

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales
Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and
Education Committee
Ymchwiliad i Waith Ieuenctid | Inquiry into Youth Work

YW 31

Ymateb gan : Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Torfaen

Response from : Torfaen County Borough Council

Question 1 – What are your views on young people’s access to youth work services, including, for example:

- levels of provision across Wales and any regional variation;
- issues relating to access for specific groups of young people e.g. language, disability, rurality, ethnicity.

Youth Service provision across Wales is varied and tailored to young people and community needs. Therefore it is difficult to comment on national variations. However, details can be found in the Welsh Government annual audit

As part of the South East Wales region activity is broadly similar and is delivered in youth clubs, schools, detached settings and projects. However the variation within delivery methods are significant as a result of a number of factors, such as funding, availability of other youth support services, directorate, topography and identified needs etc.

For example, Torfaen Youth Service, in partnership with Torfaen Play and Social Services, operates a summer and holiday programme for young people 18+ with disabilities. This is in response to financial limitations and the specific needs of the young people.

If you believe that there are particular problems, how do you think they could be resolved?

With the removal of the statutory requirement for an age specific partnership (former Children and Young People Partnerships) it has become increasingly challenging to ensure that planning and delivery is appropriately joined up

In general ,multi agency workforce plans for Children and Young People could be better developed across organisations that work with young people, taking into consideration the difference between professional youth workers and workers with youths

A nationally coordinated approach to youth work could take into consideration skill sets, professional status, funding etc. The question of how this co-ordination could happen would require further discussion and debate.

Youth Work should be integral to the development of policy for example, the profession should influence policies such as 'Successful Futures' and therefore shape policy at the beginning rather than at implementation.

The National Principal Youth Officers Group (PYOG), which is a sub group of Assistant Directors of Education Wales Group (ADEW), should be instrumental in influencing the development of policy rather than responding to policy consultation. For example, the paper on Youth Work contribution to the 'Curriculum for Life' which proved to be extremely informative in introducing the role of youth work into the debate.

Question 2 – How effective do you think the Welsh Government strategy and policy on youth work is?

In considering this question you may wish to think about:

- the Welsh Government’s specific youth work policy and strategy such as ‘The Youth Work offer’; The Wales Charter for Youth Work; The National Youth Work Strategy for Wales 2014 to 2018;
- Welsh Government departmental responsibilities and whether there is a cross-departmental and co-ordinated approach to support youth work provision.

The PYOG agrees with Welsh Government’s attempts to ensure there is more consistency in service provision and outcomes for young people via youth work interventions. The sector is keen to engage in discussions to better demonstrate how youth work makes a difference to the lives of young people. This includes the Principles and Purposes, The National Youth Work strategy and in a lesser way the Wales Charter for Youth Work.

When considering these matters however, services at a local level need to ensure the offer from youth services is relevant and meets the needs of its young people, which can sometimes appear to be in opposition to National priorities. For example, the expectation from communities is to retain open access youth clubs, however this can be challenging when policy is directing youth services towards targeted intervention. These two issues are not necessarily mutually exclusive but, in the context of an extremely challenging funding climate and the differing needs of young people national priorities, should have the flexibility to meet local need where necessary.

How do you think the Welsh Government could approach its youth work strategy and policy differently / to better effect?

As part of the response to the National Outcomes Framework to Youth Work consultation it was identified within the PYOG submission that much of social policy in the UK and Wales in recent years has been based on Outcomes (or results) Based Accountability (OBA).

This method of planning and assessing performance describes performance measurement categories in terms of ‘effort’ (how much did we do?/how well did we do it?) and ‘effect’ (is anyone better off?). In order to report against outcomes following youth work

interventions, the sector (including young people) needs to carefully consider and identify what it wishes to achieve as a result of these e.g. in Scotland, the following are identified:

- Young people are confident, resilient and optimistic for the future
- Young people manage personal, social and formal relationships
- Young people create, describe and apply their learning skills
- Young people participate safely and effectively in groups
- Young people consider risk, make reasoned decisions and take control
- Young people express their voice and demonstrate social commitment
- Young people broaden their perspectives through new experiences and thinking

Much of this can be applied here in Wales too. The PYOG would suggest that the five pillars of youth work in *Youth Work in Wales: Principles & Purposes* (Educative; Expressive; Participative; Inclusive and Empowering) should form the basis for developing an outcomes chart for Wales – these principles are also implicitly present in the *Wales Charter for Youth Work*. This also needs to link with higher level outcomes/goals in the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, so that the sector can articulate its contribution to these.

