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YouthImPact

Analysis of the Workforce Training Needs for the PEACEPLUS Youth Programme

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Introduction and Context

YouthImPact is the Quality and Impact Body for the PEACEPLUS¹ Youth Programme. YouthImPact is a cross-community and cross-border partnership of four regional organisations – Co-operation Ireland (lead partner), the National Youth Council of Ireland, POBAL and Ulster University.

YouthImPact provides training, development and impact support to youth workers engaged in six projects funded through the PEACEPLUS Youth Programme². The PEACEPLUS Youth Programme works with 14–24-year-olds living in Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland. These young people, while growing up in a time of relative peace, continue to experience the visible and invisible ripple effects of the conflict in their daily lives.

The purpose of YouthImPact is to enhance the quality and maximise the impact of the six PEACEPLUS Youth Programme funded projects, tasked with directly working with young people. The YouthImPact team work directly with those who deliver across the six projects, with the aim of promoting a high-quality, youth-centred approach, concentrating on innovative youth work methods and practice as a means of fostering good relations that is sustainable.

The PEACEPLUS Youth Programme is further tasked with improving the personal development, citizenship, employability and progression/next steps outcomes for thousands of children and young people living across the region.

This research has been carried out to ascertain the profile of the workforce of the PEACEPLUS Youth Programme, and to identify priority training needs.

¹ PEACEPLUS is a cross-border funding Programme supported by the European Union, the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Government of Ireland, and the Northern Ireland administration.

² Funded under Investment Area 3.2 of the Programme: Empowering & Investing in Our Young People

Evaluation Methodology and Research Sample

As part of its evaluation methodology and overall research design, YouthImPact administered an online survey, in Spring 2025, to assess the training and support needs of the workforce engaged in the six funded projects through their respective employer organisations. This report presents an analysis of responses to this survey. The survey findings will inform the design, tailoring, and implementation of targeted training initiatives to strengthen workforce capacity and enhance support for individual projects and the entire Youth Programme.

The survey was conducted exclusively with staff funded through the PEACEPLUS Youth Programme, who work directly with young people, either part-time or full-time. This includes youth workers, team leaders, senior youth workers, managers, mentors, project coordinators, and similar roles. Participants were explicitly informed that the survey was not intended for administrative, finance, communications, or monitoring and evaluation personnel. Respondents were assured that responses would be fully anonymised, with no individual or organisation identified, and that the data would be used solely for the purpose of workforce capacity building as described above.

The survey was open from April to June 2025. It aimed to gather responses from the circa 220 staff members employed at the time of data collection. For this survey, a total of 124 responses were received out of 220. Thus, approximately 56% of the staff members completed the survey. According to Wu et al., (2022), 44% is a reasonable response rate for education-related online surveys. Therefore, the 56% response rate for this analysis attests to the reliability of the data.

Survey responses were analysed and categorised, with specific themes prioritised in alignment with the requirements outlined by the evaluators. To enhance clarity and highlight key findings—particularly areas with the highest training needs—colour coding was applied consistently to both text and graphical representations throughout the analysis and the final report.

Structure of the Paper

The report is structured into four main sections:

1. **Workforce Profile:** A graphical overview of the survey respondents, post-qualification duration of work experience and an overview of job roles in employer organisations.
2. **Workforce Qualifications Overview:** A breakdown of respondents' qualifications across basic and undergraduate Community Youth Work (CYW) qualifications, teaching training, qualifications in allied disciplines and specialist training.
3. **Identified Training Needs:** A summary of training needs as reported by respondents.
4. **Key Insights and Future Directions:** A brief discussion on emerging insights from the data that help pave the way for planning future training events.

Section I Workforce Profile

This section first provides a breakdown of survey respondents by project, highlighting the spread of the workforce across the six PEACEPLUS Youth Programme funded projects. It then graphically represents the duration of experience of those who have a professional degree and lastly the various job roles they occupy in their employer organisations.

Table 1 below reflects the placement of all 124 respondents across the six projects. The numbers of respondents are reasonably representative of each project, with over 50% of staff from each project included in the data. This even sample spread further attests to the reliability of the data in representing the workforce training needs across the full programme.

