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Welsh Government Research

Report in relation to a contract to develop recommendations for Welsh Government
on how voluntary sector and local authorities can work together more effectively:
contract number YW/VOL/003.

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Executive Summary

There are a range of sources of support available for voluntary youth work organisations in Wales including financial support, resources, expertise and through networking. However, these forms of support are not seen consistently across Wales and in addition, this research has identified that the range of support for local organisations significantly outweighs the support for national organisations. Organisations in the statutory and voluntary sectors need to develop a shared vision for what they need to achieve for the young people of Wales, they need to move beyond their own organisational interests and be clear about how they can work together to enhance the lives of young people. While there are many elements which are shared, for example a commitment to the principles and values of youth work, however, there are many gaps emerging in provision, these can be grouped into strategic planning (at a national and local authority level), in financial matters, in expertise and importantly, the exchange of information for the benefit of young people. These matters could all be addressed through working more collaboratively.

Identifying what support national and local voluntary youth work organisations currently receive

The purpose of this research was to explore the most appropriate arrangements for supporting the voluntary youth work sector beyond 2016. The voluntary youth work sector is estimated to include 30,000 adult volunteers who work with more than 250,000 young people (Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services) (CWVYS). The Youth Work Ministerial Reference Group agreed that future models should enable partners to work together more closely and that there is a need for change. Our research has identified that this message is getting through, there is evidence of much good practice in relation to how voluntary and maintained sector organisations work together to achieve positive outcomes for young people and communities.

The increasingly challenging financial climate facing the broad public sector in recent years has resulted in a continually changing youth work landscape. This is highlighted when considering, according to the youth service audit for 2014-15 a reduction in spending by the maintained youth work sector of 14 per cent on the year before (Statistics Wales). This difficult financial context is compounded when adding in a similar reduction in the workforce. The youth work audit shows a reduction in the statutory sector workforce of 19% between 2012 and 2015 (Statistics Wales).

Despite the challenging context within the sector (see Appendix 1) our research has shown that national and local voluntary organisations receive a range of support from different sources, with local organisations receiving a greater range of support than national bodies. National and local organisations have identified that they have different ways of working and require different forms of support. National youth work organisations receive the support of, amongst others, CWVYS which acknowledges that information, training and networking are the main forms of support it offers to member organisations. At a local level, local authorities provide 2 per cent of their budget allocation as grant aid from the statutory youth service to the voluntary sector. Including contributions from the wider local authority budget, local authorities provided almost £1 million in grant aid to voluntary youth services in Wales during the year (Statistics Wales). Table 1 illustrates the forms of support available to the local and national youth work organisations.

Table 1. Forms of support for national and local voluntary youth work organisations

Local	National
Information and advice from CWVYS and in some cases the local County Voluntary Council	National Voluntary Youth Organisations Grant
Low level training available through local authorities	The information and advice shared by CWVYS
Financial support through grant acquisition	National youth work organisations provide peer support
Financial support through local authority youth services	Financial support from funding bodies
Collaborative working with local authorities	Training through YMCA Wales Community College
Partnerships with local youth services	
Youth Services provide local knowledge	
Shared youth work resources	
Youth services provide expertise with recruitment	
Funding for organisations to deliver elements of the Welsh language Strategy and some local additions	
Local voluntary organisations receive the support of their national bodies.	
Local support must be bespoke, if too formal volunteers can run a mile	
National body websites are an important source of information	
National bodies offer local groups in house leadership qualifications	
Use of social media to communicate forthcoming events and points of interest	

Table 1 shows that local organisations receive many forms of support. The need for these forms of support changes over time. Some local authorities and county voluntary councils appear more able to provide varied and relevant forms of support to their local networks.

Identifying what support national and local voluntary youth work organisations require to support them as a voluntary youth work organisation

Participants report being proud of their contribution to achieving value for young people and communities, noting that ‘voluntary sector organisations are very keen to work in partnerships, we want to make a real contribution to achieving positive outcomes.’ This was a resounding message from the voluntary sector. In all cases the sector would welcome closer working with the maintained sector.

The support needed by local and national voluntary organisation will vary from time to time. This support needs to be bespoke, to be both accessible in terms of the time the support is available (a visit from a local 'organiser' for example), and meaningful, in as much as the support available is responsive to local need. Therefore additional capacity must be made available in order to improve and expand the quality and consistency of the support available across Wales.

One of the main themes that arose throughout the research was the need for organisations to have a level of sustainability of funding. In some cases, local voluntary organisations had their financial support from the local authority withdrawn at very short notice over a matter of weeks. Existing and new Service Level Agreements should be robust and reviewed annually to ensure a level of security of funding.

