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WALES PRINCIPAL YOUTH OFFICERS' GROUP

Curriculum for Wales - what contribution
can Youth Work make?

A discussion paper on behalf of the Wales
Principal Youth Officers' Group

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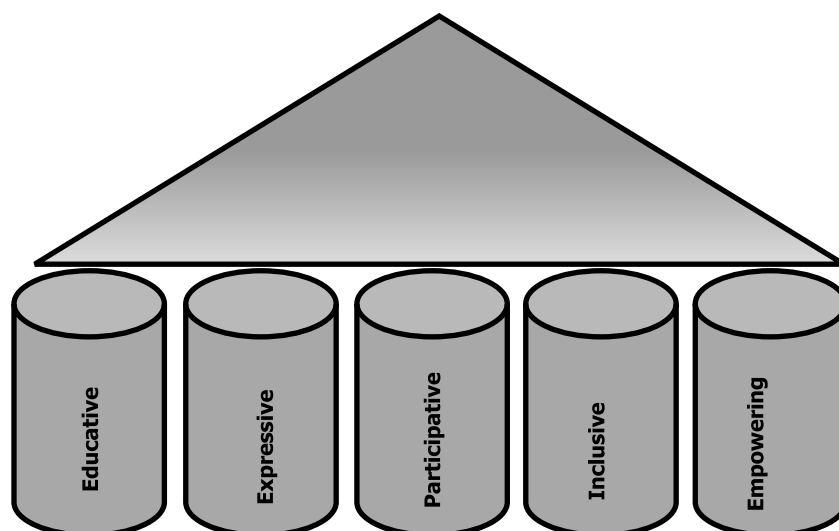
“It takes a village to raise a child”. The traditional African proverb is often quoted and, in the fast-paced, increasingly well-connected world in which we live, it has never been more relevant than today. Wales is currently experiencing a once-in-a-generation opportunity to shape and develop a new curriculum for its young learners, which will equip them for life in a modern world which is far better connected and far more competitive than it has ever been. The new Curriculum for Wales which is an exciting opportunity for a new educational approach based around a blend of academic knowledge and broader skills development, set in the context of modern methods of learning.

As the African proverb and Curriculum for Wales state, the huge effort required to successfully raise our children and young people cannot be carried out by schools in isolation but requires the input of a wide range of stakeholders, both from the wider education ‘family’ and communities. This paper sets out, on behalf of the Youth Service in local authorities in Wales, the contribution which youth work can and does make to the process of learning in schools and communities.

The Youth Service is the framework by which youth work is delivered; youth work is open to all young people aged 11-25 with its key purpose being 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.”¹ Youth work in Wales is delivered by both local authorities and voluntary sector organisations, often working together.

Youth Work is based on a voluntary engagement and delivered via informal and non-formal education approaches during the period of transition from childhood to adulthood. It is carried out in a variety of settings and through a number of methods, including curriculum specialities such as arts and culture, first aid, sports and leisure activities; information, advice, guidance and counselling services; confidence, self-esteem and well-being programmes; project work; group work and one-to-one work, providing safe environments where young people can learn, gain qualifications and accreditation (see below) and develop a wide range of personal and social (soft) skills, which underpin an individual’s voice, influence and contribution to society.

The Five Pillars of Youth Work in Wales:



¹ Youth Work National Occupational Standards

The benefits of youth work and schools partnerships

Qualified for Life: A Curriculum for Wales - A Curriculum for Life (2015) describes the Pupil Offer as being "...about schools and practitioners working with a wide range of partners to develop a breadth of opportunities and activities that expand horizons within and beyond the traditional learning environment of the classroom...It is about partnerships beyond the school, where partners multiply the impact of each other's efforts". In other words, in order for young people to be able to access the formal curriculum delivered in schools and go on to become successful contributors to their communities, they have to be ready and able to do so. This means that they need to be happy, healthy, self-motivated and resilient "Evidence...demonstrates that young people who experience a diverse range of educational relationships in different contexts develop a stronger sense of confidence and a better understanding of how relationships work which may be beneficial effects on young people's educational engagement". *NYA and Fabian Society the Contribution of Non-Formal Learning to Young People's Life Chances: Learning from Evidence* (2008)

How are youth workers working with schools?

Extending and promoting learners' experience is a key principle of Curriculum for Wales, with an emphasis on experiential learning in the new guidance "A school's curriculum is everything a learner experiences in pursuit of the four purposes" Curriculum for Wales Guidance, 2020, (p. 5). As the curriculum has been developed and refined, in line with the principle of subsidiarity, this provides a platform for schools and relevant stakeholders to consider, particularly at local level, how and where a local 'youth offer' and 'pupil offer' can work together in broadening experiences for all young learners.

The new ambitious curriculum offers an excellent chance for youth workers and teachers to better understand and appreciate each other's approach and contribution. If we don't want to nurture standard young people, we must not produce standard teachers or youth workers - further opportunities for developing this area lie with the new regulatory body Education Workforce Council (EWC) and National Academy for Education Leadership (NAEL).

