

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 16

Ymateb gan : Gwasanaethau Pobl Ifanc Abertawe
Response from : Swansea Young People Services

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.

There has been a variety of reductions in service delivery and provision of open access, this includes detached work and school drop in sessions which means that it is harder for young people to engage in youth work services.

Open access provision is harder to access due to loss of youth clubs in rural areas, services are more targeted now in the geographical areas where there is highest level of need.

Staffing issues are also linked to both the closing of open access provision as well as the quality of provision offered to young people. Staffing issues mean there is a high turnover of staff and the staffing resource through qualified staff has diminished with the quality of work reducing also. There is a feeling that open access provision is “ticking over” rather than being a focus for workers. Training of the youth club staff has also had an impact, as training has not been a focus for the level 1 staff the Qualitative work has also subsided with this. Youth workers experience has noted that when open access provisions were staffed with FT / 18 hours posts that the numbers of young people attending open access provision was higher, since the workers have moved to a more targeted/ caseload model the numbers of young people accessing youth work provision has also declined.

There are trends that prevent young people from accessing youth work provision and the feeling is that the older young people 16+ don't access the services so much unless they are referred into the targeted side.

There is a belief and assumption that this is the same throughout wales, youth work services being reduced to focus on the targeted groups.

Young people's access to a youth workers has diminished, when young people need support they need to be referred, this can take a while and young people are not having the intervention at an early enough stage. Youth workers are not as accessible in youth centres / schools as they used to be

Youth work has moved too far towards a social care model and as a result there is not enough provision or resource for young people. Staff have tensions of finding a balance between targeted case loading and providing good quality youth clubs/ provisions - some guilt when focusing on the other.

In terms of issues relating to specific groups of young people there are services available and these offer a variety of support:

Menter Iaith Abertawe

EYST - Ethnic Youth Support team

The Enabled Project - supporting young people with disabilities

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

Staffing - recruitment of Quality staff and recruiting a full staff team who can lead activities and provide consistent staffing - suggestions that provisions are put on hold while staff are trained, involved in planning and that promotion is completed and relaunched. Offer training that looks at theory and strategies rather than just on the job (foundation courses and level 2 qualifications)

Also concerns that staff are not fully aware of what youth work is and the challenges youth workers face, therefore to implement emphasis on supporting young people to come through recruitment, they have experience and knowledge of youth work and can be offered varying levels of training, such as senior member training and level 2 etc. This would also support the young people who are accessing youth work services that are NEET.

Fear that because staff issues are meaning that staff are policing a building and not providing informal education opportunities.

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 is a limited awareness of strategies and staff admit that they don’t find the time to make this a priority. Unless looking for it, they don’t know it’s there.

As a cultural discussion is it ok to allow time for this and should the service be prioritising this and allowing staff to explore what polices can influence the work.

The policies and strategies that are known are the ones that focus on the targeted work, such as the engagement and progression framework and Well-being Act.

There is a reliance on managers to filter down this information of what is of use and relevant – this is then relying on others to determine the suitability and interpretation vary between staff and managers – the development sessions don’t include this as much as before.

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

Making documents user friendly, some people find the strategies and policies hard to read and understand.

Offering opportunities to allow workers to feedback and give thoughts and ideas, may encourage them to take more of an active interest

Finding the balance of policies that match current Job role - youth workers are now lead workers using youth work skills - what policies apply to which role.

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 is not enough funding it has eroded over the years cuts and budget constraints provided by the local authority.

Menter Iaith Abertawe apply for funding and grants, others don't know where there are funding opportunities, in relation to big grants, questions were asked if youth services, council funded can apply for funding.

There are some smaller funding pots available from charities that support vulnerable families and young people.

Funding streams that we used to access have been cut - communities first.

For smaller bids there was a feeling that the applications are time consuming and that there is a lot of information required.

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

Promotion of funding opportunities – again where do you look and find these – most seem to be from word of mouth.

Reducing the application process, when these are lengthy it takes time away from 1-1 work and this is a conflict of priorities.

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).

The erosion of the youth work professional qualification status – are youth workers, youth workers anymore?

Lack of youth work services within school provisions availability of open access provision and the quality of this.

Staffing and the training and maintaining staff.

Buildings are neglected, no identified role and responsibility for maintaining and upkeep – unless legal requirement such as health and safety, funding opportunities to improve provision and value the opportunities of a young people’s space.

Standardisation of services – does the quality mark do this, how are youth work provisions, training and support quality assured and are standardised across the board.

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?

Not to forget about the young people who may not need a lead worker but who need a youth worker for support. To provide young people with a safe space where they can learn, grow and develop. A space where all young people can access support when needed. For youth service provisions to be valued and that the correct resource is allocated where needed. To support those young people who have needs in a preventative way rather than reacting when crisis happens or when issues escalate.