

Context of Youth Work in Wales, 2020

This paper was initially written for the *Wales Youth Work Leadership & Management Programme Steering Group* as an aide memoire/advisory document to assist the consultant commissioned to carry out work on the pilot phase of the programme.

Having been developed it was considered by the group (whose membership includes the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), Wales Principal Youth Officers' Group (PYOG), Council for Wales Voluntary Youth Service (CWVYS), Training Agencies Group (TAG) and Education Training Standards (ETS) Wales) that the paper would be beneficial for wider use and that it was important to share as soon as possible.

Legislative Context

Youth work in Wales has its legislative basis primarily in the *Learning & Skills Act (2000)*, Section 123, which contains guidance specific to Wales relating to the devolved policy context, which states that:

Provisions of services:

- (1) The National Assembly for Wales may direct a local authority—
- (a) to provide youth support services;
 - (b) to secure the provision of youth support services;
 - (c) to participate in the provision of youth support services.
- (2) In this section “youth support services” means services which in the opinion of the National Assembly will encourage, enable or assist young persons (directly or indirectly)—
- (a) to participate effectively in education or training,
 - (b) to take advantage of opportunities for employment, or
 - (c) to participate effectively and responsibly in the life of their communities.
- (3) In this section “young persons” means persons who have attained the age of 11 but not the age of 26.
- (4) A direction under subsection (1)—
- (a) may include provision for grants, loans and other kinds of financial assistance to be provided by the National Assembly (whether or not on conditions),
 - (b) may require local authorities to have regard to guidance issued by the National Assembly, and
 - (c) may require local authorities when making arrangements with other persons to require those persons to have regard to guidance issued by the National Assembly.
- (5) A direction under subsection (1)—
- (a) may relate to a particular class of young person;
 - (b) may make different provision for different classes of young person;
 - (c) may be revoked or varied by a later direction.

Further duties are conveyed to local authorities under Section 124:

Local authority: duty and powers:

- (1) A local authority—
 - (a) shall comply with a direction given to it under section 123(1), and
 - (b) may provide, secure the provision of or participate in the provision of youth support services otherwise than in accordance with paragraph (a).
- (2) Action which a local authority takes in pursuance of subsection (1)—
 - (a) may relate to a particular class of young persons;
 - (b) may relate to services for a person from another area.
- (3) In complying with a direction under section 123(1) a local authority shall have regard to the expediency of co-operation with voluntary organisations.
- (4) For the purpose of subsection (1) a local authority may—
 - (a) incur expenditure;
 - (b) employ officers;
 - (c) enter into agreements for the supply of goods or services;
 - (d) do anything else (other than forming companies) which they consider necessary or expedient.
- (5) Nothing in or done under section 123 shall prejudice any power of a local authority to provide services or incur expenditure.

Voluntary Sector

The Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services (CWVYS) is the representative body for the voluntary youth work sector, enabling a collective voice for those delivering services for young people throughout Wales.

Working pan-Wales, CWVYS currently has a vibrant and diverse membership of 113 organisations and is pro-actively engaged in strategic and operational developments in support of the sector and of/for young people.

It provides a frontline service for voluntary youth organisations and an important vehicle through which Welsh Government delivers the Youth Work Strategy for Wales and a range of important projects.

Extending Entitlement

Directions and Guidance derived from Section 123 and produced in 2002 by the then Welsh Assembly Government is called *Extending Entitlement* and can be found at:

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-02/direction-and-guidance-extending-entitlement-support-for-11-to-25-year-olds-in-wales.pdf>

This describes ten entitlements for “every young person in Wales”:

1. education, training and work experience – tailored to their needs;
2. basic skills which open doors to a full life and promote social inclusion;
3. a wide and varied range of opportunities to participate in volunteering and active citizenship;
4. high quality, responsive, and accessible services and facilities;
5. independent, specialist careers advice and guidance and student support and counselling services;
6. personal support and advice – where and when needed and in appropriate formats – with clear ground rules on confidentiality;
7. advice on health, housing benefits and other issues provided in accessible and welcoming settings;
8. recreational and social opportunities in a safe and accessible environment;
9. sporting, artistic, musical and outdoor experiences to develop talents, broaden horizons and promote rounded perspectives including both national and international contexts;
10. the right to be consulted, to participate in decision-making, and to be heard, on all matters which concern them or have an impact on their lives.

