



ADDYSG CYMRU
EDUCATION WALES
cenhadaeth ein cenedl | our national mission



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Youth Work Strategy for Wales



Youth Work Strategy for Wales

Audience

Young people aged 11 to 25 and the youth work organisations and youth work staff that support them, as well as wider stakeholders working to improve the outcomes for young people.

Overview

This strategy sets out a shared vision for the future of youth work in Wales. The high-level principles set out in this document have been co-developed with young people and the youth work sector. The strategy identifies a series of actions that will move us closer to our long-term goals and will be supported by an Implementation Plan.

Action required

The youth work sector are asked to work together to deliver the vision set out in this document.

Further information

Enquiries about this document should be directed to:

Youth Engagement Branch

Welsh Government

Cathays Park

Cardiff

CF10 3NQ

e-mail: YouthWork@gov.wales

Additional copies

This document can be accessed from Welsh Government's website at gov.wales

Related documents

Prosperity for All: the national strategy (2017); Education in Wales: Our National Mission, Action plan 2017–21 (2017); Youth Work in Wales: Principles and Purposes (2018); Extending Entitlement: support for 11 to 25 year olds in Wales, Direction and Guidance (2002); Our Future: A review of Extending Entitlement (2018); Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (2013)

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

This document is also available in Welsh.

Contents

Ministerial foreword	4
Context	5
Introduction	7
Our vision for the future	9
1. Young people are thriving	11
2. Youth work is accessible and inclusive	15
3. Voluntary and paid professional youth work staff are supported throughout their careers to improve their practice	19
4. Youth work is valued and understood	23
5. A sustainable model for youth work delivery	27
Conclusion	31
Glossary	32

Ministerial foreword

Between the ages of 11 and 25 young people undergo significant change and development as they transition between childhood, adolescence and young adulthood. During this crucial period, it is our duty to help support young people, giving them the opportunities, guidance and experiences in which they can develop personally, socially and academically.

I am committed to ensuring that youth work, delivered through a united youth service, is strengthened and empowered to contribute to this agenda and champion the rights of young people.

We have demonstrated our commitment to youth work by investing unprecedented levels of government funding in its delivery, helping strengthen the youth service and paving the way for a new strategic approach. This approach has been directly informed by the voices of young people and the sector, and supported by the efforts of the Interim Youth Work Board. In this way, what follows is a young people and sector-led vision and collaborative approach for strengthening youth work in Wales.

Set against this context, we are undergoing a period of major education reform. As evidenced by this strategy, these changes are not exclusive to schools and require us to integrate formal and non-formal education, and informal learning. This requires the development of new ways of working, and innovative partnership approaches. It also requires the identification and recognition of common ground across those services providing support to young people. We need look no further than *Youth Work in Wales: Principles and Purposes*¹ (Youth Work in Wales Review Group, 2018) and the four purposes of our new curriculum to identify the shared aims and objectives that drive both youth work and formal education in Wales.

This strategy sets out an ambitious programme of collaborative action intended to both improve youth work provision and our offer to young people. It will provide the evidence that will create a sustainable model for youth work delivery in the future. Working together, we will ensure the very best for our young people.



Kirsty Williams AM
Minister for Education

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kirsty Williams". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

¹ www.youthworkwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/YOUTH-WORK-IN-WALES-PRINCIPLES-AND-PURPOSES.pdf

Context

The aim of youth work is to enable young people to develop holistically, working with them to facilitate their personal, social and educational development, to enable them to develop their voice, influence and place in society and to reach their full potential.

National Occupational Standards²

Youth work offers young people opportunities for learning that are educative, expressive, participative, inclusive and empowering.

The principles of youth work in Wales

Youth work in Wales is based on the voluntary engagement of young people as empowered partners. It starts at whatever point young people are in their lives, recognises and seeks to develop and realise their potential, and is committed to equality and inclusion. Youth work operates in a rights-based way, while also helping young people to address responsibilities and requirements placed upon them. Seizing on unplanned opportunities, while also planning opportunities that lie outside formal systems of education, youth work facilitates learning, including towards accreditation or recognition where appropriate. At its core, youth work provides safe environments and supports the development and well-being of young people. Youth work recognises the importance and value of language and culture, particularly that of Wales and the need to promote the use of the Welsh language.

