

NWSI 2026 No. 64

EDUCATION

The Youth Support Services (Provision of Youth Work) (Wales) Directions 2026

Made

19 March 2026

Coming into force

1 April 2026

The Welsh Ministers make the following Directions in exercise of the powers conferred on the National Assembly for Wales by section 123(1), (4)(b) and (c), and (5)(c) of the Learning and Skills Act 2000(1) and now vested in them(2).

Title and coming into force

1. These Directions are titled the Youth Support Services (Provision of Youth Work) (Wales) Directions 2026 and come into force on 1 April 2026.

Interpretation

2.—(1) In these Directions—

“local authority” (*“awdurdod lleol”*) means a county council or county borough council in Wales;

“partner” (*“partner”*) means a person or body, other than a voluntary organisation, that provides services for young persons in the local authority’s area;

“prioritised needs” (*“anghenion blaenoriaethol”*) means such of the needs assessed under paragraph 4(a) as a local authority determines should be prioritised as part of its operation and strategic management of youth work;

“reporting period” (*“cyfnod adrodd”*) means—

(a) the period starting with 1 April 2027 and ending with 31 March 2032, and

(b) each successive period of 5 years;

“voluntary organisation” (*“sefydliad gwirfoddol”*) means a body (other than a body that exercises functions of a public nature) whose activities are carried out otherwise for profit and directly or indirectly benefit the whole or any part of the local authority area;

“young person” (*“person ifanc”*) means a person who has attained the age of 11 but not the age of 26;

“youth support services” (*“gwasanaethau cymorth ieuenctid”*) means services which encourage, enable or assist young persons (directly or indirectly)—

(1) 2000 c. 21.

(2) The powers conferred on the National Assembly for Wales by section 123 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 (c. 21) are now vested in the Welsh Ministers by virtue of section 162 of, and paragraph 30 of Schedule 11 to, the Government of Wales Act 2006 (c. 32).

- (a) to participate effectively in education or training,
- (b) to take advantage of opportunities for employment, or
- (c) to participate effectively and responsibly in the life of their communities;

“youth support worker” (“*gweithiwr cymorth ieuenctid*”) means a person falling within the category of youth support worker in Table 1 in paragraph 1 of Schedule 2 to the Education (Wales) Act 2014(1);

“youth work” (“*gwaith ieuenctid*”) means services provided within youth support services using a distinct educational approach based on voluntary engagement of young persons—

- (a) led by a youth worker or a youth support worker employed or otherwise engaged (including on a voluntary basis) by a local authority, partner or voluntary organisation, and
- (b) delivered by one or more of the following—
 - (i) a local authority,
 - (ii) a partner, or
 - (iii) a voluntary organisation;

“youth worker” (“*gweithiwr ieuenctid*”) means a person falling within the category of youth worker in Table 1 in paragraph 1 of Schedule 2 to the Education (Wales) Act 2014.

(2) Where these Directions impose a duty on a local authority to publish a document, it must be published—

- (a) on the local authority’s website, and
- (b) in such other manner as the local authority considers appropriate.

Provision of youth support services and youth work

3. A local authority must—

- (a) provide or secure the provision of youth support services in its area, and
- (b) participate in the provision of those services.

4. For the purposes of paragraph 3, the provision of youth support services must include the operation and strategic management of youth work which—

- (a) assesses the needs of young persons in the local authority’s area,
- (b) establishes the extent and nature of the resources required to meet the prioritised needs, and
- (c) secures, provides and co-ordinates the delivery of resources required to respond to the prioritised needs.

National standards for youth work and youth work offer

5.—(1) The national standards for youth work means youth work which—

- (a) is formed through engagement with young persons;
- (b) aims to introduce, protect and strengthen activities delivered in Welsh and English and is based on what young persons need or want in their area;
- (c) provides opportunities for young persons to learn and develop in different educational and community settings, including digital settings;
- (d) facilitates both universal and targeted opportunities for young persons to participate in a range of activities for the improvement of their physical, emotional and mental well-being;
- (e) is easily accessible by young persons;

(1) 2014 anaw 5. Schedule 2 was amended by S.I. 2016/1183.

- (f) is delivered in a way that supports improved outcomes for young persons through collaborative working between local authorities, partners and voluntary organisations at a local, regional, and national level.

(2) Youth work offer for the purposes of this paragraph means the provision of youth work determined by a local authority to meet the national standards for youth work for young persons in its area.

(3) A local authority must ensure that its youth work offer provides youth work that complies with the national standards for youth work.

Duty to have due regard to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

6.—(1) A local authority exercising functions under these Directions in relation to a young person, must have due regard to Part 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989 (“the Convention”).

(2) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (1), Part 1 of the Convention is to be treated as having effect—

- (a) as set out for the time being in Part 1 of the Schedule to the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011 (nawm 2), but
- (b) subject to any declaration or reservation as set out for the time being in Part 3 of that Schedule.

(3) Sub-paragraph (1) does not require specific consideration of the Convention on each occasion that a function is exercised.

