

# Structured vs Unstructured Planning

Youth work sessions can be structured or unstructured, but in our case, we found a combination of both methods worked together nicely.

Becca says- Coming from a teaching background, I have always worked with a detailed session plan in front of me. I find that having a structure helps keep both myself and the young people on track and means we get everything that I have planned done in the one session. I stick to the timings I have laid out in my plan. I also make use of very structured resources, such as worksheets and PowerPoints, which I prepare in advance. This ensures I don't miss anything out, and that I have evidence of the young people's work. In school, young people are usually taught to work in this way, so I like to keep this consistency in my approach. It hasn't failed me yet! Young people have always responded positively to this practice. Remember, teaching doesn't have to be dull!

Sarah says- My style of working is generally a little more laid back! Having always worked for charities, I'm used to creating activities on a shoe string budget with limited resources. This means you have to get creative. My usual starting point involves throwing some flipchart paper on the wall, scribbling ideas on post it notes and letting my own and the young people's imaginations run wild. I often work with young people who are disengaged from school and therefore can be wary of anything that involves a lot of writing or sitting at desks for too long, so I like to mix things up. I still always plan my sessions and have clear aims, but if something interesting comes up in conversation I don't mind going off topic. Sometimes this can be the time when a session becomes really valuable for a young person, so I like to run with any ideas they come up with, no matter how off the wall they seem.

We both say- Although we have different working styles, we found these combined really well and we formed a great team! Some young people engaged better with the structured working methods and some preferred the less structured approach. It's important to remember that everyone learns differently, so we were able to tailor our sessions to fit the different needs of the people in the group.

While working together, both of us think we have learned from each other. Sarah now makes to-do lists, while Becca has a new found love for post-it's!

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