenny lets his supervisor know about the situation as soon as he returns to work. Kenny then raises the issue with Michelle when he sees her at the drop-in centre for an appointment. He lets her know that it is important to maintain confidentiality and that he would not want his friends to know that she is a client. He reinforces the limits of his role and makes it clear that their relationship must be based on and bound by his role and responsibilities as a youth worker. Michelle is happy to keep working with him under these guidelines, and Kenny lets his supervisor know about their discussion.

12. Self Care

Ethical youth work practice is consistent with preserving the physical & mental health of youth workers. Self care is the responsibility of both youth workers and employers, and should be embedded into professional practice.

Commentary

Self care is essential to youth work, as a means to assure longevity of career, and to continually provide high quality support to young people. The level of benefits to the worker from adequate self care practice will be congruent with the level of benefits to the young people they work with. Youth work often involves working through challenging situations with young people with care & compassion, which can impact on stress levels, or lead to vicarious trauma for youth workers.

Effective self care is a preventative measure which helps to ensure youth workers are not negatively impacted by the stress and trauma they may witness or experience in their professional lives. Self care refers to activities and practices that youth workers can engage in on a regular basis to reduce stress and maintain and enhance their short- and longer-term health and well-being. Self care is necessary for the youth workers effectiveness and success in honouring their professional and personal commitments.

Ongoing, embedded self care practices help youth workers maintain boundaries and professionalism. They enable youth workers to reflect on their practice, and the impact that their work has on both the young people and themselves.

Embedding self care into practice is a shared responsibility between the workplace and the individual youth worker. Youth workers should have a self care plan that incorporates practices in both their workplace and personal life, and covers both physical & psychological health. It should also cover professional practices including supervision, reflective practice, debriefing, access to learning opportunities, developing & maintaining professional connections with other youth workers, and maintaining boundaries.

Case study 12a

Jill is an Outreach Youth Worker whose service is always in high demand. She recently separated from her husband and has been keeping herself busy by offering to take on extra young people as clients. She is now over her recommended case load. Jill meets Joe, 17, who lives with his mum and 2 siblings. Joe discloses to Jill that he misses his dad and would like to spend more time with him. Jill wells up with emotion and is unable to stop herself from crying. Joe feels very uncomfortable and tries to comfort Jill. Joe chooses not to engage with Jill anymore.

This situation makes Jill recognise the importance of her being at her best to support young people. Even though she personally feels better by staying busy and going above and beyond for her clients, this is not what is necessarily best for the young person. Jill realises that through her actions she may traumatise the young people she is supporting.

Jill speaks to her manager about needing to stay within her recommended case load. Jill's manager assigns Joe to a different worker so he can keep receiving support. Jill also talks to her supervisor about the difficulty she is having in managing her emotions when supporting her clients.

Case study 12b

Sam is a new Youth Worker at a local school. He wants to succeed in his new role, so he constantly works back late, takes his work home, and spends his weekends ruminating on what is the best option for young people he supports. Sam does not yet have the connections or confidence to seek help and guidance from other Youth Workers.

He recently started engaging with Fran, who is 16 years old. She disclosed that she is struggling with her sexuality. She feels her parents will 'kick her out' if she tells them. Sam feels that as a new worker he needs to work this out for himself and not ask for help from his colleagues. As he is unsure what to do, he finds that he is spending time when not at work researching and thinking about the best option for Fran.

When Sam realises this issue is impacting his life outside of work, Sam seeks information and support from other youth workers. He is able to connect Fran with a specialist youth service to help her navigate this situation with her family. He recognises that this may be an issue for other students, and registers to attend training that the specialist service provides to community workers. This will help him support other students in the future, and advocate for Fran within the school community.

Through this process, Sam is able to receive additional training, and learns that when he approaches other youth workers he is able to get better support for his students. He also asks an experienced youth worker for advice on how to 'switch off' when he goes home. This means he can leave work at work, and focus on maintaining an appropriate work-life balance.

Case study 12c

Winnie is a residential youth worker. She is called by the police on her work mobile at 11.30pm on a Friday night to say they have a resident, Shaun, at the Police station. Winnie has worked with Shaun over several years as his lead youth worker, and has been very involved in his support. Shaun is in custody as he was involved in an assault with another young person. The Police ask if she could come and be present while he is being cautioned, as Shaun identified her as his youth worker and requested that she attend. Winnie is not on call and informs the officers of this, and tells them to ring the refuge directly.

Shaun is annoyed when he sees Winnie next, as he thinks she should have helped him out. The on call worker was not fully aware of Shaun's background and Shaun thinks they were not as helpful as Winnie would have been. However, Winnie understands her role as a Youth Worker, and what her organisations policies and procedures are. She explains this to Shaun, and ensures he has the refuge's on-call number saved in case he needs support out-of-hours again.