

HOT CHOCOLATE TRUST // // // BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Thank you for your interest in this vacancy for a new Youth Worker at Hot Chocolate Trust.

In the following paragraphs you will find background information on the role, the recruitment process and us. We hope this will help you to work out whether you are a good fit for the role and, if you decide to apply, it will help you to show us that. We also hope it will inspire you to want to come and work for an organization we love.

Where has the role come from?

The youth work at Hot Chocolate is a rich cycle of encounter and collaboration between the young people and team. This has various consequences – for one thing there are always new ideas of things that we could do together. Thus we are delighted to add a new youth worker to the team, through the support of Comic Relief, giving us greater capacity to work with the needs and ambitions of the young people. Another consequence, though, is that young people and team often identify things in the world which they believe should be different. This post will take a particular lead in enabling young people to take action and make change in the world.

The Young Activist project will offer a fantastic opportunity for the young people involved to be empowered, inspired and challenged. To develop their own sense of agency within, their vision for, and their commitment to a fairer, healthier, happier society and world in the future. Over the three years, the Young Activists project will support 120 young people to get involved in volunteering, fundraising, campaigning and other activist options. An incremental process, built around the vision and passion of the young people themselves, can unleash untapped resources and life-times of activism.

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The recruitment process

This role sits in the heart of Hot Chocolate, our youth work, participating in our team's engagement with and support of young people and leading a particular focus on young people's activism. For this reason we are very keen to find the right match for both the role and for the organization.

Obviously the first important date is the deadline for applications: **Wednesday 24th January at 1pm**. We will invite short-listed candidates into a two-stage process: an informal visit and a formal assessment day.

The formal assessment will be on **Thursday 8th February** and will take several hours. This allows us to use both a panel interview, and a more informal group process with Hot Chocolate team and young people, giving you different ways to present your abilities.

The informal visit will function as preparation for this process and will not be assessed. On either Wednesday 31st January or 7th February short-listed candidates will have the chance to visit a Hot Chocolate Open Session (the backbone of our youth work) and to find out everything you want to know about Hot Chocolate and how we function.



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Since 2001 Hot Chocolate has been supporting isolated, wary young people to take up and sustain opportunities that become transformative, building the vision and resources to live fuller, healthier lives. The young people (around 300 each year) come from all across Dundee: marginalized in their own neighbourhoods the city centre is their place. We build community with young people, rather than provide services for them, giving them the trust, responsibility, and support to decide, plan and implement day by day activities with team and shape longer-term plans.

"You don't understand what the Steeple is until you've walked through that door. It's like a whole different world. You walk in and it's like all the bad stuff just washes off, and you're free from pressure and judgement for the time you're here. You're just free to be who you are." MK, 15

Hot Chocolate's approach centres on building community with young people, not service provision, for many reasons: the young people we engage with are wary of programmed approaches and resist or have already 'failed' in such contexts; assuming their competence and responsibility in their own lives and community from the start builds confidence and brings deeper change; it ensures we remain acutely responsive to the real needs of young people.

"The community feel of belonging created by the team and young people at HC provides a platform where healing can begin. From this place of safety and relational support, young people can begin to process the traumatic experiences which are the cause of so much stress in their lives."

Steve Sweeney, Barnardo's Scotland Rollercoaster Service

What are the challenges facing young people in Hot Chocolate?

Because the young people are a gathered sub-culture from all over the city, and beyond, there is no independent research which describes them. Our own research recently showed:

- 68% are aged 16-18; 46% male, 44% female and 10% transgender/non-binary.
- 24% are currently not in education/employment/training.
- 84% were bullied at school (10% currently), 46% were excluded and 80% skipped classes. 40% identified additional support needs (mostly dyslexia, ADHD, autism).
- 19% drink alcohol most weeks and (an additional) 5% most days.
- 25% use drugs most weeks and (an additional) 31% use most days, mainly cannabis.
- 72% have been a victim of crime (mostly theft, assault, "spiking") and 68% a perpetrator (mostly theft, graffiti, assault).
- 44% have diagnosed mental health conditions; 70% have self-harmed, 44% have had an eating disorder, 74% have had panic attacks, 82% had suicidal thoughts and 42% attempted suicide.
- 56% have been looked after outside the parental home, 32% have had carer responsibilities.
- Most have experienced significant loss – 56% through parents separating, 76% bereavement, 28% imprisonment of family members.
- 56% lived with someone suffering mental ill health, 34% with problem drinking, 32% with illegal drug use; 56% experienced verbal abuse and 34% physical hurt.