The research identified that the role of the project manager is crucial to the success of voluntary organisations. A programme of training on strategic leadership will be helpful for leaders to support them to come to terms with the competing demands of the current socio-economic climate.

Small local voluntary organisations want to demonstrate to their communities that they are providing a high level of service. There are considerable demands on these organisations in how to demonstrate this quality. Record keeping, accreditation and safeguarding are all fundamental but come with time burdens which mean the staff engaged in that work cannot be more proactive in, for example; fundraising. Seeking to develop streamlined systems which meet the needs for data gathering would be a positive development rather than tying practitioners up with unnecessary bureaucracy. The sector should develop a collection of easily accessible resources which are kept up to date annually to provide practical information and advice to small voluntary organisations on best practice in running a small voluntary youth work organisation.

Identify what would support voluntary youth work organisations and local authorities to work more closely together

The Ministerial Reference Group for the Youth Service has noted the need for a radical way forward for the youth service in Wales. Many of the examples of good practice identified in the research and the representative sample below are consistent with this vision from the Ministerial Reference Group which has recommended the way forward for the youth service in Wales include the objectives that:

- Young people's involvement should be at the heart.
- A regional approach is important.
- Long term commitment is necessary.
- There is a need to work together

There are many examples of voluntary youth work organisations and local authorities working closely. These examples of best practice in this area must be gathered, shared and celebrated.

A national programme of joint training for youth work leaders and managers should cater for the needs of the statutory and voluntary youth work sectors. A series of

local networking events will support voluntary youth work organisations and local authorities to work more closely together. This element of the work is vital for the development of sound working relationships and the development of a local shared vision for young people.

A national policy statement on joint working between the sectors would further support organisations to work together. This policy could contain guidance on good practice in relation to partnership working and include examples of good practice in partnership approaches and their impact on the lives of young people.

Are there any gaps?

The *National Youth Work Strategy for Wales 2014-2018* recognises the need for both the statutory and the voluntary youth work sector to work closer together at local authority level. There was a widespread acknowledgement that youth work practice is changing and that as a result the demands on staff are altering. One participant noted that 'our (voluntary sector) training needs are the same as the statutory sector. We understand there is no money to give but training could be offered.' CWVYS have noted that 'the voluntary sector needs core funding to ensure it can develop opportunities for young people and support its volunteers' (CWVYS, 2016).

Gap 1. Organisations both national and local require an element of core funding to ensure they can achieve outcomes for young people. Where this core funding is missing or withdrawn local provision is very often soon seen to disappear.

Gap 2. There is currently no mechanism or strategic forum for the statutory and voluntary sectors to discuss and plan a shared vision for the delivery of youth services across Wales.

Gap 3. There is currently no policy statement detailing explicitly how local authorities should work with the voluntary sector.

Gap 4. There is a lack of consistency in the support for the voluntary sector across Wales.

Gap 5. There is a lack of awareness among local voluntary organisations about where and how youth work policy is developed.

Gap 6. The need for very strong directions and guidance for schools in relation to the potential role of the local voluntary sector.

Gap 7. There is no complete map of the existing financial support for the voluntary sector across Wales, to assess the detail of support and to explore the impact achieved.

Gap 8. There is a lack of clarity about the various local planning structures for children and young people. This should be addressed urgently as we move forward with implementation of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act (2015).

Gap 9. There is currently a gap in awareness of how local voluntary organisations can best prepare to be more successful in local tendering arrangements

Gap 10. The Youth Work audit includes Service Level Agreements but does not recognise what is supplied by the voluntary sector or other sub-contractors. This is a source of concern to providers in the voluntary sector.

Gap 11. There are gaps in relation to the sustainability of many funding arrangements. Local leaders need to consider this in light of local needs assessment.

Gap 12. There was anecdotal evidence to suggest that some youth clubs are not as inclusive as they might be in making sure young people with a disability can access provision. The right support for, and from a club could make considerable quality of life improvements for young people for example with a disability.

Gap 13. Volunteers put in a great deal of work for their communities. Informal, peer support and recognition of the hundreds of hours contributed by volunteers to their communities every year is important. However, there is not enough recognition or awareness among the public.

Gap 14. The sector is improving in respect of sharing current practice, through for example the Youth Work in Wales Excellence Awards but is not good enough at identifying and sharing information widely or routinely enough.

Within the current financial climate, what can be done to improve closer working and better outcomes for young people?

Nationally – there is a need for a body which brings together strategic decision makers from the voluntary and statutory sectors to represent the young people of Wales and their constituencies, to share information on best practice and developing a shared vision for youth work in Wales. The Youth Work Alliance Wales must be strengthened.

