

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 10

Ymateb gan : YMCA Caerdydd

Response from : YMCA Cardiff

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.

Our experience in general is largely based on work in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan. Even in these neighbouring local authorities there is a difference in approach.

More generally when I speak to colleagues in other YMCAs in Wales, it is clear that there is a very different provision in each area and that mapping the level of provision can be difficult.

It is clear that youth services across Wales and in the region where we operate have been severely cut in recent years. In Cardiff, the Council has been forced to make sweeping cuts to its previous provision and although a new service has been put in place (and providers have been contracted to deliver this new service), the picture remains unclear in the long term. There seems at present a lack of coherence at local and national level of a longer term vision for the provision of a Welsh youth work service.

Going back to the Cardiff picture, the Youth Innovation Grants were launched last year by the Council as a replacement to their existing provision. The YMCA bid for and won 3 contracts in this programme (and may well take more in the future). We are and remain committed to providing youth services across the city, and even self fund a weekly provision ourselves.

However the new programme places constraints on providers like ourselves that hamper service delivery. For example, the contracts are worth a lot less than before, £18k per annum being the highest award, with other areas offering only £12k per annum.

An early emphasis on 'innovation' also placed a greater burden on providers, to deliver a new more 'shiny' service, whilst the reality of all the feedback from young people is that they cherished first and foremost a safe place to meet friends and socialise.

Furthermore these contracts are initially offered for 12 months, with an option of a further year to providers. Following this, there is an expectation, (though I am not sure if this is currently still the working premise), that the service should become self sustaining. Such short termism in terms of provision, places a further strain on service providers, as we cannot commit resources in the long term to such provision, as we remain unaware of their life span within Council budgets.

The YMCA is able to match fund provision in certain areas, and is always looking to bring in more resources to help sustain youth and young people's services generally. In such instances, there should, in our opinion, be more of an equal dialogue between provider and local authority or central government regarding a more long term strategic approach to funding youth work provision over the next 5-10 years.

This short term approach is also evident with the recent launch of the Youth Quality Mark. In our opinion, this is an excellent development that will be of benefit to the quality of youth work being undertaken across Wales. The YMCA is keen to commit to it and to achieve the award. However, the current provision is only available for 18 months and there remains uncertainty as to its long term future. We believe this should be prioritised by the Government as a key development tool and funded accordingly.

There is also now a tendency to focus on hard outcomes for youth work. This is understandable, however we should disregard the continuing need for a traditional youth work model that is centre

based and allows young people to engage with projects on their own terms.

There should also be a greater focus on engaging ethnic minorities and migrant families in larger cities. This area of work has largely been underrepresented in youth work and any new strategy should have a stronger focus on this area.

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

In the last few years, there has been a significant shift across Wales in how youth work provision is being delivered. Local authorities are no longer best placed or able to deliver the comprehensive services they have to young people. Cardiff YMCA fully recognises that we in Wales are currently in midst of an ongoing transition in terms of service delivery and is keen to play a role in a new service provision.

Our major recommendation is that a 10 year strategy is developed that recognises the pressures we face today with a detailed vision on how we achieve the standard of service provision we want. This should be a partnership approach with organisations like CWYVS and key third sector partners involved in this process. Naturally, the YMCA would be keen to be involved in any such strategy.

In our opinion, there should be more of a tie in between the Welsh government and partners on the ground to ensure a greater coherence in terms of an all Wales provision.

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.

YMCA Cardiff believes that the current Youth Work Strategy is in itself a well written strategy that recognises the value of youth work

provision and its role in supporting young people and its wider value within the community.

The issue however, is since this strategy was written, our economic and social climate has changed significantly, and local authorities have been forced to make decisions that do not naturally align with this current strategy. It is therefore out of kilter with the reality of what is occurring on the ground across Wales.

In our opinion, the current strategy needs to be rewritten or updated to reflect these recent changes and a more radical ways of supporting youth work provision locally and nationally needs to be sought. We believe that a stronger engagement with third sector organisations is essential in any new strategy as this is the way current service delivery are going. We would like to see more coordination with schools for example in order to align better, youth work provision with the formal education sector.

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

- Longer term strategy and ring fencing of youth budgets
- More emphasis on partnership working
- More recognition of emergence of third sector organisations as likely delivery partners in future provision
- Emphasis on quality mark past current date and on professional development in general
- Learning from others- integrated approach of Scotland for example

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

I have included our views in the questions above on this matter. Continued local authority funding, despite being welcome, is not enough in our opinion to maintain an excellent youth service provision. Accessing European Union funding is possible, but is time consuming, difficult to access and post Brexit, I am not sure what the current position is for this.

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

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).

I have already mentioned some of these issues in other questions.

Access to digital technology is also a factor that needs further consideration.

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?

To take a longer term view /strategy to the whole area of youth work.