

YW 35

Ymateb gan : YMCA Abertawe

Response from : YMCA Swansea

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.

Young people’s access to services is very limited, especially in statutory youth services. There have been continuous closures and a reduction of open access youth clubs across Wales. Open access youth clubs are an important part of young people’s development. It provides learning opportunities for young people that increases their personal, social and educational skills. Skills that allow them to become mature and independent adults.

Open access youth clubs provide young people with learning opportunities that they wouldn’t necessarily get from mainstream education. It teaches valuable and essential life skills that enable young people to make informed opinions and to make healthy life choices.

Statutory youth services are focusing on targeted provision as a result of Welsh Governments Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (2013). In any kind of youth work there is always a need to carry out targeted provision, however universal should always remain at the core. The effects of this decision will be seen in 5–10 years, time because what happens when local authorities, will only provide targeted work, is that a large portion of young people in Wales will be missed and will fall through the gaps.

The framework misses a lot of young people because it does not

recognise that all young people are vulnerable and at risk, this is the purpose of youth work. The framework fails to see young people with concerns on their identity, who may be LGBT+ and young people being exploited or suffering abuse (it is common for this to be picked up in youth clubs).

As a result there is reduced access to youth provision for ALL young people in Wales and it is also causing a strain on third sector youth organisations, to pick up the young people being missed and falling through the gaps. It is also effecting third sector organisations that have in past work in partnership with local authorities for open access provision. Now with local authorities only focusing on the Lead Worker role, local authorities have taken workers out of this provision, leaving third sector clubs understaffed and over stretched resulting in less quality provision.

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

The Youth Engagement and Progression Framework and the Lead Worker should be an additional local authority service. There is definitely a need for this focus but with it being the only provision, it is not inclusive.

If Welsh Governments target is to reduce NEET young people in Wales, then there should be more funding being put into youth work, or the money that does go into youth work actually used for youth work. Funding needs to be managed better or by an independent body. Local authorities should have two types of provision, youth work and the lead worker role, but just as much emphasis on both. Open access and universal provision is most definitely preventative work and the lead worker is intervention, with both it would create the best outcome for 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.

There are so many youth work policies, strategies and frameworks that contradict each other, it seems that they have not been coordinated and this becomes confusing for youth work practitioners, as well as the organisations. For example the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework does not correspond with the National Occupational Standards for Youth Work, The National Youth Work Strategy for Wales 2014 to 2018 and the Extending Entitlement. This is consistent across all policies and strategies, they do not correspond.

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

For clear implementation of policies, strategies and frameworks, there needs to be communication and coordination amongst ministers, officials, social researchers, practitioners and young people to ensure consistency and clarity for practitioners but most importantly young people. Strategies and Policies should reflect and back each other up.

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

There seems to be a lack of funding in statutory youth services for young people or the money that already exists, needs be spent in actual youth work. There is so much funding that local authorities receive that do not get used for the youth work on the ground being delivered. There is not enough funding being put into universal and open access provision which is effecting young people’s access to youth provision.

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

A central independent body should have the full figure of youth funding in Wales and should hold responsibility to share this out in the most needed areas and organisations, this being core funding for local authorities and funding grants for third sector. The body should have expertise in the youth work 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).

Local authority youth services are taking away open access youth clubs because they are based in council buildings. The local authorities need to sell these buildings for the cuts that the Welsh Government have instructed that they must make. Understandably the cuts need to happen but taking away youth clubs is not the answer, this will only cause more problems in the future, so this is only a quick fix solution, not a sustainable long term plan for Wales.

The registration for youth work needs to ensure that this will not have an impact on access to funding in the future for organisations that rely heavily on youth support workers and volunteers. There needs to be an equal solution to this where all workers regardless of status practising youth work should be registered.

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?

There needs to be a major priority on universal (true) youth work, as well as there being a clear understanding of the importance in youth work and the impact it has on young people in Wales.