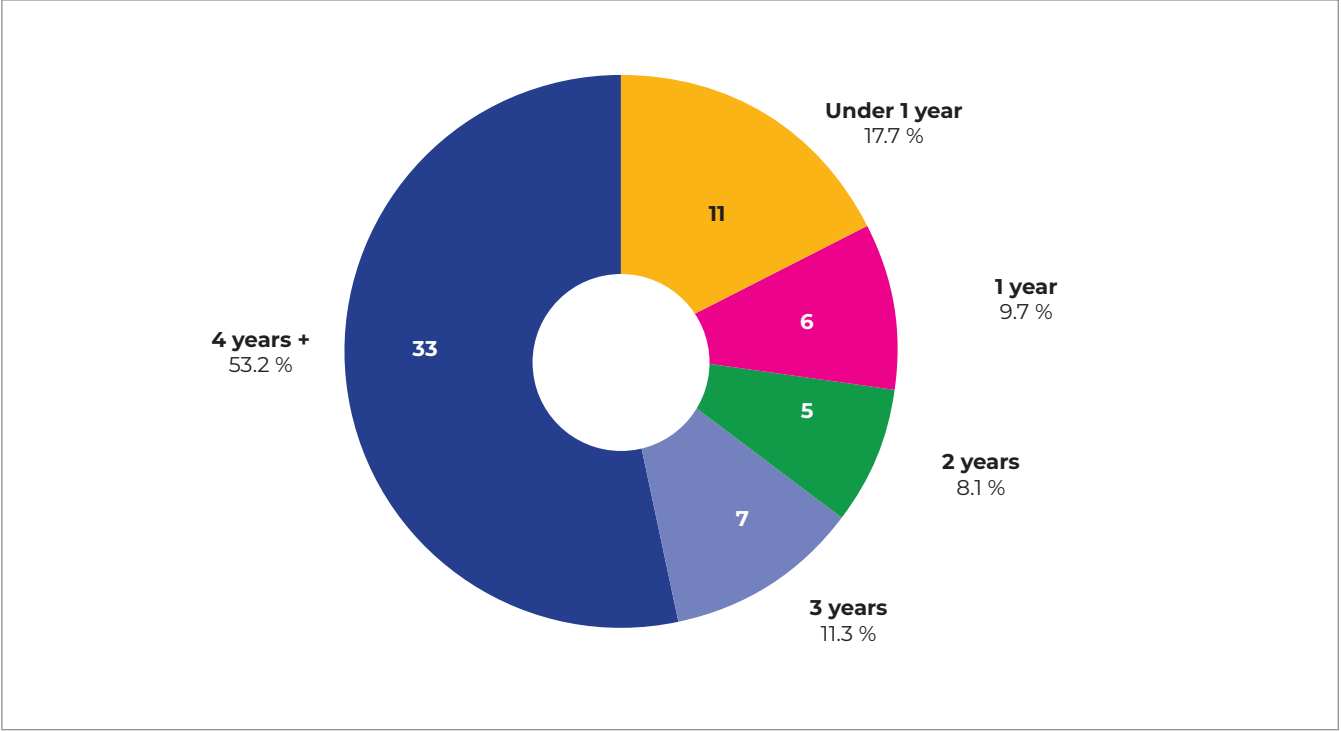
Table 1. Spread of Workforce across PEACEPLUS Youth Programme Projects

Project	Respondents
AMPLIFY	23
Empower 2 Transform (E2T)	26
HEROES+	16
Journeys	19
STRIVE	20
Youthscape Plus	20
Total	124

Source: Data collected within the EU PEACEPLUS Youth Programme

62 out of 124 respondents reported having a professional Community Youth Work qualification, which equates to 50% of the workforce (see figure 2 for further details). Of these professionally qualified youth workers, Figure 1 below reflects the duration of their post-qualifying youth work experience, with over half boasting more than 4years experience in the field:

Figure 1. Post-qualifying Years of Experience of the Professionally Qualified Workforce



Source: Data collected within the EU PEACEPLUS Youth Programme

The respondents used various job titles for their roles in the respective organisations. These job titles (30 in total) are divided into five main groups: management roles within partnerships, management and coordinator roles, workers with face-to-face developmental roles, administrative roles, and senior practitioners. In some cases, job titles had project names as prefixes. These job titles were included in table 2 below after removing the prefixes. Two participants reported dual roles, such as Specialist Mentor / Project Support Officer and Lead Worker / Area Leader.

