

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 27

Ymateb gan : Clybiau Bechgyn a Merched Cymru
Response from : Boys' and Girls' Clubs of Wales

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.

Youth work within Wales takes place within many forms, this includes an ever decreasing local authority service due to budget cuts and a variety of voluntary based youth work providers. These come in various guises and are supported by volunteers who contribute their time and effort to support young people.

There is unfortunately a postcode lottery of service where local authorities have continued to support youth work whilst some have made budget cuts with funding being directed to other services of local need. So unfortunately some areas continue to have thriving local authority youth services whilst others are dwindling despite the efforts of dedicated staff who are under resourced.

Youth work can take place in a variety of settings, however, our organisation believes that the universal access service is decreasing with an increased focus on targeted interventions and a continued focus on formal accreditation. Whilst we are supportive of these targeted interventions and their impact on wider Welsh Government policy we feel that this has come as a detriment to the centre based work. These clubs provide ‘a universal service’ which Young people attend voluntarily, the clubs provide young people with a place that is theirs. As highlighted in the Youth Review (2007), ‘young people want somewhere to go, something to do and someone to talk to’. It is

important to ensure that these centre based projects continue as these places can provide the opportunities to develop further targeted interventions with young people who have developed positive relationships with youth workers in these settings.

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

Unfortunately, the funding that has been allocated to youth work from Welsh Government to the local authorities doesn't get to where it should be going due to decisions made locally. This was highlighted in the Youth Work Strategy itself:

“The great majority of public funding available to support youth work in Wales is administered by local authorities with funding allocated from the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) provided by Welsh Government. The RSG is an unhypothecated funding stream and it is therefore a decision of local authorities as to how this funding is utilised in order to best meet their local needs and priorities – including the provision of youth services”.

We believe that it is unfortunate that this funding for youth work isn't getting to where it should and changes need to be made to ensure that this funding benefits its intended beneficiaries. Perhaps this funding could be administered directly by a regional or national youth service / body as has been proposed in the past. Such a lead body would also be able to provide leadership from the youth work sector within Wales.

Due to times of austerity voluntary organisations are struggling and some are closing – this is having an impact on young people who do not have safe places to go and undertake worthwhile projects that can impact on Welsh Government policy agendas e.g. Employability, Mental Health, Obesity.

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.

We believe that the youth work strategy is a good document that demonstrates the Welsh Government’s commitment to youth work in Wales and acknowledges the impact youth work can have on delivering the outcomes for government. Due to the efforts of the Youth Work Strategy branch team we feel that good progress is being made on achieving the targets despite the team being extremely small in number.

As an organisation we like the ‘Youth Work Offer’ and the ‘Charter for Youth Work’ though unfortunately we believe that these could be promoted wider within the field in Wales as many youth workers seem unaware of these documents.

The unfortunate thing about youth work in Wales is that collectively we do not promote the great work that takes place – perhaps the promotion of youth work as a service and as a career could be something that is further developed. We are aware of the ‘youth work marketing group’ but could they be supported by additional staff from other sectors to ensure that youth work and youth work success stories are prominent in the media.

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

Although the small staff team at the Welsh Government work extremely hard they are currently under staffed. Over the past 10 years this team has been constantly reduced which has made this role even more difficult.

As an Organisation that remembers the Wales Youth Agency that

closed in the mid 2000's we feel that perhaps an organisation could be set up to support and promote youth work in Wales and make use of funding that is currently not going directly to Youth services (RSG funding).

We are aware of recent proposals and studies about the way forward for youth work in Wales by both the 'Youth Work Reference Group' and 'Resolve PS Ltd' and would support a new approach that would ultimately make services better for young people in Wales and utilise the current budgets.

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

We have previously mentioned funding in question one with regard to the local spending of the Revenue Support Grant. It is unfortunate that large sums of money are allocated to youth work but this doesn't get to where it is intended due to local decisions.

As a charitable organisation we are constantly fundraising to sustain our work. This is a constant time consuming battle to be able to provide quality youth work. We are grateful to the Welsh Government as we are recipients of the NVYO grant which provides the basis of funding that enables us to leverage in further funding from funds, trusts and grant schemes. Perhaps a study could be undertaken by Welsh Government or CWVYS to show how important this NVYO funding is in order to attract further funding to voluntary organisations in Wales.

Due to these times of austerity this fundraising is getting harder and we are noticing that some independent clubs are struggling especially those that have paid staff. We have also noticed that organisations who are run solely by volunteers are struggling due to increasing costs particularly with insurance and utilities.

We are an Organisation that has received funding through European funds especially funding from Erasmus+. During the last financial year, we received funding for European projects including youth

exchanges and the 'Not The Usual Suspects' youth democracy project. Britain's withdrawal from the EU raises some concern about these funds and ultimately opportunities for young people in the future. We would also like to see other groups undertake youth exchanges and make use of this funding as such opportunities have a great impact on young people's lives.

As an organisation who are members of CWVYS we can see the value of their work. CWVYS are able to support us, assist us with policy developments and also to develop partnerships with other organisations. We feel that CWVYS play an effective role in supporting voluntary youth work organisations despite a lack of long term funding. We would like to see CWVYS supported over a longer period (3-4 year commitment) so they can plan their work more effectively.

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

To highlight the points raised in the first part of this question we suggest:

- Study on effectiveness of NVYO grant assisting organisations leverage in additional funding.
- Encourage more youth work organisations to maximise Erasmus+ funding opportunities.
- Provide longer term support to CWVYS

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).

A large proportion of youth work in Wales takes place within the voluntary sector and within this sector many of the youth workers provide their time freely as volunteers. It is important to encourage and provide opportunities for these volunteers to undertake basic training so they fully understand the principles of youth work. We try and encourage volunteer clubs to undertake the 'Level 2 Award in

youth work' as a starting point, however, it is sometimes hard to encourage volunteers to undertake this training if they work full time in another role. We also feel that these volunteers need to be valued and appreciated within the sector.

We support the 'Quality Mark for Youth Work in Wales' and improving the service we deliver, however, we currently undertake Investors in People and are part of the 'PQASSO for Wales' project which is encouraging organisations in Wales to undertake this quality mark. Due to these current commitments we are unable to undertake the 'Quality Mark for Youth Work in Wales' at present.

We also strongly believe that Youth Work needs to be promoted further within Wales, this is both through the media and as a career opportunity.

Youth Work in schools can have an important role to play but we must remember that youth work is undertaken voluntarily. Young people choose to engage and is not something that should be forced upon them. This is a key aspect of what makes youth work unique to any other services.

Young people within 'club based' youth work provisions have poor access to technology at home and sometimes even less access to technology at their centres. There is a further opportunity for youth work to assist the governments targets regarding digital literacy and accessibility.

The buildings that youth work takes place in need attention so that they are maintained and are fit for purpose.

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?

Although we have raised many points within this document, the one recommendation we would make is that:

Centre based work is the bedrock of youth work and should not be forgotten or neglected. This form of youth work enables young people to develop positive relationships with youth workers who can build upon this relationship by encouraging them to undertake more targeted interventions. These ‘clubs’ provide young people with a place to go, something worthwhile to do and a place to meet with their friends.

We believe that policy targets can be achieved more effectively if young people are supported by youth workers who they trust and have developed positive relationships within their community based club.