Partnership working

7. A local authority may work—

- (a) in partnership with partners or voluntary organisations in the provision of youth work for young persons in its area;
- (b) in partnership with other local authorities, partners or voluntary organisations in the provision of youth work across local authority borders.

Lead officer

8. A local authority must appoint a designated lead officer with suitable seniority and experience to co-ordinate engagement with young persons in its area, other local authorities, partners and voluntary organisations in the provision of youth work.

Youth work strategic plan

9.—(1) A local authority must produce a youth work strategic plan (“strategic plan”) for each reporting period, which has been developed after the local authority has complied with its statutory duty to consult under section 125 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000.

(2) The strategic plan must include the objectives for youth work over the period of that plan which include but are not limited to—

- (a) noting how the local authority, working with partners and voluntary organisations where appropriate, will meet the prioritised needs of young persons in the local authority’s area;
- (b) noting whether there are any inequalities in the provision of youth work and, if so, how they will be addressed;
- (c) assessing what provision will be made for future demands upon youth work during the period of the plan.

(3) The strategic plan must set out—

- (a) the evidence base for setting the objectives;

- (b) how the local authority will work with partners and voluntary organisations to plan and deliver provision of youth work within its area;
 - (c) how the local authority will work with other local authorities, partners and voluntary organisations to plan and deliver provision of youth work across local authority borders for young persons.
- (4) The strategic plan must contain—
- (a) a summary of the consultation carried out for the purposes of sub-paragraph (1), and
 - (b) a summary of the responses (if any) received to that consultation.

10.—(1) A local authority must submit the strategic plan to the Welsh Ministers for their approval.

(2) A local authority must—

- (a) submit its first strategic plan to the Welsh Ministers for approval no later than 30 September 2026, and
- (b) submit each subsequent strategic plan to the Welsh Ministers for approval no later than 30 September in the year before the plan will take effect.

(3) The Welsh Ministers may—

- (a) approve the strategic plan as submitted,
- (b) require the strategic plan to be modified,
- (c) approve the strategic plan with modifications, or
- (d) reject the strategic plan.

(4) If the Welsh Ministers reject or require modifications to the strategic plan, the local authority must revise and resubmit its strategic plan, as soon as is reasonably practicable, for approval by the Welsh Ministers under sub-paragraph (1).

(5) A local authority must send a copy of its approved strategic plan to—

- (a) that local authority's overview and scrutiny committee;
- (b) any other body as directed by the Welsh Ministers.

(6) A local authority must publish its strategic plan as soon as reasonably practicable after it has been approved by the Welsh Ministers under this paragraph.

11.—(1) A local authority may revise its strategic plan during the reporting period in response to an assessed need.

(2) The Welsh Ministers may direct a local authority to revise its strategic plan at any time during the reporting period.

(3) A local authority must submit a revised strategic plan produced under sub-paragraph (1) or (2) to the Welsh Ministers for their approval as soon as reasonably practicable.

(4) The Welsh Ministers may—

- (a) approve the revised strategic plan as submitted,
- (b) require the revised strategic plan to be modified,
- (c) approve the revised strategic plan with modifications, or
- (d) reject the revised strategic plan.

(5) If the Welsh Ministers reject or require modifications to a revised strategic plan, the local authority must revise that strategic plan and resubmit it, as soon as reasonably practicable, for approval by the Welsh Ministers under sub-paragraph (3).

(6) A local authority must send a copy of its approved revised strategic plan to—

- (a) that local authority's overview and scrutiny committee;
- (b) any other body as directed by the Welsh Ministers.

(7) A revised strategic plan must be published as soon as reasonably practicable after the approval of the revised plan by the Welsh Ministers.

12.—(1) A local authority must keep under review the extent to which it is meeting the objectives set out in its strategic plan.

(2) A local authority must from time to time and at least once within every financial year of the reporting period, consult with young persons in its area about the extent to which it is meeting the objectives set out in its strategic plan and meeting the needs of those young persons.

(3) A local authority, having carried out the review set out in sub-paragraph (1) and consultation set out in sub-paragraph (2), must publish, as soon as is reasonably practicable, in each financial year following the publication of a strategic plan, a report of the progress it has made in meeting its objectives set out in that strategic plan.

Guidance

13.—(1) When exercising its functions under these Directions, a local authority must have regard to any guidance issued by the Welsh Ministers.

(2) When making arrangements with other persons in the exercise of its functions under these Directions, a local authority must require those persons to have regard to any guidance issued by the Welsh Ministers.

Review

14.—(1) Before 1 October 2028, the Welsh Ministers must—

- (a) carry out a review of these Directions,
- (b) set out the conclusions of the review in a report, and
- (c) publish the report.

(2) The report must in particular—

- (a) set out the objectives intended to be achieved by these Directions,
- (b) assess the extent to which those objectives are achieved, and
- (c) assess whether those objectives remain appropriate and if so, the extent to which they could be achieved in another way.

Revocation

15. The Youth Support Services Directions (Wales) 2002 are revoked.

Lynne Neagle



Cabinet Secretary for Education, one of the Welsh Ministers

Date: 19 March 2026