Table 2 reflects the wide range of functions and roles included as part of the workforce. The numbers in brackets reflect the number of respondents with the corresponding job title or the group. One response (out of 124) was excluded due to a lack of clarity of the job title, so the table reflects 123 responses. Some roles may have a job description that makes them suitable for more than one category, however, for our purposes, these have only been recorded in one category. For example, senior youth workers may also have management roles, or training and development officers who may have face-to-face roles.

Table 2. Workforce Job Titles and Roles

Groups	Job Titles
Management within partnerships (6)	• Team lead (2) • Area manager/area leader (1) • Co-lead (1) • Partner project manager (1) • Area leader (1)
Management and coordinators (16)	• Programme Support Officer (5) • Project coordinator (3) • Coordinator (2) • CEO (1) • Programme coordinator (1) • Project officer (1) • Project support officer (1) • Support officer (1) • Youth officer (1)
Senior practitioners (21)	• Senior youth worker (7) • Youth development worker (7) • Youth development Lead (5) • Lead worker (1) • Senior worker (1)
Face-to-face workers (79)	• Youth worker (59) • Youth support worker (6) • Assistant youth worker (4) • Project worker (3) • Key worker (2) • Specialist mentor (1) • Sports for Development facilitator (1) • Sports Development Facilitator (1) • Sports facilitator (1) • Training and Development Officer (1)
Administrative roles (1)	• Finance officer (1)

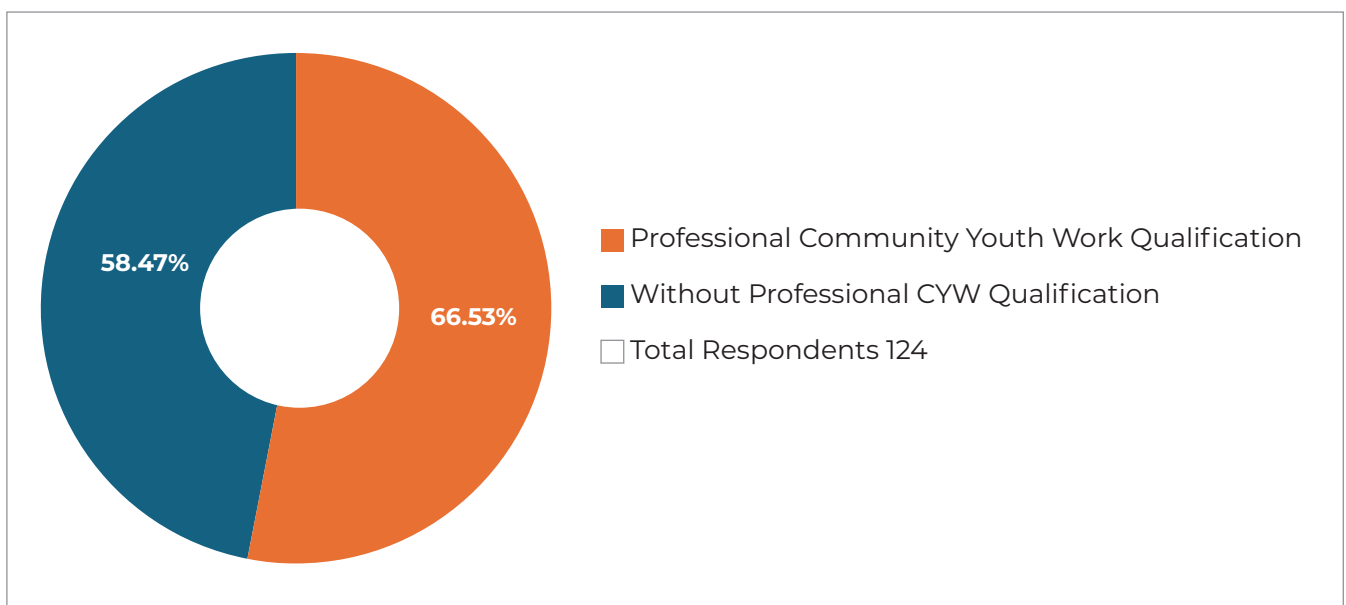
Source: Data collected within the EU PEACEPLUS Youth Programme

Section II Workforce Qualification

This section analyses the level and nature of qualifications of the workforce to understand the levels of Community Youth Work (CYW) training among the workforce and the applicability of other qualifications in working with young people.