The purposes of youth work in Wales

Youth work in Wales promotes and actively encourages opportunities for all young people in order that they may fulfil their potential as empowered individuals and as members of groups and communities, thereby improving their life chances. It supports them through significant changes in their lives and encourages them to gain and develop knowledge, understanding, attitudes and values, and to make constructive use of their skills, resources and time. In doing so it promotes opportunities and access for all young people whatever their race, gender, sexual identity, language, religion, disability, age, background or personal circumstances. A key role for youth work is to challenge oppression and inequality, while supporting and enabling young people to keep themselves safe.

² www.nya.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/National-Occupation-Standards-for-Youth-Work.pdf

How is it delivered?

Youth work is a universal entitlement, delivered by both voluntary and local authority youth services, and is open to all young people within the specified 11 to 25 age range. Youth work is an intrinsic element of youth support services, which seek to ensure that all 11 to 25-year-olds have access to a variety of services, support and experiences they need to achieve their potential. Through the Learning and Skills Act 2000, section 123, Welsh Ministers have directed local authorities to provide, secure the provision of, or participate in the provision of youth support services.

Who is this strategy for?

Young people; voluntary and paid professional youth work staff; youth work organisations; voluntary and local authority youth services; organisations or individuals delivering youth support services; wider sectors working to improve the outcomes for young people; service managers; commissioners; politicians; those undertaking youth work inspection, regulation or quality assurance roles.

Introduction

Youth work can mean different things to different people and, in part, this has contributed to a range of different strategic approaches to its delivery. But it is this fluidity, underpinned by distinctive values, that is one of youth work's greatest strengths. Youth work is not confined to a single setting or context, though it is undoubtedly a key part of the wider education service. Youth work practice can and does adapt, and it can do so without compromising its values, principles and purpose. Youth work can change lives.

It is through youth work – the establishment of trusted relationships with adults, healthy relationships with peers and safe spaces in which to develop – that young people can be supported to build resilience and better understand how to make effective choices. Often led by, and always negotiated with, young people and delivered through a range of engaging and social activities, this growth can take many forms, be it personal, emotional, political or educational. Helping, through reliability and consistency, to increase trust, youth work is also able to support young people to develop a sense of belonging. Youth work promotes equality, celebrates diversity, tackles discrimination, builds resilience, and supports young people to understand and access their rights. It has the potential to realise benefits for all young people, while also maximising the impact of support aimed at the most vulnerable among them. Further, it remains a robust approach for empowering young people to use their voice, be heard, and play an active role in designing, delivering and holding accountable the services that they access. Youth work can, and does, support young people to enjoy success, now and into adulthood.

However, the power and potential of youth work in Wales has not yet been fully realised and we do not yet have a systematic approach to its planning and delivery. We recognise resources are tight and difficult decisions have had to be made. But, effective youth work is reliant on meaningful investment, engagement with young people, and partnership working across the sector. In some instances these processes and partnerships are in disrepair. Where services are withdrawn, or poorly delivered, the casualties of this are young people and youth work itself.

We must restate our commitment to young people and to youth work. The Welsh Government has begun by investing unprecedented levels of funding in the youth service. Together we must build on this, working in partnership to deliver individual and collective action. We all have a part to play.

A new chapter

For many years Wales has demonstrated its strong commitment to supporting children and young people. Born out of the Learning and Skills Act 2000, *Extending Entitlement: support for 11 to 25 year olds in Wales, Direction and Guidance (2002)*³ sought to ensure appropriate support and a set of entitlements for young people through youth work and youth support services. Subsequent youth work strategies have built on these principles and we remain committed to them. The Welsh Government adopted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as the basis for policy making for children

³ gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-02/direction-and-guidance-extending-entitlement-support-for-11-to-25-year-olds-in-wales.pdf

and young people in 2004. This rights-based approach was strengthened through the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011. Wales was the first country in the UK to appoint a Children's Commissioner and the first country to enshrine in law the need to consider, and work toward, the well-being of future generations. Our *Children and Young People's National Participation Standards (2016)*⁴ are there to ensure young people have their voice heard and participate in making decisions that affect them.

In recent years, it has become clear that more could, and should, be done. Significant work has therefore been undertaken to re-engage young people and the sector in a conversation about what kind of youth service we want for Wales. The results of these discussions are reflected in this strategy and we now seek to apply this learning and move forward as we begin writing a new, positive chapter for youth work in Wales.