Youth Work: Principles & Purposes

As well as adhering to the National Occupational Standards for youth work, in Wales we have an additional professional document, called *Youth Work in Wales: Principles & Purposes* <https://www.wlga.wales/SharedFiles/Download.aspx?pageid=62&mid=665&fileid=568>, which draws on the NOS and is written by the profession, for the profession. This is underpinned by 5 central ‘pillars’, that youth work is:

• Educative	• Participative
• Expressive	• Inclusive
• Empowering	

Local Authority youth work audit

Data relating to local authority youth work, including funding, workforce, members and projects can be found here <https://stats.wales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Education-and-Skills/Youth-Service>

National Assembly for Wales (NAfW) Youth Work Inquiry

In 2016, the Children, Young People and Education Committee in the National Assembly for Wales announced that it would be carrying out an inquiry into youth work and published its findings and recommendations in a report called *What type of Youth Service does Wales want?* in December 2016 <https://www.assembly.wales/laid%20documents/cr-ld10870/cr-ld10870-e.pdf>

Welsh Government (WG) produced its response to the report in the following February (2017) <https://www.assembly.wales/laid%20documents/gen-ld10920/gen-ld10920-e.pdf> in February 2017

Interim Youth Work Board and new Youth Work Strategy

WG's response included a commitment to establish an Interim Youth Work Board, tasked with developing a new youth work strategy, which was published in June 2019 -

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-06/youth-work-strategy-for-wales.pdf>

The strategy articulates four main themes of work, each of which is being developed by a Strategic Participation Group (SPG), which reports to the Board:

- Young People are thriving
- Youth work is accessible and inclusive
- Voluntary and paid professional youth work staff are supported throughout their careers to improve their youth work practice
- Youth work is valued and understood

The Board has been tasked with reporting to WG by the end of 2020, when it has also been asked to make recommendations for a more sustainable Youth Service in Wales.

Youth Work funding

Youth work in Wales is funded from a variety of sources. In regard to local authority funding, the largest contribution comes from WG via the Revenue Support Grant (RSG), an amount which has in recent years reduced from £44.2m in 2010/11 to £31.4m in 2018/19. WG announced a further £6.2m via local authorities in 2019/20 and 2020/21 for Wellbeing (£2.5m) and Youth Homelessness (£3.7m) as part of the Youth Support Grant (YSG), taking the total to £10m. The previous Training Grant has ceased.

The voluntary youth work sector is supported by WG National Voluntary Youth Organisation (NVYO) and CWVYS grant scheme, which provides £784k in 2020/21, divided between 8 nationally-focused organisations. The voluntary sector more widely is engaged in constant fundraising exercises which bring significant added economic value to Wales in the form of grants for revenue and some capital funding from a wide range of trusts, foundations, in-kind contributions in addition to local, regional and national campaigns.

Wider Policy context

Youth Engagement & Progression Framework

In 2013, WG produced its 'flagship' NEET Strategy, called the Youth Engagement & Progression Framework (YEPF) <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-02/implementation-plan-youth-engagement-and-progression-framework.pdf>, developed in a fully inclusive manner with the sector. The framework Implementation Plan, which has proven to be very successful, includes 6 'key elements' to reduce the number of young people aged 16-18 and 19-24 who are Not in Education, Employment or Training:

- Identification
- Brokerage
- Tracking
- Provision
- Employability and opportunities
- Accountability

Youth work has been recognised as being key to the framework, particularly in its contribution to identification, engagement and brokerage. The Framework is currently under review.

