Youth Work Alliance Wales (YWAW)

The contribution of youth work to the Programme for Government in Wales

November 2013

Background

The *Youth Work Alliance (Wales)*, is an independent forum whose membership includes representatives from the *Wales Principal Youth Officers' Group* (PYOG), the *Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services* (CWVYS) and *Education and Training Standards Committee Wales* (ETS). YWAW works strategically to promote non-formal and informal learning opportunities via youth work practice in line with the youth work *National Occupational Standards* (NOS) and *Youth Work in Wales: Principles & Purposes*, which sets out the key principles which underpin youth work delivery in Wales.

Purpose of this paper

This paper seeks specifically to identify the broader Welsh Government (WG) policies and demonstrate where and how youth work does/can make a significant contribution to the achievement of those policies by improving the life chances of young people aged 11-25. It is not the purpose of this paper to identify new areas or scope of operation for youth work, but to highlight the role it currently undertakes, **as a specific form of work with young people**, in contributing to and complementing WG policy.

What is youth work?

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.*" Youth work NOS.

Welsh Government policies

The overarching agreement of the current devolved government in Wales is the *Programme for Government,* the 'roadmap for the current Assembly term… representing a real commitment to delivery, and a move away from an approach to measuring success that placed too much emphasis on the amount of money spent, or the number of policies implemented, rather than the impact government is actually having on people's lives'.

The strands that make up Programme for Government consist of the following:

- Growth and Sustainable Jobs
- Public Services
- 21st Century Healthcare
- Education
- Supporting People
- Welsh Homes
- Safer Communities
- Equality
- Tackling Poverty
- Rural Communities
- Environment & Sustainability
- Culture & Heritage of Wales

The WG agenda is based on the principles of social justice, equality and rights.

WG delivers against these strands under the following topics and their related sub policies:

- Business and economy
- Children and young people
- Culture and sport
- Equality & Diversity
- Education & Skills
- Planning
- Statistics
- Environment and countryside
- Local government
- Older people
- Social Justice
- Health and social care
- Housing and community
- Improving public services
- International
- Sustainable Development
- Tourism
- Transport
- Welsh Language

Programme for Government - Where and how youth work contributes

Youth work with its unique methodology, principles and professional practice as defined by *Youth Work in Wales: Principles & Purposes*) provides the opportunity for it to be a key and major contributor to the sustainable development of Wales and the wellbeing of its future generations and thereby should be central to service provision with appropriate emphasis, support and resources.

In a complex and difficult environment, young people have the right to expect high-quality targeted, specialised and open access youth service opportunities, delivered by enthusiastic, well trained and professionally qualified youth workers.

Youth work is delivered through a variety of settings and methods e.g. centre-based work; street-based, outreach and mobile work; work with a broad range of members of the community; residential work; targeted provision for specific groups in a variety of environments including, for example schools, the youth justice system and health environments. As stated in *Youth Work in Wales: Principles & Purposes*, the five pillars of youth work in Wales are:

- Educative
- Expressive
- Participative
- Inclusive
- Empowering

Whilst disappointing that the Youth Service does not appear in the document, at macro level youth work directly and indirectly contributes across *WG Programme for Government* strands and topic areas, as can be seen in the table below.

THEME/KEY ACTIONS	CONTRIBUTES DIRECTLY	CONTRIBUTES INDIRECTLY	FOR EXAMPLE
Growth and Sustainable Jobs ➢ Supporting the economy and business ➢ Improving Welsh skills for employment ➢ Improving our infrastructure ➢ Creating a sustainable, low-carbon economy		✓	• Young people are able to take a leadership or supportive role through junior leader and peer education schemes. • Development of wider employment skill sets e.g. communication, team work, inter-personal skills, leadership skills • Young people encouraged to play a positive role in their communities
Public Services ➢ Supporting continuous improvement in our public services ➢ Ensuring that our funding supports stronger and more effective service delivery ➢ Securing effective collaboration between public services	✓		• Young people have a role in management and governance of many youth groups i.e. as trustees • Debates and discussions leading to improvements in services • Youth councils, advisory groups, local surveys • Visits to Parliament, the Senedd, and local council

THEME/KEY ACTIONS	CONTRIBUTES DIRECTLY	CONTRIBUTES INDIRECTLY	FOR EXAMPLE
Education ➢ Improving early years experiences ➢ Improving school attainment ➢ Developing Welsh medium education ➢ Improving further and higher education	✓		• Youth work is recognised as a form of learning outside of the traditional classroom environment, providing clear and tangible outcomes, including accredited learning • Personal and social development opportunities including social confidence, motivation and self-determination • Opportunities to learn team building and management skills • Chances to try things in a safe supportive environment • Young people are able to take a leadership or supportive role through junior leader and peer education schemes. • Experiences designed to broaden horizons, raise aspiration and develop resilience • Some youth organisations have the development of the Welsh language as an explicit objective