Whilst teaching and youth work are different educational approaches, they deliver their greatest impact where they both embrace and understand each other as being **complementary**. "Communication is a recurring issue for both those working in the youth sector and those employed in formal education. Youth workers can often struggle to articulate the value of their profession. However, schools can also fail to communicate adequately how they want to work with youth workers to support their students".² **Successful Partnerships are based on a mutual understanding of roles and are found where youth workers are an integral part of the school team.**

² National Youth Agency Commission into the role of youth work in formal education (2014)

Some examples of effective practice include:

- 'detached work' around corridors, cafeterias, common rooms and recreation areas;
- work with various interest groups around things like school newspapers, social action and school councils and forums;
- PSHE delivery
- homework and study support clubs;
- school holiday provision;
- work with young people experiencing difficulties around schooling; and
- pastoral and personal support
- support for young people not in education, employment & training (NEET)

Following a survey of youth work in formal learning settings carried out by the PYOG, the sector reported work being carried in the following curriculum/enrichment areas:

• Conservation/Environment	• Sports Achievements
• Community/Citizenship	• Outward bound opportunities
• Youth Forum/School Council	• After school/lunchtime clubs
• Independent living	• Vocational programmes
• Enterprise activities	• Basic skills
• Music and drama	• Essential skills
• Sports leadership	• Arts and crafts

...including a selection of accredited programmes:

• BTEC	• Princes Trust XL/Achieve
• OCN	• PSD
• Youth Achievement Awards	• Health
• Adventure Service Challenge	• Duke of Edinburgh
• First Aid	• ASDAN
• Agored Cymru	• Millennium Volunteers
• John Muir Award	• Youth Work Certificate

A number of these opportunities can make a valuable contribution towards experiential learning, Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE), Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) as well as a number of Areas of Learning and Experience including in particular Health & Well-being and Expressive Arts.

Four Purposes of the Curriculum				
Examples of youth work provision (taken from the 2018-19 Welsh Government Youth Work Audit)	Ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives	Enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work	Ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world	Healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society
	1,100 After School Clubs	600 Arts & Drama projects	1,100 One-to-One projects	1,500 sports, and physical activity projects
	600 Accreditation projects	500 Information and Marketing events	600 Information Service projects	1,300 Health & Well-being projects
	400 Alternative Curriculum projects	400 Participation/Forum/Council projects	600 Welsh Language projects	600 Holiday Schemes
	400 projects for young people not in education, employment or training	300 Information Technology projects	500 Citizenship projects	400 Disabilities projects
			400 Black and Ethnic minorities projects	300 Duke of Edinburgh projects

Also: 200 projects with young offenders, 100 residential projects, 50 gender specific groups, 50 young parent groups

Source: <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Education-and-Skills/Youth-Service>

Whilst youth work is based on a voluntary relationship with a young person, a relationship which is also led by that young person, a number of accredited programmes and qualifications are available for those who wish to pursue such a route (some of which are on the Qualifications and Curriculum Framework (QCF) but all of which provide opportunities for young people to obtain recognition for their efforts). Professionally qualified youth workers, whilst skilled in engaging young people, are also highly trained and well used to planning, monitoring and evaluating their work.

There is growing evidence and consensus that **many outcomes of youth work, which are termed as intrinsic** (valued by and related primarily to individuals such as happiness, self-esteem and confidence) have a positive impact on those which are termed as extrinsic outcomes (those which can be measured by other people including educational achievement, literacy and numeracy or good health). **Youth services use a variety of mechanisms and tools to measure and evidence impact and progress.**

Local authority Youth Services also work closely with their voluntary sector colleagues, both local, regional and national and should be familiar with the services available in their local area.

PHSE work

PHSE support by youth workers (whether based in Schools or visiting) includes the delivery of following topic areas:

• Relationships	• Bullying
• Behaviour	• Substance misuse
• Anger	• Curriculum related issues
• Truancy	• Sexual Health
• Self-harm	• Crime
• Confidence	• Attitudes
• Self-esteem	• Physical/sexual abuse
• Internet safety	

There are increasing calls for youth workers to deliver PSHE in particular on a more substantial basis. The less formal nature of their relationship with young people can encourage young people to discuss sensitive issues more openly. Links to community organisations and other agencies can also be exploited by youth work staff should referrals need to be made, for example via brokering to other youth service teams or substance misuse agencies.

Education Workforce Council

Since April 2017, youth workers in schools have been required to register with the EWC. This means that registered youth workers will be subject to the EWC Code of Conduct and be expected to work towards the aims of the EWC, in a similar way to that of teachers, FE College lecturers and support staff and work-based learning practitioners.

With a new *National Youth Work Strategy for Wales* (2019) and Interim Youth Work Board focussing on four main themes (Young People are Thriving; Youth Work is Accessible and Inclusive; Voluntary and paid professionals youth work staff are supported throughout their careers to improve their practice and that Youth Work is Valued and Understood), the youth work sector continues to evolve and improve the quality of its workforce e.g. working with the [Education Training Standards \(ETS\) Council Wales](#) as the body which endorses training programmes. Whilst the EWC provides a new level of assurance as to the professional status of youth workers and the safeguarding of learners, parents and general public, it provides a unique opportunity for each sector of the education workforce to learn from each other in the drive to improve standards.