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What happens in a year?

150 open door youth work sessions (Tues/Wed 7-9pm; Sat 2-5pm; 40-70 YP per session) - young people and team co-create group activities around art, sport, music, cooking, issues, employability et al. Team spend time alongside young people drawing out their needs and ambitions, creating opportunities for support and learning. Open Sessions also create a context for connecting young people with other agencies (e.g. Princes Trust, Penumbra, Women's Aid, The Corner) and with other opportunities.

"The main learning from Hot Chocolate is to put young people first and allow them to lead. The co-production ethos is key to the success of the project... young people get the most out of it by making the decisions themselves." from an independent evaluation of Creative Scotland's Youth Music Initiative.

350 Individual Support sessions with 70 young people - youth workers and young people identify issues or ambitions and collaboratively explore, set goals and act to make change. Common themes are: mental health, volunteering, confidence, school support, loss, employment, relationships, violence & safety.

"School doesn't prepare me for life but Hot Chocolate does. When my friend called and said she had tried to commit suicide nothing at school had prepared me for that, but everything at Hot Chocolate had..." Anon

60 Group work sessions with 70 young people - Group work will begin with a desire expressed by young people, a theme recognized by team, or an offer from an outside agency.

"You guys are interested in stuff just because we're interested in it. That's how much you care about us. I've never known anyone go out of their way, for no apparent reason, just to make me happy." Ross, 21

Around these 3 core methods of engagement:

- 3-4 Residential opportunities - deepening relationships, stretching skills and horizons.
- "Exodus" Summer programme with 150 young people - Exploring a theme over three weeks through multiple youth work approaches and a large scale collaborative art work. This year's theme "FuturePerfect" helped young people explore ideas about the future (both personal and social) and unpick assumptions about perfection and imperfection: <https://youtu.be/9ATesfdbKmQ>
- Youth Team with 12-20 young people - a supported, accredited volunteering programme.
- Facebook youth work – over the last few years in our youth work Facebook has shifted from vehicle for simple contacts and information into a valuable platform for youth work engagements.

Young people will choose their own pathway through these options which makes it difficult to describe a typical 'journey' but ensures that our work is as relevant and responsive as possible to each individual: the right support at the right time to make a real difference. Robust systems of evaluation and team work underpin this fluid approach: <https://vimeo.com/73729688>

"This place is where my life started. My real life, where I got to know who I really am. Who I wanted to be & who I realised I could become... You never really leave Hot Chocolate, it becomes part of you." Jemma, 25.



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A learning culture

Working at Hot Chocolate is a phenomenal learning opportunity – for all of us. A reflective culture that embraces risk and works to understand failure combines with a richly varied team with skills from CLD, art, music, organizational development, financial management, design and much more to make a genuinely stimulating environment. Our structures and processes facilitate growth too from our approach to everyday youth work, to creative and scheduled internal training and reflective opportunities, a developmental approach to regular Support and Supervision, and allocated budgets to support external training for all staff. We want to learn from you too.

Making a wider impact

We aim to make a wider impact on youth work practice and young people's experience across the country by sharing the experience, practice and resources we have accumulated. This responds to increasing invitations but, on the premise that the young people are the experts of their own experience, it also brings them and their voices into local and national discourse and decision-making. Last year this included:

- 7 conference presentations and workshops, and 4 articles/chapters, sharing from our practice and principles.
- 18 Learning visits from practitioners, students, politicians and funders.
- New training “Reclaiming monitoring and evaluation” alongside sales of the unique Hot Chocolate Outcomes Database.
- Youth work practice coaching for training practitioners.

What is Christian about Hot Chocolate?

Hot Chocolate Trust is a Christian organisation, and this underpins how and why we do what we do. Our staff, volunteers and young people are a mixture of faiths and backgrounds and we welcome everyone without prejudice or distinction of religion, race, culture, disability, gender or sexuality, the only requirement is a sympathy with our core values. Our team, comprising both Christian and non-Christian, reflected on what this commitment looks like in practice:

- **Radical inclusivity**
- **An exploratory approach to truth**
- **A tenacious hold on hope**
- **A safe place for the whole person**

If you would like to know more about this aspect of Hot Chocolate Trust we will be glad to talk about it.

“This place could be under a cardboard box, and we’d still be a family. There’s so many different people, so many different cultures and sexualities and backgrounds - and the team somehow just tie everyone together. It shows that everyone can come ‘under the roof of the Lord’ and still be accepted, whether you believe in God or not. It doesn’t feel like a church, it feels like a home.” Jenna, 16