The sector should work with Welsh Government to develop a policy statement on funding arrangements for the voluntary youth work sector. The annual youth work audit should take into account the contribution of the voluntary sector as sub-contractors in achieving outcomes for young people.

Appropriate and timely Information is crucial at all levels and it was apparent that for voluntary sector organisations affiliation to CWVYS greatly helped in that respect. This is a strength and support should be made more consistent across Wales.

The sector must do more to identify current good practice in partnership working and to share this across the sector in Wales.

Locally - mapping is key, identifying gaps and building the capacity of both commissioners and delivery bodies. Commissioning or delivering the right services for the benefit of young people locally is crucial, young people have a right to be involved when these decisions are being made.

The voluntary sector has the capability to diversify quickly and this is a strategic strength for the sector. More could be done to maximise this capability. The voluntary sector participants also noted that the allocation of the Revenue Support Grant could be made more transparent across Wales.

Participants suggested there are too many drivers to the work and that there needs to be strategic decision making taking place about the real core business and direction of travel in relation to policy and practice in the sector both nationally and locally. This is a local dilemma but one which could be partly addressed with a joined up, national approach.

Recommendations.

Recommendations from this study stem from an analysis of the research findings. Some of the recommendations do not require additional resources, merely altering existing work practices. Other recommendations have resource implications and their costs and potential benefits should be considered. Below is a passage with the main recommendations picked out, Table 2 contains a fuller list of the recommendations.

Strategic leadership training for leaders and managers in the voluntary and statutory sector. Elements of the training could be delivered together to both sectors to help facilitate a shared vision.

There are further opportunities to be gained from the youth service engaging more effectively with Industry/ Employers who could invest in social education, this would provide really valuable opportunities for informal and non-formal learning in the workplace.

Develop a practical handbook, website and mobile app which would support local voluntary organisations in identifying good and safe practice and as an aid to new organisations setting up.

A grant should be established to support the local County Voluntary Councils to sharing good practice in youth work, to work as a link between the statutory and voluntary sector and to provide vital support for small, community based organisations.

Develop a young people e journal identifying and sharing good practice across the sector, also maximising the reach of key messages on social media.

This current research has identified commissioning arrangements that have been running very successfully for ten years. Other areas may be developing a strategic approach to commissioning, research into the impact of existing commissioning arrangements should be shared to avoid delay and duplication (See Appendix 2).

There is a necessity for voluntary youth work organisations and local authority youth services to work more closely and collaboratively 'Local authorities should work positively and collaboratively with voluntary organisations to help ensure that youth work provision meets local needs and that best use is being made of available resources.' (Welsh Government, 2014).

Awareness of research and keeping up to date with current trends is mainstreamed within and across the sector, this will strengthen practice, enhance outcomes and result in a better quality of service to young people. A series of youth work master classes should be held across Wales. This will further the development of a learning culture not merely a doing culture.

Table 2. Recommendations at a local, regional and national level and in the short, medium and longer term.

Structural level	Short Term	Medium Term	Longer Term
Organisational level	Carry out a rapid appraisal of their preparedness for collaborative working across sectors. Being explicit about their unique contribution to local life.	Work together to develop a local youth work/ youth service funding plan.	Local organisations should seek to identify their strengths and to be proactive in devising CPD training and offering this to the sector. This could be an additional source of income.
		Local skills and resources swap sessions with a social element (this could be facilitated with a small grant).	
Local/ regional level	A local audit of provision and need be carried out to establish the extent of youth work in each area and the needs of young people locally.	At local authority level a cross sector forum to be established to develop a shared approach for collaborative working in each area.	In each area a shared plan be developed to ensure duplication is avoided and outcomes for young people are maximised.
	A local/ regional workforce development plan be developed offering appropriate training outside of office hours and in response to consultation with stakeholders.	Access to local training plans be made widely available to stakeholders in a timely fashion.	
	That each Principal Youth Officer arrange a regular		

	forum with local voluntary sector providers to share information about the needs of young people and communities and to work with the local CVC to publicise local planning and funding channels. The aim of this to be enhanced partnerships through better understanding of each other's contexts.		
National level	Welsh Government seek to develop a funding strategy based on at least a three year funding cycle wherever possible.	Funders seek to minimise the burden of reporting required for funded provision.	Future national youth work strategies contain clear guidance for collaboration between voluntary and maintained sector, a policy on joint working.
	That Welsh Government considers commissioning research into the cost benefits and impact of specific pieces of work and to publicise best practice as it is identified.	The sector to identify a lead organisation to support voluntary sector providers with DBS related activities.	Future national youth work strategies should contain a SMART target for allocation of funding to the voluntary sector.
	Welsh Government commission the development of a youth work handbook for individuals and local independent providers with details of requirements for DBS, Health and Safety, Governance.	The annual youth work audit should require respondents to note results contributed by the voluntary sector and other sub-contractors.	
	Welsh Government commission the development of annual good practice	Youth Work Alliance Wales should be strengthened to enable the	

	guides to enhance practice for the benefit of young people and communities.	development of a shared approach and priorities for young people in Wales.	
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Summary

