Youth Social Action in 16 – 19 Study Programmes

East Norfolk Sixth Form College
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East Norfolk Sixth Form College’s mission statement is Excellence and Care: Working for the Community. Whilst the College wishes to forge links with our local community stakeholders that extend the possibilities for our students, the College’s relationship with the community aims to be one of mutual benefit. Through a variety of programme and projects, students gain valuable and purposeful work related learning and develop key employability skills, whilst the community stakeholders benefit from the students’ creative and technical skills. During their time at College, students are encouraged not only to understand the concept of citizenship but also to put their knowledge into practice in a meaningful way.

The College’s Career Development Programme commits the College to assisting students in securing a work experience placement whether this be with a business or third sector organisation; in turn students are expected to demonstrate commitment, produce a supporting statement and attend an interview at the prospective placement. It is worth noting that in their supporting statements students recognise the importance of work related learning but they also recognise that they live within an area of relatively high social deprivation and would like to improve the lives of others within their community.

The College counts the James Paget University Hospital, Voluntary Norfolk, Gt Yarmouth Borough Council, the Citizen’s Advice Bureau (CAB), YMCA and numerous local charities amongst its community partners. All of the volunteering opportunities are skills based. Examples include meal volunteering at the local hospital, which requires the use of specialised equipment; designing logos or websites for local charities; volunteering at the local Citizens Advice Bureau or becoming a member of the College’s Youth Action Group.

The CAB offers a range of volunteering opportunities and the Volunteer Coordinator attends the College on a regular basis to explain the volunteering opportunities that exist to students. These include; administrators, receptionists, information assistants, financial education volunteers, and IT support coordinators.

YMCA Norfolk also visits the college to recruit students as Young Health Champions. The YMCA recognises that the area served by the College has young individuals living within it from disadvantaged backgrounds. Students who become Young Health Champions are trained to deliver and help young people
within the community widen their knowledge in three key areas: mental health, physical health (obesity) and sexual health.

The Youth Advisory Board (YAB) was set up by Norfolk County Council for the commissioning of services and sustainable activities that help the community to meet young people's needs, especially those who are more vulnerable. A central commitment of the YAB is that young people are included at every stage of the decision making process and are able to access a range of training opportunities to develop their skills and confidence.

In order to achieve this, young people volunteer to become part of a Youth Action Group (YAG) and are trained to assist with the quality assurance of commissioned providers; ensuring high quality, effective and sustainable provision. A YAG has been running for two years at the College. YAGs play a key part in ensuring that young people are partners in the YAB decision making process.

The East Norfolk Sixth Form College YAG meets regularly with young professionals from the Mancroft Advice Project to share ideas, receive updates and make future plans. The YAG is voluntary engagement; no previous experience or knowledge is required as full training is provided. The YAG are an excellent example of social action in that helping the community to meet the needs of its young people is a multi-step process in which students address an issue they care about, learn about it and potential solutions to solve it, then take action to create positive changes on the issue.

The students who train as Meal Volunteering Assistants encourage elderly patients to eat and drink, help cut up their food and ensure they have the right cutlery available. They also feed patients of any age who are unable to feed themselves. In order to become a Meal Volunteering Assistant, students receive specific training to help them with communication and nutritional skills. The students are also trained in patient care in addition to specialised training in using the equipment and writing up notes on each patient.

Social action is regarded by East Norfolk Sixth Form College as being important to all: a Volunteering Fair is held annually in partnership with Voluntary Norfolk; students are all encouraged to attend this to understand how they can contribute positively to the lives of others within their local community. Many staff are also interested to find out more about volunteering and social action; some staff have also taken up voluntary work as a result of talking to third sector organisations at the Volunteering Fair.