

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales  
Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and  
Education Committee  
Ymchwiliad i Waith Ieuenctid | Inquiry into Youth Work

YW 04

Ymateb gan : Plant y Cymoedd

Response from : Valleys Kids

**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.

Working in the Valleys of South Wales I am not aware of the provision across Wales. I am concerned as the provision for young people in the Valleys has been reduced with in some areas most of the Local Authority provision being based in schools. For various reasons this eliminates many young people having access sometimes because if young in the bracket 18 to 25 then you are much less likely to want to go to school provision. Also for their leisure time often young people don’t want that to be in school and of course there are some of the young people in need of high quality youth provision are excluded from school.

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

As always the main problem is how provision is resources. To provide high quality youth work then you have to have good qualified youth workers. When there are limited resources for providing provision outside the school situation then many of the non uniformed youth organisations have had to reduce much of their provision for example in my own organisation we used to be able to provide 7 day a week provision we are now fortunate if we can provide 3 evenings a week.

I am aware that future questions in this survey ask about funding but

how Third Sector organisations are funded needs to be explored to resolve this issue.

**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.

Valleys Kids have always had a commitment to work with the most challenged and the most challenging young people. When I look at some of the strategy I have concerns that the emphasis on eligibility for employment. Our Youth Work is about training young people for life, developing life skills.

Some of the emphasis is on the young people getting accreditation and while it mentions the DofE some of the other accreditations have limited value to employers. While some of the life skills are much more appropriate in the arena of employment.

With our emphasis on working with the disengaged there is a journey that youth work needs to take the young people on. That can be a long journey and accreditation is something at the end of the journey not the beginning so there is a need for the resources for the beginning of the journey.

There is certainly a need for cross departmental approach to how youth work is supported. Especially with the new Wellbeing Act

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

While I have always argued that youth work is part of education the Welsh Government needs to be less concerned about formal qualifications within the youth work field but rather about the more soft outcomes, about the journey that a young person is taking and

how the youth work being provided is aimed at enabling the young people to grow in confidence and enabling them to achieve their potential. Youth work that gives them 'hope' that they can achieve and enable them to have aspirations and high expectations of themselves.

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

I believe that there is not nearly enough funding available for youth work in any area.

As a local Third Sector organisation it is not easy to access some of the funding for the kind of youth work I have described for example Communities First outcomes are again much more about formal education. I do not see that the youth work role is about that formal education but in enabling the young person to be ready to engage in formal education.

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

I believe there is a need for the outcomes to be explored and to ensure that when outcomes are being decided that people working with the young people in a variety of settings are involved. There needs to be thinking about using different methods to measure what is good youth work, using methods such as "out come star" rather than accreditations.

**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).

I think that one of the issues that needs to be thought about is in providing youth work to ensure that we put the needs of the young people at the centre and to realise that all young people do not need the same that one size does not fit all. To recognise that while school

based youth work will meet the needs of some young people as does the voluntary uniformed organisations that often with the young people who most need some youth work provision neither of these will attract them.

**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?

To look at how look Third Sector Organisations are funded to ensure that the funding available is realistic and will enable good youth workers to be appointed within those organisations who are most likely to meet the needs of the disadvantaged young people.