This strategy does not offer a complete answer at this time, or a comprehensive solution ready to be rolled out. Instead, it sets out the high-level principles we believe we should be working towards and identifies actions that will move us closer to our long-term goals. It is supported by a detailed implementation plan, published in October 2019, that will be time-bound to the life of the Interim Youth Work Board. This is required to both generate change at pace, and to develop the necessary evidence that will inform the recommendations from the board at the end of its tenure.

⁴ gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-02/Bilingual-Participation-Standards-poster2016.pdf

Our vision for the future

Wales is a country where:

- all young people are thriving, with access to opportunities and experiences, in Welsh and English, which provide enjoyment and enrich their personal development through youth work approaches
- youth work is rights-based, informed by young people, and collaboratively planned and supported by a skilled workforce of voluntary and paid professional staff
- the value of youth work is understood, with clear lines of accountability.

This is a shared vision. In developing it we have engaged directly with young people, youth workers and volunteers, and voluntary, local authority and independent youth work networks and groups, including the Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services (CWVYS), National Voluntary Youth Organisations, Principal Youth Officers, Engagement and Progression Coordinators, the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), the Education Workforce Council (EWC), Education Training Standards (ETS) Wales and Estyn.

This approach reflects our commitment to systems leadership – a young people and workforce empowerment approach – that will help ensure the sector plays an active role in developing and implementing our new strategic direction. The terms ‘we’ and ‘our’ when used throughout this strategy refer, therefore, to the sector as a whole.

The vision has been further informed by the work of the Children, Young People and Education Committee, the Youth Work Reference Group, the Youth Work Marketing Group, the report *Our Future: A review of Extending Entitlement* (2018)⁵, the independent evaluations of the Welsh Government’s youth work funding streams and strategy, and discussions with a wide range of partners, both within Wales and beyond.

Our vision for the future will be achieved by focusing our efforts across the following five aims.

1. Young people are thriving

2. Youth work is accessible and inclusive

3. Voluntary and paid professional youth work staff are supported throughout their careers to improve their practice

4. Youth work is valued and understood

5. A sustainable model for youth work delivery

⁵ gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-04/180316-our-future-a-review-of-extending-entitlement_0.pdf



1. Young people are thriving

“ I want safe places to hang out, make friends, and try new things.”

“ I need to be able to grow so I can be the best I can be.”

We want a skilled, confident, equitable and inclusive Wales where young people have the opportunity to grow, develop and play an active role. Through youth work, young people are supported to find their voice, formulate and convey their ideas, develop autonomy, build skills, make friends and, importantly, have fun. To help ensure young people are able to thrive, we need to ensure we are creating safe spaces and youth work cultures that are caring, inclusive and understanding, and which build trust and a sense of belonging. This is not just about providing them with these experiences, but ensuring they play an important role participating in the decisions that affect them now and in the future. Without delivering on these aspirations, our vision cannot be realised.

To make Wales a great place for young people to grow up and thrive, we want young people to:

- have access to opportunities that enhance informal learning, and support engagement with social, non-formal, and more structured learning experiences, in Welsh or English – through these they will build healthy relationships, avoid isolation and loneliness, develop social and emotional capabilities, autonomy, self-control, confidence and resilience
- have access to safe spaces where they feel welcome, have fun, and are understood and valued, no matter their background or personal context
- participate in the development of these opportunities and the decisions which affect them, and be given access to procedures which enable them to question and challenge decision-makers; there should be meaningful partnerships with young people to make this a reality
- benefit from relationships with trusted adults and peers to guide and explore new experiences
- understand and receive their rights, including their right to have access to comprehensive, objective, understandable and reliable information on all their questions and needs
- understand and celebrate diversity, in all its forms, and develop a strong, modern sense of Welsh identity and community.

Working towards these aims, we have:

- listened to young people through face-to-face dialogue, evaluations, questionnaires and our survey 'Let's Talk Youth Work', to place their voice at the centre of everything we do at a national level
- established youth networks, youth councils, and youth-led action at local levels through voluntary and local authority youth work provision
- updated the document *Youth Work in Wales: Principles and Purposes* – enshrining the role of young people in the design and delivery of services and decisions that affect them
- invested more than £10 million via the Youth Support Grant to complement and enhance local authority and voluntary sector investment in the delivery of youth work opportunities and experiences for young people.

