

Save the Future Generation of Wales

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 5 December 2017

Petitions Committee | 5 December 2017

Research Briefing:

Petition number: P-05-787

Petition title: **Save the Future Generation of Wales**

Text of petition: We the undersigned call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to ensure the financial resources for youth work contributed by the individual local authorities through 'Revenue Support Grant' is at least 50 percent of its notional allocation.

The matter of whether or not introducing the hypothecation of 'Revenue Support Grant' (RSG) for youth work has already been identified in one of the reports released by the 'Children, Young and Education Committee' in the last year. It is a fact that there is a gap between the actual financial contributions to youth work provided by the individual local authorities through 'RSG' and that of the notional allocation for youth work. It is crucial to assure and maintain the quality of youth work provided to young people in Wales in order for them to gain the precious opportunities to improve themselves in a supportive environment. This crucial factor should not only depend on the individual local authorities' decisions, which differ from one to another due to their own priority of expenditure. More proactive intervention by the Welsh Government must be required to ensure the minimum level of quality of services provided all across Wales. Introducing partial hypothecation prevents the individual local authorities from reducing further reduction in financial resources spending on youth work, while it also enables them to retain some extent of autonomy to prioritise their needs of expenditure in accordance with their individual priorities. This particular notion could be the most realistic solution for the matter.

What is youth work?

The Youth Work National Occupational Standards (2012) identified that the key purpose of youth work is to:

‘enable young people to develop holistically, working with them to facilitate their personal, social and educational development, to enable them to develop their voice, influence and place in society and to reach their full potential.’

The Youth Service in Wales is a universal entitlement, open to all young people within the specified age range 11 to 25. Youth work is provided through both the voluntary and local authority sectors and through a variety of youth work settings and methods.

According to [the Welsh Government](#), good non-formal educative youth work provides all young people with active interventions with a purpose that produces learning and development environments for young people. It can play an important role in equipping and helping young people to achieve in their formal education. Youth work in Wales offers opportunities for learning that are educative, expressive, participative, inclusive and empowering.

National Assembly for Wales action

In July 2016, **The Children, Young People and Education (CYPE) Committee** agreed to undertake a “snapshot” inquiry, the aim of which was to review the effectiveness of Welsh Government’s strategy and policies in respect of youth work.

The Committee was particularly interested in exploring:

- Young people’s access to youth work services;
- The effectiveness of Welsh Government strategy and policy on youth work;
- Funding for youth work (Local Authority, Welsh Government, European, Third Sector); and
- Any other issues considered to be relevant to the Inquiry.

This [Research Service blog from February 2017](#) provides an overview of developments preceding the [Senedd debate](#) on the [Children, Young People and Education Committee’s \(CYPE\) inquiry into youth work](#).

In evidence the CYPE Committee heard how funding pressures have had a serious impact on youth work over recent years. According to the Welsh Government’s Statistical Release, the total amount of budgeted expenditure for youth services by local authorities, including funding through the Revenue Support Grant, has reduced by almost 25% over the last 4 years.

As the inquiry progressed the Committee noted the Minister's strong opposition to the hypothecation of funding for youth work within the revenue support grant. The Committee remained concerned, however, that there is a lack of accountability for the use of funds nominally allocated to local authorities via the Revenue Support Grant.

On reflection of stakeholders views and the Minister's response, Recommendation 8 of the [CYPE Committee's report states](#):

The Minister should develop an accountability framework for local authorities' use of funds for youth work via the revenue support grant. The framework should include sanctions if outcomes are not delivered.

This recommendation followed on from evidence which led the Committee to express concerns about increasing pressures on both the statutory and voluntary sector related to short-term funding from multiple funding streams.

Welsh Government action

The then [Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language responded positively to the Committee's recommendations](#) during February 2017, accepting the majority of them and acknowledging a close fit with his own thinking. In response to recommendation 8, which is accepted in principle by the Welsh Government, the then Minister states:

The RSG is an un-hypothecated funding stream, and it is therefore a decision of local authorities as to how this funding is utilised to best meet local needs and priorities. It is not possible to identify how much RSG is spent on youth work or to prescribe this amount – the Standard Spending Assessments are notional amounts that are used for calculation purposes only and are not targets for spending. However, historically the Welsh Government has provided direct support to a number of grant schemes intended to support the outcomes of youth work. We have begun the process to undertake a review of all these youth work funding streams to identify the true impact and to support future thinking for supporting youth work in Wales. I want to ensure we have better transparency and value for money.

As part of continued correspondence between the CYPE Committee and the then Minister, the [Committee's Chair Lynne Neagle wrote to Alun Davies in May 2017](#) seeking an update on the Welsh Government's progress for implementing the inquiry's recommendations. On funding, the letter states:

The Committee had significant concerns that youth services would be vulnerable to financial uncertainty if local authorities are not subject to clear guidance and accountability on how the Revenue Support Grant should be spent to support youth services. Could you provide an update on the review of youth work funding streams that you outlined in your response to the Committee?

The [Minister for lifelong learning and Welsh language's response of June 2017](#) reiterated how the Welsh Government provides core funding for statutory youth services through the RSG, but the Minister further updated that:

We are currently in the process of externally reviewing our additional youth work grants, including the National Voluntary Youth Organisation (NVYO) grant, all evaluations are due to be completed

this summer. It will be at this point I will consider our options and then announce my decision, which will include any changes to the NVYO grant. I am fully aware of timescales for current NVYO recipients, including the need to know of any future funding decisions by 31 December.

Furthermore, in its response to this Petition, the Welsh Government acknowledge that this was an issue brought up by the CYPE Committee's Inquiry and outline their efforts to help shape the statutory direction and guidance on youth work to reflect today's legislative, policy and financial landscape, and 'set realistic expectations for what can be achieved.'

The Minister for the Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning, Eluned Morgan, concludes in her letter to the Petitions Committee that she does not intend on making changes to existing funding arrangements whilst these reviews are ongoing.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.