62 respondents reported holding a professional CYW qualification. However, based on further details provided for the level of youth work qualification, an additional four respondents (who had mistakenly added their JNC qualification elsewhere) were added to this group. Therefore, figure 2 below shows a total of 66 participants of 124 respondents who were identified as holding a professional CYW degree:

Figure 2. Respondents holding a professional Community Youth Work Qualification



Source: Data collected within the EU PEACEPLUS Youth Programme

Table 3 below records a breakdown of all the Community Youth Work qualifications by the 124 respondents. These include those with basic level CYW qualifications such as OCNNI Levels 2 & 3 and level 4 Certificate in Youth Studies or equivalent.

Table 3. Community Youth Work Qualifications of Workforce

Worker's qualifications		N	%	Total	
				N	%
Workers with CYW qualifications	Workers with professional CYW Qualification	66	53%	92	74%
	Workers with Basic Level CYW Qualification	26	21%		
Workers with no CYW qualifications	Workers with Allied qualifications	18	14.5%	32	26%
	Workers with no qualifications	6	5%		
	Teacher-qualified workers with allied degrees	5	4%		
	Teacher-qualified Workers	3	2.5%		
Total				124	100%

Source: Data collected within the EU PEACEPLUS Youth Programme

3 This includes 3 teacher-qualified workers who also hold a professional CYW qualification.

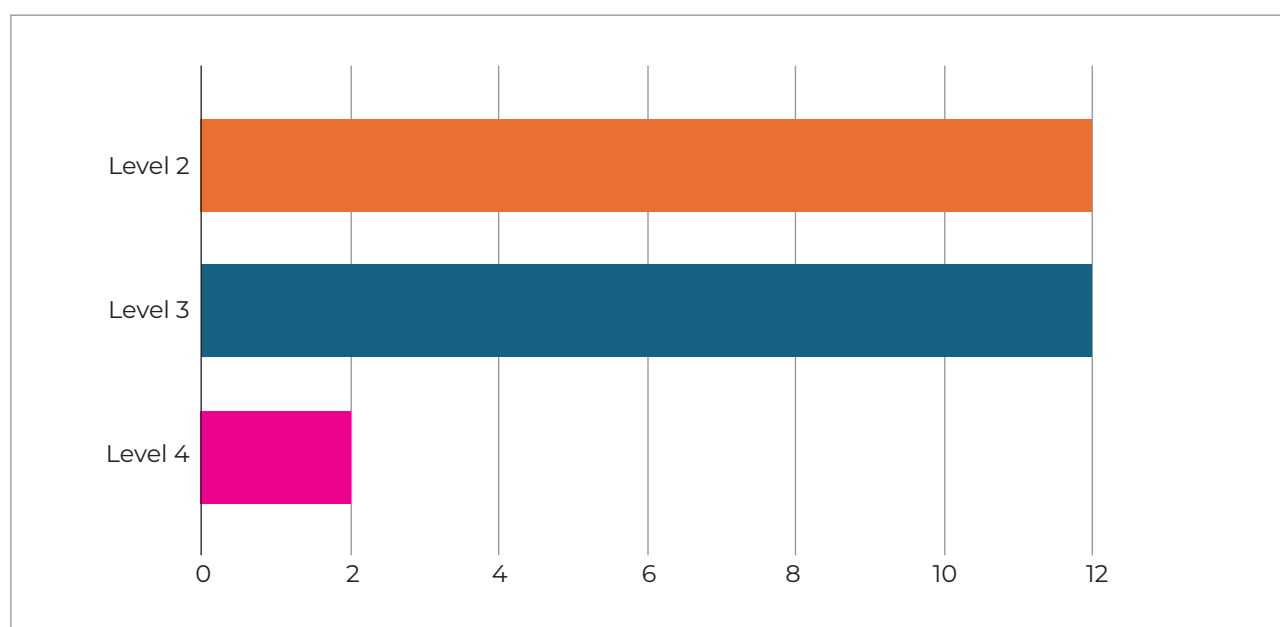
4 This includes 2 teacher-qualified workers who hold level 2 or 3 CYW qualification.