To move us towards our shared vision we will:

- continue to invest in the development and delivery of consistent and quality youth work provision in Welsh and English, no matter where young people live, their age, identity or background
- deliver a children's rights approach, rooted in the UNCRC, ensuring youth work policy and delivery:
 - embeds children's rights
 - ensures equality and non-discrimination
 - empowers children and young people
 - supports their participation
 - establishes accountability
- explore how young people access, create and interpret information to support their decision-making and engage in youth work opportunities and experiences, and how digital tools can optimise our approaches
- build on the intentions of the 2016 Wales Charter for Youth Work, working towards a nationally recognisable offer to young people in Wales
- develop and strengthen specific provision aimed at supporting and improving outcomes for more vulnerable or marginalised young people.



2. Youth work is accessible and inclusive

“Everyone should be able to take part.”

“If I need help, I want you to be there when I need you.”

Quality youth work is a social interaction, but doesn't have to be limited to specific organisations or distinct geographical locations. The strength of the youth work approach is its adaptability to different situations and contexts. It is driven by informed, competent, committed individuals and organisations across the voluntary, statutory and private sectors and, at its heart, creates safe spaces for young people to learn and grow.

To realise our vision, we must ensure that quality youth work in Welsh, English, and where appropriate an individual's language of choice, is accessible and inclusive to young people right across the country. While we must give important consideration to issues such as rurality and location of services, youth work must also be accessible and inclusive in a wider sense to all young people. It should reflect the range of diverse backgrounds, identities, experiences, and needs of young people in Wales. Youth work must, therefore, proactively remove barriers to engagement and participation, ensuring it is accessible to all, and particularly to those young people who may have experience of isolation, marginalisation, exploitation, or discrimination, including those with a protected characteristic. This requires us to rethink our approaches to deliver an accessible, active offer, no matter the access point.

We want youth work to:

- create safe spaces that all young people can voluntarily choose to access – these safe spaces may be physical (in a club or centre, on the street, at leisure facilities, as part of outreach), virtual (over the phone, digital) or emotional (by establishing welcoming, understanding, young person-informed cultures)
- be visible to both young people and their families, so they know where to go for support, and to other service areas, so they know how to access support and advice on working with young people
- be planned, delivered and reviewed by a unified sector (united by common ground, with shared values and agreed ways of working) through a partnership approach (with each other and with young people) that makes best use of the available skills, knowledge, expertise and resources
- offer a sufficient level of planned and ad hoc opportunities for social, emotional, personal and language development for all young people
- be responsive to changing circumstances, appropriate, and accessible to all young people aged 11 to 25.

Working towards these aims, we have:

- worked collectively to establish positive relationships with government, and across the sector, through engagement and the establishment of networks
- increased investment and placed an expectation, via the Youth Support Grant criteria, that partners across a unified sector work collaboratively to plan and deliver provision
- piloted approaches for ensuring the development and delivery of sufficient levels of youth work opportunities across local areas
- strengthened the capacity of national youth work organisations in Wales, through our National Voluntary Youth Organisations Grant
- provided core funding to the Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services (CWVYS) to continue to support a diverse group of local and national voluntary youth services across Wales
- offered training for voluntary and local authority youth services, ensuring they are better able to identify and respond to the needs of young people.

To move us towards our shared vision we will:

- develop a better understanding of the role and availability of Welsh language provision across Wales, and develop a programme of work to increase opportunities for youth work in the medium of Welsh
- consider research and best practice on the creation of accessible, safe spaces for the delivery of youth work and develop guidance to support their implementation
- pilot approaches for making youth work more accessible, including through outreach, in collaboration with schools and a range of partners, and digitally
- strengthen links between local authority and voluntary provision through the development of shared expectations for partnership working across a unified youth service
- pilot a formal mechanism and principles for establishing sufficient levels of youth work provision at a local level, and roll it out on a national basis
- map and better understand existing provision, including transitional provision (pre-11), and provision for those aged 18 to 25 where services are less consistent and accessible
- continue to seek opportunities for young people to benefit from improved mobility, opportunities, and experiences beyond Wales and the UK.



3. Voluntary and paid professional youth work staff are supported throughout their careers to improve their practice

“We need the best youth workers who are skilled and will love and care about their jobs.”

“I want to get the best help possible from someone I trust.”