New Curriculum

Wales is currently going through a 'once in a lifetime' curriculum review. *Curriculum for Wales* https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/?_ga=2.174871522.1518768271.1587372355-1508754148.1586341948, is underpinned by four purposes – for learners to become:

- 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.

and six Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLE's) with Digital competence, Literacy and Numeracy being cross-curricular:



Whilst not explicit in the document, a number of its principles and areas of delivery reflect youth work and youth work can make a valued contribution to areas such as experiential learning, PSE, SRE, Health & Well-being, Expressive Arts.

The *Wales Principal Youth Officers' Group* (PYOG) has written (and recently updated) a position paper on youth work's contribution to the new curriculum -

<https://www.wlga.wales/SharedFiles/Download.aspx?pageid=62&mid=665&fileid=2672>

CWVYS represents the youth sector on WG Ministerial/Third Sector Groups which influences and supports implementation of policy-making decisions via meetings with relevant Ministers, including the new Curriculum via the Education Group and others e.g. Third Sector Partnership Council <https://wcva.cymru/influencing/accessing-theassembly/> plus Finance; Housing and Local Government; Health, Social Care, Wellbeing and Sport; International Relations and Welsh Language.

Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (2015)

The *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act* 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of a sustainable Wales and is underpinned by seven 'goals', which the principles and purposes of youth work are clearly aligned to:

- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales
- A healthier Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language
- A globally responsible Wales

Social Services & Wellbeing Act (2014)

This Act was designed to address issues of changes in demography and increased expectations from those who access care and support in a challenging funding climate. The Act is designed to give those using social care services greater freedom to decide which services they need and is based on four principles:

- Voice and control
- Prevention and early intervention
- Well-being
- Co-production

Prevention and Early Intervention

Youth work has been recognised for its role in prevention and early intervention, particularly via effective open access services and engaging with some of the most disengaged/vulnerable young people via some of the more targeted provision. The sector is also recognised as having an important part to play in improving the health and well-being of young people in Wales, as referenced on page 16 of *Mind Over Matter* <https://www.assembly.wales/laid%20documents/cr-ld11522/cr-ld11522-e.pdf>, a key report produced by the NAFW CYPE Cttee in 2019. There is also a requirement in the Act for local authorities to promote social enterprise.

The Wales PYOG has also produced a position paper on youth work's contribution to the new curriculum, Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and Social Care and Wellbeing Act <https://www.wlga.wales/SharedFiles/Download.aspx?pageid=62&mid=665&fileid=574>

Estyn report Youth Support Services in Wales: The Value of Youth Work

Amongst the findings from this thematic report published by Estyn (Wales' Education Inspectorate)

<https://www.estyn.gov.wales/sites/www.estyn.gov.wales/files/documents/Youth%20Support%20Services%20in%20Wales.pdf> in 2018 it was mentioned that

"The support for these (vulnerable) young people that is most successful in the long-term is engagement with well-trained youth workers who take time to build a relationship of trust with them. They then can foster these young people's personal development, build their confidence and resilience, and develop their social skills, so that they are more likely to make better life decisions and in due course re-engage with learning programmes. Such support needs to be flexible and non-judgmental."

Education Workforce Council

In April 2017, JNC qualified youth workers working for local authorities, voluntary sector organisations, schools or colleges of Further Education were required to register with the Education Workforce Council, the education workforce regulator -

<https://www.ewc.wales/site/index.php/en/>

Youth Work Quality Mark

In 2015 the Welsh Government launched the Youth Work Quality Mark

https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/the-quality-mark-for-youth-work-in-wales-introduction-and-guidance_1.pdf with three levels of award – Bronze, Silver and Gold. It is referred to as *"...a unique tool for self-assessment, planning improvement and gaining a Quality Mark for youth work. The Quality Mark consists of two distinct elements;*

- 1. a set of Quality Standards that youth work organisations can use as a tool for self-assessment and improvement; and*
- 2. an externally assessed Quality Mark that is a national award demonstrating an organisation's excellence.*

The tender for the award has recently transferred to the EWC

<https://www.ewc.wales/site/index.php/en/accreditation/the-quality-mark-for-youth-work-in-wales.html>