A) Workers with Community Youth Work (CYW) qualifications

92 workers who hold a CYW qualification are subdivided into two groups based on whether they have a basic level qualification (pre-vocational) or a professionally qualifying level qualification. 80 out of 124 respondents held an introductory qualification at level two, three or four. However, respondents holding both professional CYW qualifications and introductory ones were removed from this group.

Figure 3 gives a breakdown of the remaining 26 respondents with basic-level CYW qualifications (and no subsequent professional CYW ones). Only the highest level of their qualification was counted. It is noticeable in the graph that most of the workforce are qualified at levels 2 and 3, while only a small number have a level 4 qualification.

Figure 3. Breakdown of Basic CYW Qualifications

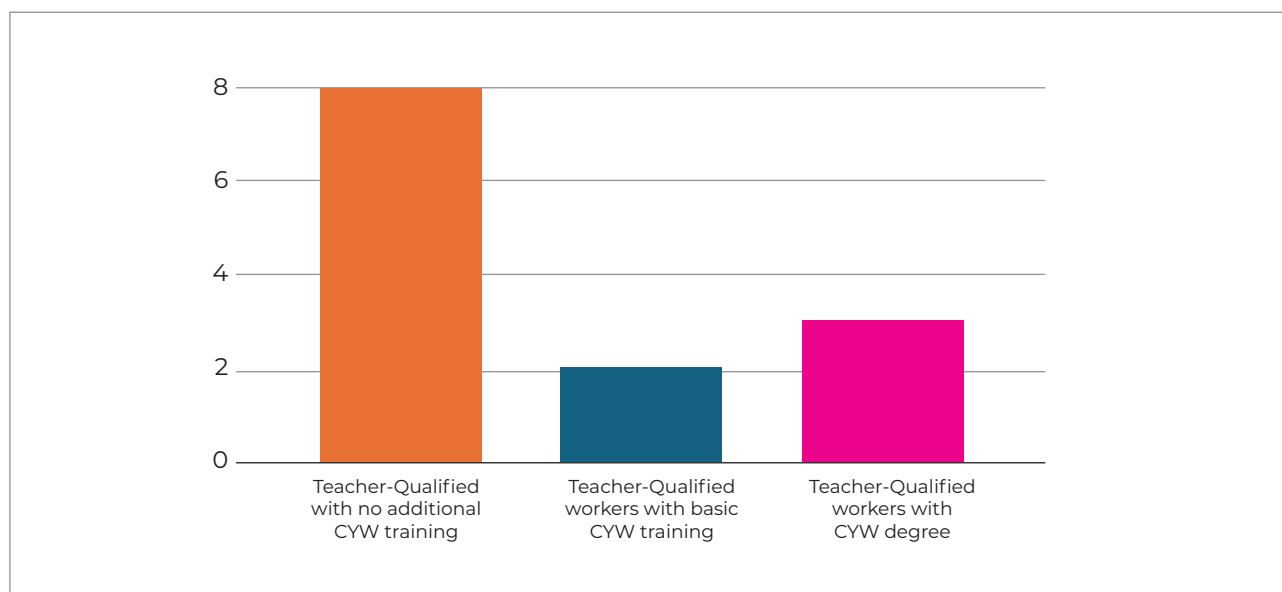


Source: Data collected within the EU PEACEPLUS Youth Programme

B) Qualification level of Teacher-qualified respondents

Only 13 (10 %) out of 124 respondents were teacher qualified. Figure 4 below assesses whether these teacher-qualified respondents have CYW or other qualifications. Out of the 13 teacher-qualified workers, 2 held a basic CYW qualification, 3 had professional CYW qualifications, and 8 had no CYW qualification.