Our greatest resource is the youth workforce – both voluntary and paid professional staff – that provides opportunities and experiences for young people across the country. These opportunities and experiences are often varied and diverse, but serve primarily as the means for furthering a young person’s social, emotional and personal development. They come from a range of backgrounds and bring with them a range of skills, knowledge and experience. They are united by their passion for, and commitment to, working with young people through youth work approaches and making a difference to their lives. Without this resource and the networks that support them, and unless appropriate investment and support is provided for them, we will not realise our vision. We value their effort and want to reward it with an offer of learning and support, and by securing the recognition their profession deserves.

We want voluntary and paid professional staff to:

- be outwardly proud of the valued, essential work they do with young people, and be universally recognised as key players in the system
- be highly skilled and have access to opportunities for ongoing development at the outset and throughout their careers, no matter their chosen pathway
- be supported through a professional registration process, depending on the nature of the work they undertake, that adds value to their practice
- access regional and national opportunities for networking and conferences, focusing on sharing good practice and providing information
- have opportunities to act as system leaders, playing an active role in the development and delivery of youth work policy
- feel confident that they are able to practice youth work in a stable environment where their role is valued in the longer term.

Working towards these aims, we have:

- established the Coherent Route of Recognised Youth Work Qualifications in Wales and provided funding for workforce professional development
- contributed to raising the status and standing of youth work professionals by introducing professional registration through the Education Workforce Council (EWC)
- funded Education Training Standards (ETS) Wales to ensure the quality of youth work training
- funded the Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services (CWWYS) to play a vital role in supporting the voluntary sector with training, advice and networking opportunities
- funded country membership of the European Youth Information and Counselling Agency (ERYICA) to enable Welsh organisations and individuals to access European support and training
- worked with the UK National Agency for European Union youth programmes (the British Council and Ecorys) to support and promote access to European funding for youth movement and training through Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps
- supported networking and sharing of practice through the Youth Work Quality Mark, Youth Work Excellence Awards and annual national conferences
- included youth work within the Professional Teaching Awards Cymru, recognising the importance of both non-formal and formal education approaches.

To move us towards our shared vision we will:

- develop, publish and implement a Workforce Development Plan for a diverse but united sector at all tiers (including, for example, young person, apprentice, volunteer, trustee, paid youth worker, service manager)
- understand and respond to existing Welsh language training needs
- ensure the training of professionally qualified youth workers addresses what young people need today and the contexts in which youth work takes place
- review and update the Coherent Route of Recognised Youth Work Qualifications to improve progression
- begin development of a programme of leadership for senior leaders in the youth work sector, and engage with the National Academy for Educational Leadership to consider its eligibility for endorsement
- improve the information available to us about the workforce (both voluntary and local authority) by strengthening the auditing of provision and skills
- consider the future role of registration in professionalising and supporting voluntary and paid professional youth work staff in Wales
- further support networking, identification and sharing of best practice through a strengthened Youth Work Quality Mark, youth work conferences, events and the Youth Work Excellence Awards
- establish a young people and workforce empowerment methodology by implementing a systems leadership approach to the development and delivery of actions across the Implementation Plan – this will ensure the sector plays an active role in developing and implementing our new strategic direction.



4. Youth work is valued and understood

“ Youth work should be important to everyone! ”

Youth work brings significant benefits to young people. This alone provides a robust rationale for investing in its delivery. However, this is amplified when considering the benefits accumulated to Wales by supporting young people to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

Alongside tackling poverty, youth work, therefore, has a role to play in strengthening the foundations for achieving prosperity for all, contributing directly across the four key themes and the majority of priority areas identified in *Prosperity for All: the national strategy* (2017)⁶. It supports Our National Mission, helping ensure the success and well-being of every learner, regardless of background or personal circumstance. Within this, youth workers have a vital role to play in partnership with formal education to help realise the four purposes of Curriculum for Wales 2022⁷. Further, they are important to the delivery of the *Youth Engagement and Progression Framework* (2017)⁸, supporting young people to remain engaged in their education, employment and training, or re-engage where appropriate.

