

YW 33

Ymateb gan : Gwasanaeth Ieuenctid Powys

Response from : Powys Youth Service

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.

For Powys due to recent budget cuts, the variation in access to a youth work for young people who live outside the 5 main Towns (Ystradgynlais, Brecon, Llandod, Newtown, Welshpool) has been dramatically reduced with Youth Service run Youth Clubs in Llanidloes, Machynlleth, Builth, Hay, Crickhowell, Talgarth, Knighton, Llanfyllin, Rhayader, and Llanfair being closed.

Although the youth service is looking to commission some work outside the 5 main towns around: Citizenship, Arts, Sports, Health. Each high school will also be allocated a part-time youth worker.

Young People based in the Brecon Barracks (Derlin Lines) have their own youth club, and there is work underway to try and integrate these young people into the Town’s youth clubs especially Gurkha families, who in April came and introduced the young people to Henna tattoos.

Young people with disabilities can be supported through the Referral Scheme, if they need a support worker, although it isn’t always easy to find someone to undertake this work.

Young people have the opportunity to attend a Welsh Language youth club across the county, who have recently received an award from the O2 think big scheme.

Working with Action for Children some of our centres run young parents groups for parents under the age of 25, these run similar to parent and toddler groups but with more professionals attending to work with them, and parents are able to access support in their local area. The future of these groups is uncertain. We also work with Powys Young Carers, to run young carers sessions where they can receive more emotional support and not worry about their caring responsibilities for a couple of hours. The future of these groups is uncertain. Since the removal of the Youth Information vehicles from schools and the redundancy of the youth information workers, we believe that although access to a youth worker to provide information has improved, the quality of the service has decreased as the workers don’t have the range of experiences,

knowledge and leaflets to be able to provide young people with the best advice.

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

To make youth services accessible to all, not just those in schools, we need to have a workforce flexible enough to be able to work in various places using various methods and adapting these methods to reach young people that need it at the time. Greater partnership working with partners taking the lead from youth services so they learn ways of engaging with young people and be adaptive and flexible in their approach. Recognition of the impact youth work has on young people and how it can help in resolving Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's), and why it is important to give careful consideration to how youth workers can complement formal education.

Legislate the need for Youth Information similar to legislation for Family Information Services.

More Funding – but let's be realistic.

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 think WG is moving in the right direction in protecting the status and professionalism of Youth Work in Wales, especially with the new Youth Worker Charter that strengthens the need for youth work, especially where they can be linked to ACE's.

Effectiveness of these strategies and policies we're less sure about. Charter point 3, (Information, guidance and support on matter....) in part could be interpreted as the now defunct CLIConline, the youth work strategy (14–16) said that won't happen until April 2016, it happened in April 2014 (for good reasons), but any review of a national information service has yet to be implemented; the Youth Information Workers Network meeting were left unsupported and to our knowledge much of the youth information work has disappeared.

Charter point 1 and 2 require funding and long-term investment (although point 2 could be access by Erasmus+, until we leave Europe.)

Charter point 7 & 8 both require national recognition to reinforce the idea that volunteering can help improve workforce motivation and employability.

Employers need to understand the non-formal and informal education

accreditation that the youth service delivers as well as the different types of qualifications over standard GCSE, A-Levels, degrees, NVQ, BTEC.

The national outcomes framework is a good idea, but what it will actually change is yet to be proven.

The strategies and policies contain good ideas, but in a time of budget cuts the effectiveness of them is unsure. Young people's voices need to be heard especially those who are too young to vote, compared against those who can – would schools be shut, if it was only the pupils shouting?

The charter and framework are good but mostly can only be carried out in larger towns, especially in Powys. Working in schools does mean greater access to most young people, but also means exclusion of those not in mainstream school, but we believe the greater partnership with schools can only be beneficial. We just need to be able to sustain a partnership on equal terms without being moved around or used as being the place to send the naughty ones!

We can't comment on the second part of the question, as we're unfamiliar with departmental structure and responsibilities, but we will comment that all services for children and young people (outside social service and possibly education) should be working if not put together to provide a cohesive approach from birth to adulthood in the services that are provided and to ensure they complement each other. I.e. what happens in Flying start areas after a child starts education?

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

Talk to local authorities and ask them to report on what youth work is actually happening in their authority and benchmark those responses.

Provide support to the Youth Information Workers Network, and possibly develop a national forum for youth workers to share good practise and work on national issues (similar to PYO)

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

Powys Youth Service funding has been reduced by 50% (2016–2019), with minor cuts taken place since 2010, very little funding from the Revenue Support Grant can be allocated to youth work, due to the pressures on Education and Social Services. Some funding is received through grants for preventative work during school holidays to put on activities for all young people.

The Welsh Government Youth Strategy grant provides some funding for targeted work, and non-mandatory training for continuous professional development.

Currently a grant is going in to the European Union to help compliment the current work around the Engagement and Progression Framework.

We're not aware of any money from or to the 3rd sector currently, although this

will change with the commissioning model (see question 1)

We're not fully aware of the whole of our youth services finances and redesign, but what we do know is that due to budget pressures, rural young people are having their centre closed, and will only be able to access a youth worker in school for a limited number of hours each week.

LA funding is reducing, WG funding is not enough, European funding will only last for 2 years and the funding needed to train the 3rd sector to complement youth worker would be difficult to find. We think that as the WG decided that youth work should be a professional occupation and so youth workers had to have a diploma or a degree it isn't appropriate that the 3rd sector are being asked to pick up the pieces after the cuts.

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

Research into the long-term financial benefit and value for money (if indeed there are any) of funding Youth Services to help young people become more resilient and healthier, this will enable the right people to argue the need for a well-funded youth service to help prevent young people later using statutory services (DWP, Social Services, NHS, Police, ETC) Unfortunately everyone thinks it is someone else's problem and they can't put money into it.

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).

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All of the issues you have highlighted are issues that young people in rural Wales face every day. There is no regular transport, we've already covered workforce but the knowledge and experience that is being lost through severe staff reductions has a detrimental effect on services for young people. We think the quality mark is a good thing, but only if it actually means something to those who hold the purse strings.

Youth work in school and the emphasis on the professional recognition of youth workers can only help improve the status and reason why youth workers are needed and what they can do to help improve a young person's life.

We hear almost daily the new dangers young people face online, in order to help combat this we need to do something new, something radical, but more importantly something quickly.

Young people now have better access to technology than ever before, but broadband is still slow, mobile internet barely exists and some homes are still without internet. To help young people become digital natives we need to invest in their future, and the current infrastructure to help encourage technology businesses to bring their companies to the super-fast broadband enabled country side- but first it needs super-fast broadband at an accessible price.

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?

Research and promote the long-term benefits of investing in early intervention services at a universal level.