

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 23

Ymateb gan : Rheolwyr Timau Troseddu Ieuenctid Cymru
Response from : Youth Offending Team (YOT) Managers Cymru

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.

We are aware across Wales a number of Local Authorities have removed their universal provision of Youth Services in favour of delivering a targeted provision due to funding reductions. In some instances this has been seen as benefitting partner agencies or departments as some services have been aligned to maximise resources. In some cases this has led to services being more targeted but YMC are of the opinion that a properly resourced Youth Service working in partnership, can by providing a universal offer, as well as targeted interventions, impact on the prevention of young people entering the criminal justice system in the first place. As it is, whenever community-based youth work is reduced, the possibility of young people requiring more costly services increases. Another impact is that young people affected by poverty, have their opportunities diminished which in turn threatens their ability to reach their full potential.

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

By providing a properly resourced Youth Service, that is underpinned by Extending Entitlement, and that enables it to work in a complementary fashion with services.

The skills of youth workers at engaging young people in a universal setting is an important factor when planning for reintegration within their communities from a multi-agency Youth Justice Service position, as they enhance the offer to young people.

It would be helpful if Welsh Government Departments united to provide a funding resolution for services that work side by side, so that one is not 'robbing Peter to pay Paul' and setting services at odds with each other, rather than promoting collaboration for the benefit of young people.

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.

This relates to the statement above in that it would be helpful if Welsh Government Departments united to provide a funding resolution for services that enables agencies to work side by side such as Youth Services and Youth Justice Service, particularly in relation to provision of targeted interventions.

We welcome the Youth Service providing Young People the opportunity to gain awards and accreditation for the work they undertake with the Youth Service. However, we would urge the Welsh Government to ensure that these awards and/or qualifications are incorporated into the new National Qualification Framework therefore making these recognised in the wider community.

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

- By connecting its various policy areas and being more strategic in its deployment of funds

- By facilitating access to research, peer mentoring and sharing opportunities, meaningful contributions to emerging policy, etc.
- YOT Managers Cymru would welcome closer working relationships with Principal Youth Officers group so as to develop synergy between the two operational methods and delivery for the benefit of the shared cohort/individual
- Welsh Government work with their colleagues in Education to ensure both strands of work are aligned

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

The funding for youth work seems fragmented as the RSG allocation varies from council to council. This is difficult when seen in isolation but when one looks at the bigger picture e.g. what is happening to other young people's services such as Youth Justice, then unconnected funding decisions pose a significant risk. Often at local authority level, services are combining to survive funding reductions, and although there is always scope to review practice and costs, there is a risk that in the desperation to find efficiencies, services become so streamlined that young people suffer most.

The funding picture gets more complex with ESF factored in, as the bureaucracy attached to it can mean that funding for delivery is reduced. The parameters are often so strict as to restrict creativity and although the funding does provide opportunities, it is not without its issues. Young people within the Youth Justice Service often benefit from the delivery of ESF projects delivered by the Youth Service e.g. work on supporting young people who are NEET. However, sometimes the volume of required paperwork can seem so onerous that it can appear like the pressure is to put a tick in a box rather than addressing the needs of the young person and can exclude some young people from accessing the service and flexibility with the funding.

The Third Sector in Wales is undergoing the same challenges as local authority Youth Services and there needs to be investment in infrastructure if the Third Sector, especially small to medium enterprises, are able to deliver effectively. Quality should remain paramount in the delivery of any services for young people.

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

- Grants need to be for longer than 1 year and linked to a comprehensive strategy.
- It needs to be clear which funds/strategies can be accessed by the Youth Service and Youth Justice Services e.g. Pupil Deprivation Grant, 14–19, Curriculum for Wales, Engagement and Progression Framework, Families First, etc.
- One MIS for all so that reports can be run in an instant and everyone is comparing like for like and therefore improved performance management
- Replacement for ESF needs to be identified sooner than later.
- Time and resources are required to build/re-build capacity into the Third Sector

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).

Due to the significant reductions in budgets for Youth Work across England and Wales, there is a risk that people begin to avoid pursuing Youth Work as a career, which would be a great loss, especially to young people. Youth Work has a long history and should be celebrated and maintained. The registration of Youth Workers from 1st April 2017 will help with acknowledging the role of Youth Work however more clarity and detail regarding accountability attached to registration and registration for the Third Sector needs to be provided. The challenge for the Youth Service is to adapt to the potential forthcoming changes.

Within Youth Justice, its multi-disciplinary focus requires a range of professionals to work together; which includes effective partnership working with Youth Service colleagues. Different professions and different approaches create opportunities and services to meet the varied and diverse needs of young people.

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

To ensure that there is alignment between the clarity of registration of youth workers (including 3rd sector) and the National Youth Work strategy.

There needs to be more specialist focus from youth services on youth justice support, working with, instead of replacing or adopting responsibilities.