⁶ gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2017-10/prosperity-for-all-the-national-strategy.pdf

⁷ The four purposes of Curriculum for Wales 2022 are expressed in terms of what all children and young people should become and achieve through their school education – ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives; enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work; ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world; healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

⁸ gov.wales/youth-engagement-and-progression-framework-implementation-plan

Youth work opportunities and experiences contribute to the ambitions of *Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers* (2017)⁹, by providing more opportunities for young people to learn and use Welsh in social situations beyond the school gate or home. They have an important role to play in delivering on some of the key commitments in *A Healthier Wales: our Plan for Health and Social Care* (2018)¹⁰, ensuring equity in physical and mental health outcomes by supporting young people to make healthy lifestyle choices and signposting them to support. Attending youth work provision helps combat loneliness and isolation and promotes community cohesion, with young people being supported to understand their rights, exercise their voice, and participate in the decisions that affect them. Finally, building a sense of belonging, supporting young people to develop resilience and understand the impact of their emotions and actions, also directly contributes to reducing the risk of exploitation or criminal activity.

To maximise the contribution of youth work to these areas, it needs to be valued and understood at all levels in the system, so it is at the forefront of decision-makers minds when commissioning or considering the impact of provision.

We want youth work to:

- be recognised for its value and impact by individuals, charitable trusts, public sector commissioners and services at all levels
- play an active, established role in informing and implementing services for young people across a range of policy areas/programmes of work
- draw on a robust evidence base that can be used to inform and influence approaches for working with, and securing outcomes for, young people
- have opportunities to celebrate its work and engage in discussion with the public and politicians about the impact of its approaches.

Working towards these aims, we have:

- recognised the role of youth work as an effective, preventative intervention, and facilitated discussions about the role of youth work across the voluntary sector, local authority structures and a range of partners
- celebrated the role and impact of youth work publically through events, including annually through Youth Work Week
- benefitted from the Children, Young People and Education Committee's Inquiries 'Mind Over Matter'¹¹ and 'What type of youth service does Wales want?'¹², building on their recommendations to strengthen our approach
- worked collectively as a sector to highlight the role of youth work in supporting the delivery of local and national programmes of work.

⁹ gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-12/cymraeg-2050-welsh-language-strategy.pdf

¹⁰ gweddill.gov.wales/topics/health/publications/healthier-wales/?lang=en

¹¹ www.assembly.wales/laid%20documents/cr-ld11522/cr-ld11522-e.pdf

¹² www.assembly.wales/laid%20documents/cr-ld10870/cr-ld10870-e.pdf

To move us towards our shared vision we will:

- develop, launch, and implement a Youth Work Communications and Marketing Plan that improves the understanding of the positive power and impact of youth work
- strengthen the contribution of youth work across government agendas, including within education, establishing partnerships to support curriculum delivery
- update and relaunch the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework, clarifying the function of youth work in supporting its delivery
- support youth workers and youth work organisations to evidence the impact of their approaches through the development of toolkits and resources focusing on self-evaluation, impact monitoring, and measuring the satisfaction of young people in the quality of the youth work they experience
- explore with youth workers and youth work organisations how they can be better supported to develop and implement innovative and collaborative ventures with a wide range of partners
- maximise the reach and impact of Youth Work Week as a mechanism for promoting youth work and young people at the national level.



5. A sustainable model for youth work delivery

“I need to know it’s going to be there. Youth work needs to be something that lasts.”

By working together in implementing those areas identified so far, we will vastly improve the delivery of youth work in Wales and make significant strides towards securing its strategic direction in the longer term. Nevertheless, further action is needed if we are to realise a truly sustainable approach.

Youth work is delivered across a range of services and by a diverse group of individuals and organisations. With this diversity and adaptability comes strength, but it also presents challenges to how we develop a robust understanding of the nature of youth work in Wales, including how it is equitably funded, planned, delivered and held accountable. Alongside this, more needs to be done in relation to the statutory basis that supports youth work delivery, including understanding whether current arrangements are clear, or if they encourage inconsistency of approaches across Wales.

We need to better understand the answers to these questions if we are to develop a shared understanding of youth work in Wales, establish common ground across a diverse range of providers and foster a genuine commitment to long-term investment in its delivery. Youth work brings with it opportunities for mutually beneficial partnerships and the realisation of savings through preventative early intervention and action. However, the systems and structures for the planning and delivery of these services, while performing well in some areas, do not operate consistently to a shared set of standards or ways of working. A lack of strategic direction and unclear lines of accountability have exacerbated this picture.

To achieve our vision we need a sustainable model for the delivery of youth work in Wales that is based on a clear understanding of the resources, skills and opportunities available to us. There must be accountability and clear expectations for delivery at all tiers of the system.