Figure 4. CYW Qualification held by Teacher-trained respondents



Source: Data collected within the EU PEACEPLUS Youth Programme

C) Qualifications in Allied Disciplines

When prompted about holding a degree in an allied discipline, 49 (40 %) said yes, while the remaining 78 (60 %) said no. Two respondents were removed from the affirmative count of 49, as their degrees were youth work degrees: BSc (Hons) Community Youth Work and Masters in Youth and Community work with JNC and Practical Theology. Three respondents had more than one degree, the second of which are marked with a single asterisk. Therefore, the total number of qualifications recorded is 51 for a total of 47 respondents in this category. The qualifications of the respondents in allied disciplines are grouped into six broad categories in Table 4 below, with a high proportion of qualifications in psychology, sports science and social care⁵.

⁵ The double asterisks marks abbreviations whose descriptions are shown in the glossary section.

Table 4. Title of Degrees in Allied Disciplines

Group	Degree titles
Health and life Sciences (21)	BSc Psychology / BSc Social Psychology*/MSc Applied Psychology (7) BSc Sports, Health and Exercise Science/Sports Coaching/Sport (5) BSc Social Care Practice / BA Applied Social Care* (5) Counselling (level 4) (1) BSc Health and Wellbeing (1) MSc Health Promotion and Public Health* (1) Medicine (1)
Humanities (8)	HND Fine Arts/MA Fine Arts (2) HND Arts (1) MA Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages* (1) BA English (1) MA English language and literature (1) BA History (1) BA Humanities Combined* (1)
Social Sciences (13)	PGDip Mediation*(1) PG Masters Conflict Management*(1) Conflict Transformation and Social Justice (1) BSc Community Development (1) Diploma in Social Work (1) PGDip Youth Justice (1) BSc Sociology and Social Policy (1) BSc Social & Cultural Studies (1) BSc Social Policy and Special Educational Needs* (1) BSc Criminology and Social Policy (1) MSc International Development (1) MSc Youth and Childcare Studies (1) BSc Early Childhood Education (1)
Religious Studies (4)	BSc Theology (3) Catholic Studies and Primary School Education with an Emphasis on Key Stage 3 Social Sciences (US based programme) (1)
Business and management (4)	Strategic Management and Leadership (1) BA Events Management (1) Business and marketing (1) MA Leadership and management* (1)
Law (1)	Law (1)

Source: Data collected within the EU PEACEPLUS Youth Programme

D) Workforce with specialist qualifications

26 respondents stated that they held specialist qualifications that were relevant to their work on the PEACEPLUS Youth Programme. There are 50 qualifications named here with 16 people presenting with more than one specialist qualification. The responses are grouped in eight categories in Table 5 below and show considerable expertise to enhance the variety of programme activities and available skillsets across the PEACEPLUS Youth Programme.

Table 5. Specialist qualifications of respondents

Qualifications	Respondents
Health, Safety & Wellbeing	• Adult Safeguarding Champion • Safeguarding young people and Vulnerable Adults • Designated Officer Training • First Aid • Remote Emergency Care (REC2) • Outdoor First Aid Level 2 • ASIST Training - Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (2) • Drugs and alcohol • OCN Level 2 Mental Health • Mental Health First Aid • OCN Level 3 Sexual health • Trauma Informed Practice (2) • Counselling Skills and Theory (2) • ACES training – Adverse Childhood Experiences (2) • Motivational interviewing • Sports qualifications
Education	• Tutoring • BSc in Education & PE • QCF Level 3 Classroom assistant • TQUK Level 3 Award in Education and Training (2) • PG Certificate in Secondary Education • PG Certificate in Higher and Further Education
Peacebuilding	• OCNNI Level 2 & 3 Community Relations • Conflict Resolution • OCNNI Level 2 Good relations • Level 4 & 5 Restorative Practitioner

Qualifications	Respondents
Working with young people with specific needs or conditions	• Autism Spectrum training (2) • Level 2 Disability awareness • Level 3 Young people with disabilities • Level 6 Nurture qualification (providing a greater understanding of attachment and supporting young people who have a variety of needs) • Level 2 Disability awarenessLevel 4 Young people with additional needs • Level 2 Disability awarenessManaging Challenging Behaviours
Management and Leadership	• Management (2) • Leadership and management (L-5) • MSc in Leadership in Sustainable Development • Diploma in Learning and Development Practice (Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development) • Certificate in Training Practice (Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development)
Quality Assurance, Assessment and Standards	• Vocational Assessor Awards (3) • Internal Verification Award • NOCN Level 4 Leading the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice
Religious Studies	• Certificate in Youth Ministry
Other	• Music: Artist Development Level 5 • Childhood and Youth Studies