Cross departmental policy development in Welsh Government needs to take into consideration the national Youth Work Strategy for Wales to ensure policies dovetail into one another, with this intention of shared outcome measures.

Question 3 – What are your views on the funding available for youth work, including through Local Authority, Welsh Government, European Union, and Third Sector.

The local authority is facing substantial financial challenges and as a result the indicative allocation for Youth Services within the Revenue Support Grant is allocated in response to a wide range of needs across the borough. Overall, across Wales there is significant disparity between the percentages allocated to the Youth Service in each local authority. The funding can be allocated in response to the perception that youth services are discretionary, however Extending

Entitlement; Direction and Guidance July 2002, set out a statutory basis and direction for the Youth Service in Wales for the first time. This statement of understanding is echoed with the National Youth Work Strategy for Wales 2014–2018

Some funding for activity that could be carried out by youth workers is hypothecated and therefore cannot always be allocated to the wider need, for example the Pupil Deprivation Grant allocated to schools is specifically attributed to closing the gap in response to presenting need. Many youth service alternative curriculum programmes within schools address this but receive no additional funding from the PDG

There appears to be high levels of funding channelled toward targeted initiatives that are very limited in their scope. As a result young people are being assessed against funding criteria as opposed to a holistic approach offered through universal provision. Open access provision is the gateway through which young people can be supported to access specific provision based on need.

Much youth service and wider youth support service provision is funded through grants: this often means that, in addition to a lack of flexibility to respond locally, provision can be delivered in relation to the available resource, not necessarily the presenting need. Grants usually sit outside of the LA's mainstream budget process, and therefore do not always drive discussions about the appropriateness of the provision in quite the same way. We would recommend that grants provided by WG be incorporated into our RSG settlement and not be limited to a year on year approval process.

In the absence of the Children and Young Peoples Partnerships or their equivalents, and the targeted nature of funding the formal mechanism for collaborative approaches may not be as well developed as possible. That said the academic research on "joining up" tends to emphasise the importance of leadership, rather than structures for example succession planning and work force.

If you believe there are problems in this area, how do you think they could be resolved?

A national co-ordinated approach to Youth Support Services.
A long term shared outcomes framework for children and young people, recognising all the different professions that contribute.
With the need for organisations to work closer together on the 'Social Care Health and Wellbeing Act' and the 'Future Generations Act' this maybe an opportunity for a multiagency approach to funding and workforce planning, especially within the development of the shared outcomes framework.

Question 4 – Are there any other issues you consider relevant to the Inquiry that you think the Committee should be made aware of? (for example: workforce related issues; the Quality Mark for Youth Work in Wales; buildings and infrastructure; youth work in schools; transport issues; access to digital technology; Welsh Government's consultation on proposals to register and inspect some out of school education settings).

It should be noted that the Registration of Youth Workers is a positive model, as identified within the first round of consultations.

The Quality Mark is a positive development in recognising quality youth work. It is important that WG clarify the status of the Quality Mark and ensure that it is robustly administered to ensure consistency of quality.

Transport continues to be a significant barrier for young people to access their full entitlement to services which would enable them to become socially and economically mobile. There is still a inconsistencies in cost to young people and a national pricing structure could address this.

We welcome the opportunity to be part of a national inspectorate framework.

Capital funding should be made available to Youth Services as many of the facilities used to deliver youth work require updating in response to the changing needs of young people.

Question 5 – If you had to make one recommendation to the Welsh Government from all the points you have made, what would that recommendation be?

Recognition of the professional status of youth work and its statutory role supporting children and young people and the development of an independent national co-ordinating organisation.