We want a sustainable model for youth work in Wales that:

- has strong leadership at all levels to help guide the sector moving forward
- is based on a clear understanding of the value of youth work to Wales, and a shared purpose to deliver enriching opportunities and experiences for our young people no matter their background or where they live
- understands the scope, scale and quality of youth work across a diverse sector and sets clear expectations for standards, roles and responsibilities
- is based on a transparent and equitable financial model, bringing consistency and coherence to the disparate nature of funding that currently exists
- uses audit information to support the planning, delivery and monitoring of approaches at local and national levels
- has mechanisms for ensuring accountability, and simple and clear terminology so that individuals, organisations and services understand their role and where they belong in the chain of delivery
- benefits from partnership agreements and established ways of working within and between services.

Working towards these aims, we have:

- appointed an Interim Youth Work Board to engage with young people and the sector, providing leadership and advice, and supporting the development of our new strategic approach
- invested annually in the auditing of local authority provision and analysis of the information collected
- sought to understand the strategic context in which youth work operates at a local authority level alongside its voluntary sector partners
- co-developed new Youth Support Grant criteria as part of efforts to ensure a more consistent youth work offer across Wales
- worked to establish relationships and improve partnership working, both within a unified youth work sector and with other service areas
- evaluated the Welsh Government funding streams and strategic approaches, implementing relevant recommendations aimed at improving their operation.

To move us towards our shared vision we will:

- continue to provide clear leadership during a time of change – this will be role-modelled by the Interim Youth Work Board, the Welsh Government and strategic leads within the sector
- work with our partners to map their youth work provision across local areas, to determine the scope, scale and quality of youth work provision in Wales
- evaluate the mechanisms through which youth work is funded in Wales, and propose a more sustainable, equitable model of funding
- agree roles and responsibilities, clarify terminology and strengthen accountability mechanisms at all tiers across a unified youth service
- explore the statutory framework that supports and encourages the delivery of youth work and consider what needs to change to ensure delivery of our collective vision
- publish a report from the Interim Youth Work Board at the end of its period of service that will evaluate progress made since the publication of this strategy, and make clear recommendations to Welsh Ministers on what needs to change.



Conclusion

The strategic direction proposed in this strategy is the product of detailed discussion with young people and youth work stakeholders at all levels of the system. Their positive engagement in this process and valued contributions have directly shaped a mutually agreed way forward.

With the vision, principles, and high-level actions now in place, all of us have a role to play in securing their delivery. This will require individual and collective action across the sector and at all levels. In this way we seek to empower a unified youth service, in partnership with young people, to be the primary agents of change in developing and implementing a new strategic direction. These efforts will be facilitated by government, working in partnership with the Interim Youth Work Board, who will continue to provide advice and guidance while ensuring we stay true to our shared vision.

The supporting Implementation Plan will clarify ownership of actions and identify delivery milestones. It will also be a living document, reflecting progress and updating approaches as new evidence emerges. Its first iteration will be time-bound to the life of the Interim Youth Work Board, generating change at pace, and supporting them to develop the necessary evidence that will inform their recommendations at the end of their tenure.

Glossary

Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services (CWWYS)

CWWYS is funded by the Welsh Government to represent and support voluntary youth organisations at a national level.

Education Training Standards (ETS) Wales

ETS Wales professionally endorses programmes of training for youth workers to ensure they are of a suitably high quality, relevant to the needs of employers, youth workers themselves and the young people with whom they work. It undertakes this work on behalf of the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) for Youth and Community Workers.

Education Workforce Council (EWC)

EWC is the independent regulator in Wales for youth workers. Since April 2017, youth support workers and youth workers who provide services for or on behalf of a local authority, school, further education institution or voluntary organisation in Wales and who hold qualifications set out in the Welsh Government legislation need to be registered with the EWC.

European Youth Information and Counselling Agency (ERYICA)

ERYICA is an independent European organisation, composed of national and regional youth information co-ordination bodies and networks. It works to intensify European and international cooperation in the field of youth information work and services. It develops, supports and promotes quality generalist youth information policy and practice at all levels in order to meet the information needs of young people and to apply the principles of the European Youth Information Charter.

Extending Entitlement: support for 11 to 25-year-olds in Wales, Direction and Guidance (2002)

This document sets out a statutory basis and directions for the Youth Service in Wales for the first time. It states that, in the context of youth work provision, 'informal education' is a process of learning which involves the voluntary engagement of young people with services that enable them to participate in a wide range of experiences and activities that promote their personal and social development.