Source: Data collected within the EU PEACEPLUS Youth Programme

Section III Training Requirements

This last section of the report documents the training requirements as specified by the respondents, outlining their training requests, which are grouped in 12 categories as below:

Table 6. Workforce Training Requests

Themes	Specific Training Requested
Citizenship	• Young people and citizenship • Anti-racism • CRED / LGBTQIA + / Inclusion
Digital Safety for Youth	• Social Media • Mobile Phone usage among young people and its impact
Employability and personal development	• Employability guidance for young people • Welfare advice
Good Relations	• Peacebuilding • Conflict management/conflict resolution
Health and Safety of young people	• First aid • Substance use • Suicide Prevention • Asist Training (Suicide First Aid Training)
Leadership & Management	• First aidTeam Teach** • First aidLeadership • First aidMentoring • First aidIV (Internal verification Training) / assessor training • First aidReporting • First aidSensitive cases handling • First aidEffective funding and resource utilisation • First aidMotivational training and personal and professional development opportunities for staff members
Mental Health	• Mental Health Training for Workforce • Trauma in young people • Trauma-informed Practice • Trauma and addiction

Themes	Specific Training Requested
Working with young people with specific needs or conditions	• Disability • Assisted Technology, such as Makaton for effective communication with children with communication difficulties • Assisted Technology, such as Makaton for Supporting non-verbal young people, young people with ASD, ADHD, and autism • SEN training specifically around communication/inclusive activities • Working with children who refuse school and are non-committal towards programme interventions • Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs** training) • Child Sexual Exploitation Awareness
Youth work	• Theoretical principles underpinning youth work • Practical skills and competencies of youth work • Support for staff to complete the level 2 and 3 in youth work • Gender consciousness • Outdoor Qualifications • Advocacy
PEACEPLUS Youth Programme	• Themes of PEACEPLUS pillars • More information on YouthImPact and PEACEPLUS • Collective events to share practice • Request for evening training for part-time workers with morning jobs • Cluster groups

Source: Data collected within the EU PEACEPLUS Youth Programme

Key Insights and Future Directions

This report has presented a brief analysis of the training level and needs of the workforce engaged in the six YouthImPact supported PEACEPLUS Youth Programme projects. It reveals that 74% of the workforce engaged under the PEACEPLUS Youth Programme hold CYW qualifications of some description. 53% hold a professional Community Youth Work qualification (normally at degree level). However, 26% hold no CYW certification or qualifications, a significantly high number. This group requires attention to receive basic training in Community Youth Work models, skills, principles and approaches.

YouthImPact is well placed to offer such generic training. While training the workforce in the foundations of community youth work is imperative, motivating the workforce for undertaking accredited qualifications may pose a greater challenge as it is resource and time intensive and poses many logistical barriers for full time workers. This level of investment would be best considered by individual projects, who are in a position to manage staff workload and commitments. For this reason, this role is not recommended for the YouthImPact team, but there is a clear role for delivering non-accredited youth work training.

49% of the workforce held other degree level qualifications outside Community Youth Work (this includes 3 people with both CYW degrees and other degrees). This statistic speaks to the diversity of the workforce, including those with degrees as varied as psychology, community development, arts or conflict mediation. These rich perspectives

can add to a more holistic approach if multi-disciplinary specialisms can be recognised and appreciated among project teams.

The training needs highlighted many issues, problems or situations that young people face in their lives – from trauma to attention deficit disorder. From this variety of conditions and complex circumstances, it is clear that the specialist skills and expertise required from the workforce is expanding exponentially. Within this research, the wide range of specialist skills in the workforce is impressive but may not be known or fully appreciated by project co-ordinators.

For this reason, dissemination of this research across the projects is recommended. However, without the foundational understanding of community youth work, training that focuses on, for example, neurodiversity, is at risk of focusing on the medical, safety or health aspects without considering the theme within a Community Youth Work context.

Specific themes are best housed within a holistic CYW framework to hold integrity with the youth-centred PEACEPLUS Youth Programme principles. The need for basic youth work training is also highlighted here as a priority for this PEACEPLUS Youth Programme workforce.