Our thanks go to all the staff and volunteers who gave up their time to take part in this study. Our research identified that stakeholders within the voluntary sector appreciate the realities of a very difficult financial climate within the broader public sector. The team has carried out interviews with stakeholders from each region across Wales – 4 interviews in total. Additionally one focus group was held with 12 representatives of national and local community based voluntary organisations from across Wales. Participants included representatives of local voluntary councils, Principal Youth Officers, and small, community based youth work providers. One interview was carried out in the Welsh language. Results show are many very good examples of collaboration which are providing real benefits for young people in Wales. Stakeholders understand that the changing face of youth work is creating new demands on the workforce and that youth work training needs to be offered equitably across the sector. Leadership is seen as being crucial to setting the tone and the culture and in providing clear models of good practice in relation to working in collaboration – there is a need for the sectors to develop a style of working together rather than one being in a position of superiority. Both the maintained and the voluntary youth work sector in Wales have significant strengths which can be built upon with support for the recommendations contained within this report.

Appendix 1: PEST Analysis

Political	Economic
<p>Young people are high on the political agenda, youth work is well situated to play an active role in influencing future policy.</p> <p>Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act (2015) provides a strategic opportunity for youth work to respond proactively.</p> <p>Funding often comes with targets which influence a principled approach to youth work, this can dilute its strengths.</p> <p>Youth workers should work closely and not be afraid to work with their local elected members to share information about their work and its impact.</p> <p>With a high level of media coverage of global troubles the youth service should respond to ensure young people are informed about the reality of global events and the concept of real risks.</p>	<p>We are part of a wealthy country but this wealth does not translate into good levels of well-being for young people.</p> <p>Youth work budgets are being reduced. Charitable sector funding is being reduced.</p> <p>The financial climate is making a successful transition to adulthood more difficult for young people. Youth work can respond to that.</p> <p>Organisations often have to chase funding to ensure sustainability and this dilutes their youth work impact and diverts them from the core business, a vicious cycle.</p> <p>Youth workers provide invaluable social capital to young people during their transition to adulthood.</p>
Social	Technological
<p>Society is changing at an unprecedented rate. The youth service needs to look ahead for future opportunities, for example working with employers directly, exploring apprenticeships.</p> <p>Rapid increases in social anxiety among young people, the youth service could be anticipating this and responding strongly as it has done previously with c-card schemes.</p> <p>The youth service should attend more to developing a social media profile, the style of that offer is crucial.</p> <p>Obesity and its outcomes – the youth service can play a significant role in establishing healthy lifestyles.</p>	<p>The service needs to use changing technology but not be enslaved by it. To be strategic in its use.</p> <p>The service should develop a vision for how it works with technology to maximise many young people's obsession with it but also to be clear about how youth work can complement young people's use of technology.</p> <p>Research would identify current best practice across the world in technology and young people.</p> <p>The service could be utilising its capacity to enable young people to develop a sense of global citizenship.</p>

Appendix 2: Case Studies

Case Study 1. In one area the maintained youth work sector could identify three partnerships as 'commissioned services'. Important features of these arrangements were the high levels of trust which had been established over many years of working together. These arrangements suit both parties and are managed through a rigorous process of quarterly and annual reporting. The commissioner has a clear idea of what is needed and ensures the partnership achieves the desired results. There are clear reporting arrangements in place to monitor service delivery and impact.

Case Study 2. In one area a maintained youth service has collaborative partnerships which enable it to deliver a service to local young people more effectively than working alone, this is clear due to one of the partners providing a building within which to work and another the expertise of the youth workers. These include working with a charitable trust to develop a programme of youth work developing literacy skills among early teenagers and with a housing organisation to deliver forms of education to complement formal approaches, eg BTEC and PSE qualifications.

Case Study 3. In one rural area the county voluntary council employs a children and young people facilitator to facilitate networking and ensuring that young people are linked in to local and county wide planning arrangements. This reiterates the importance of good communication being vital in the sector. In this area there is an excellent working relationship between the Principal Youth Officer and the CVC and a commitment to developing a shared vision. This is a clear example of good practice.

Case Study 4. In one community the statutory and voluntary youth sector share buildings and complement each other's activities. Both partners are able to attract funding from different sources and have different profiles within the community. Staff are clear that they work with a young people first approach. It is clear that young people do not really care about who delivers the service. The important thing for them is that the right service is delivered well and on time.