Formal, informal and non-formal education

- **Formal education** is the hierarchically structured, chronologically graded 'education system', running from primary school through to university and including, in addition to general academic studies, a variety of specialised programmes and institutions for full-time technical and professional training.
- **Informal education** is the truly lifelong process whereby every individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experience and the educative influences and resources in his or her environment – from family and neighbours, work and play, the market place, the library and the mass media.
- **Non-formal education** is any organised educational activity outside the established formal system – whether operating separately or as an important feature of some broader activity – that is intended to serve identifiable learning clienteles and learning objectives.

The distinction made between formal, informal and non-formal education is largely about setting and its impact on pedagogy and outcomes. Formal education is linked with schools and training institutions; non-formal education is linked with community groups and other organisations; and informal education covers what is left, e.g. interactions with friends, family and work colleagues. These definitions do not imply hard and fast categories, as there will be some overlap (and confusion) between informal and the non-formal education.

Interim Youth Work Board

The role of the Interim Youth Work Board is to represent young people and the youth work sector, and provide advice to Welsh Ministers on a sustainable model for youth work. The board will run for two years from October 2018.

NEET

This refers to those young people not in education, employment or training.

National Voluntary Youth Organisations

In this context, voluntary organisations that deliver youth work services in 18 or more local authority areas.

National Voluntary Youth Organisation Grant

Funding provided to National Voluntary Youth Organisations for both core and project-based youth work across Wales.

Open-access provision

Open-access provision is youth provision that is open to all young people to attend voluntarily. It can include a range of leisure, cultural, sporting and enrichment activities, often based around youth centres and generally provided in partnership with local communities.

Principal Youth Officer

The term is used to identify the officer nominated by each local authority to be the strategic head of the Youth Service.

Principal Youth Officers' Group

A professional learning community of serving officers, comprising of principal youth officers from within the 22 local authorities in Wales. The group has an established role in advising on the strategic development and delivery of Youth Services and other associated initiatives on behalf of local authorities in Wales.

Quality Mark

The Quality Mark, developed by the Welsh Government, is a set of indicators and quality standards that organisations can use to self-assess the quality and impact of their work with young people and develop plans for improvement.

Systems leadership model

A model of organisational leadership which places practitioners and service users at the heart of policy development and delivery.

Targeted provision

Targeted provision entails provision for vulnerable young people, including neighbourhood and street work outreach teams, youth advice and guidance services, youth justice teams, drug and alcohol misuse services, sexual health services and homelessness support.

Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA)

The WLGA is a membership organisation that represents all 22 local authorities in Wales. Its primary purposes are to promote better local government, to promote its reputation, and to support local authorities in the development of policies and priorities which will improve public services and democracy.

Wales Charter for Youth Work

Published in 2016, the Wales Charter for Youth Work set out the Welsh Government's minimum expectation for youth work across Wales.

Youth Engagement and Progression Framework

Developed to reduce the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) or at risk of becoming NEET, the framework, for 11 to 25-year-olds, provides a systematic mechanism for local authorities to identify those in need of support, to establish the support available and to track the progress of young people as they make the transition from education into further education or employment.

Youth Services

Youth services are generally defined as services, which support the personal and social development of young people through non-formal education provision.

Youth Support Services

Under section 123 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000, the National Assembly for Wales may direct local authorities to provide, secure the provision of or participate in the provision of youth support services. 'Youth support services' means 'services which in the opinion of the National Assembly for Wales will encourage, enable or assist young persons (directly or indirectly) to participate effectively in education and training, to take advantage of opportunities for employment, or to participate effectively and responsibly in the life of their communities'.

A wide range of organisations provides youth support services. These include local authority provision, local voluntary sector providers and national voluntary/third sector providers.

Youth Support Grant

Annual funding provided to local authorities to enable them to deliver open-access and targeted youth work provision, as well as to support the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework. Funding is provided on a formula basis.

Youth Work in Wales: Principles and Purposes (2018)

This document sets out the key principles which underpin youth work and provides an overview of its nature, purposes and delivery. The document has been produced on a collaborative basis by representatives of the voluntary and local authority youth work sectors in Wales and with the Education Workforce Council.

Youth Work Excellence Awards

These annual awards are an opportunity to recognise and celebrate outstanding youth work projects, youth workers and volunteers involved in youth work across Wales.