40 out of 124 respondents (32%) answered the question on their future training needs. This response rate is heartening, as it suggests that the other 68% are having their training needs met within current YouthImPact training and project-specific training. A few themes are worthy of note here. Training on

PEACEPLUS and the five programme outcome areas continue to feature highly in training needs. This may be attributed to flux in the workforce with new staff being recruited continuously. The focus of many of the requests for training is to improve skills in working with young people with specific conditions or additional needs. There is a fine line here for workers to consider ways to implement anti-discriminatory practice or inclusive youth work on one hand; but also, to recognise the limitations of youth work in addressing special additional needs, which may require signposting to external services.

Similarly, a prominent training request was for training related to the safety and wellbeing of young people. Clearly this is a priority for youth workers and (similar to young people with additional needs) basic training on mental health is to be welcomed, however it is best placed alongside discussions on signposting for specialist support and where the boundaries lie for direct support from youth workers. While there is an obvious role for YouthImPact in delivering to some of these priorities, care needs to be taken not to extend beyond the reach of the discipline of youth work.

A number of respondents also requested leadership and management training opportunities. The Coordinators Hub and the team leader clusters may be useful in offering support, but this request suggests a further interest in broadening the knowledge and skills of senior managers and coordinators.

In general, the training needs or requests recorded here focused less on learning new methodologies or approaches. This may indicate

that staff members are already well equipped with creative, engaging methodologies for working with young people. While youth workers are notoriously creative and resourceful (YouthLink Scotland, 2020), the programme's heavy workload can stifle this creativity and lead to programme activities being repeated rather than refreshed.

Anecdotally, the YouthImPact team hear of enduring creativity amongst workers despite demanding workload, complex needs of young people and intensity of delivery, but the challenge is of staff burnout and the toll that such creativity and effort places on staff. Further investigation may be needed to ascertain whether training in creative approaches to working with young people is of interest to the workforce. It is worth considering running training that focuses on creative skills such as micro-skills sessions, creative arts or ecological youth work.

Some of the training requested falls both outside the domain of this project and outside the scope of the YouthImPact team. The focus for the YouthImPact team is for training and support that will ultimately benefit the young programme participants. While many of the suggestions for training will have this impact, some may be proposed for professional development purposes rather than for the improvement of the programme. However, these training requests may be addressed in other ways, by raising the themes with employers and providing signposting towards the organisations that offer the requested training.

Finally, three respondents expressed that they needed more time to reflect on training needs. Therefore, it is worth considering whether

participants can be prompted to share any specific training needs as they arise in the future. This question is included in the evaluation forms for all YouthImPact sessions, and it would be worthwhile taking time to explore these evolving needs.

Though not a part of this survey directly, one respondent appreciated the usefulness of cluster groups as an opportunity to learn new ideas and gain insights from peers. Thus, continued focus on peer support and a peer learning approach is an important point to bear in mind for future training. The response also speaks to the effectiveness of the project sessions delivered to date.

Abbreviations and Descriptions

Acronym / Term	Description
ACEs	Adverse Childhood Experiences
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
CRED	Community Relations, Equality and Diversity
CYW	Community Youth Work
HND	Higher National Diploma. It is a Level 5 qualification in the UK, equivalent to the first two years of a Bachelor's degree
JNC	A JNC degree in Youth and Community Work, is a qualification recognized by the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) for Youth and Community Workers. This recognition signifies that the degree programme meets the professional standards set by the JNC for youth work practice, making graduates eligible to work as professional youth workers in the UK and Ireland and potentially further afield. JNC degree is currently a level 6 qualification.
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, and the "+" signifying other diverse identities within the community.
N/OCN & OCNNI	OCN Northern Ireland is a UK-recognised Awarding Organisation based in Northern Ireland, with an extensive portfolio of qualifications, ranging from Entry Level to Level 5. For more information, refer to the link N/OCN .
NSETS**	North/South Education and Training Standards. For more information, refer to the link NSETS .
SEN	Special Educational Needs
Team Teach**	Team-teach is an accredited training programme that focuses on positive-behaviour management techniques for individuals working with young people. For more information, refer to the link TeamTeach .

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