THEME/KEY ACTIONS	CONTRIBUTES DIRECTLY	CONTRIBUTES INDIRECTLY	FOR EXAMPLE
21st Century Health Care ➢ Improving health outcomes by ensuring the quality and safety of services is enhanced ➢ Improving access and patient experience ➢ Preventing poor health and reducing health inequalities		✓	• Healthy eating programmes • Time and location flexible sex and relationship education • Up-to-date and good quality information and advice
Supporting People ➢ Providing users and carers with a stronger voice and greater control over the services they receive ➢ Ensuring people receive the help they need to live fulfilled lives	✓		• Self esteem, anti bullying projects. • Open access/universal services open to all 11-25 year olds • Working with Young Carers programmes • Confidence - raising activities with young people • Development of resilience
Welsh Homes ➢ Increasing the supply and choice ➢ Improving quality ➢ Improving housing services and support		✓	• DIY projects, community painting and decorating, plays and concerts • Specialist youth organisation which work with homeless

THEME/KEY ACTIONS	CONTRIBUTES DIRECTLY	CONTRIBUTES INDIRECTLY	FOR EXAMPLE
Safer Communities ➢ Reducing the level of crime and fear of crime ➢ Reducing harm associated with substance misuse ➢ Reduction and prevention of youth offending ➢ Improving safety in communities	✓		• Learning "soft" skills and essential skills needed to sustain communities • Drug/alcohol awareness opportunities • Gaining an understanding of mutual support and the needs of others • Participation in positive activities • Environmental improvement projects • Duke of Edinburgh Award citizenship/volunteering
Equality ➢ Advance equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination ➢ More inclusive and cohesive communities	✓		• Promoting equality and diversity and challenging oppression is a central function of youth work • Intergenerational work • Lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender information and awareness • Disability awareness • Combating and challenging hate crime/extremism • Anti-discrimination practice • Developing self-esteem and resilience • Developing social inclusion

THEME/KEY ACTIONS	CONTRIBUTES DIRECTLY	CONTRIBUTES INDIRECTLY	FOR EXAMPLE
Tackling Poverty ➢ Tackling poverty and material deprivation ➢ Tackling worklessness and raising household income ➢ Improving the skills of young people and families ➢ Improving the health and educational outcomes of children, young people and families living in poverty	✓		• Providing opportunities to participate, regardless of background • Broadening horizons and raising aspirations by providing new and challenging experiences • Developing employability skills which encourage young people's progression • Sexual health awareness • Youth Work in schools - promoting the engagement of young people • Links with Communities First Action Plans • Contributing towards reducing teenage pregnancy statistics
Rural Communities ➢ A thriving rural community ➢ Ensuring rural communities have access to faster broadband speeds and new digital services ➢ Improving public services for rural communities	✓		• Youth services make a major contribution to rural society e.g. social inclusion through organisations such as the Wales Young Farmers' Clubs

THEME/KEY ACTIONS	CONTRIBUTES DIRECTLY	CONTRIBUTES INDIRECTLY	FOR EXAMPLE
Environment & Sustainability ➢ Living within environmental limits and acting on climate change ➢ Protecting healthy eco-systems ➢ Creating sustainable places for people		✓	• Environment projects, Youth Exchange • Outdoor activities: walking, camping, boating etc tree planting, gardening, area clean ups.
Culture & Heritage of Wales ➢ Widening access to our culture, heritage and sport and encouraging greater participation ➢ Strengthen the place of Welsh language in every day life	✓		• Eisteddfoddau, theatre workshops, youth exchanges • Events held through the medium of Welsh, production of Welsh medium literature • Delivery of youth work and training/learning opportunities through the medium of the Welsh language

Conclusion

Youth work is, and has the potential to be an even greater, key contributor to Wales' successful sustainable future via the powerful relationships built around a voluntary foundation and driven by the needs of the young person.

In the Programme for Government Annual report (June 2013), the First Minister identifies jobs, growth and tackling poverty as the top three priorities. He refers to the dramatically changing financial climate and new context we experience in facing these challenges.

The University of York, in research undertaken for the Audit Commission (2013), point to the "relatively inexpensive youth support projects (which) produce major public finance savings. This indicates that cuts in such programmes will result in very significant rises in public expenditure". They estimate that the average life-time cost of a young person not being in education, employment or training (NEET) is £104,300.

Whilst the Youth Service is recognised as carrying out excellent work in engaging with and progressing young people who have become disengaged, its wider role in offering activities and programmes for all young people is crucial in preventing young people reaching this position. Work via open access services plays a key role in ensuring that all young people engaging with youth work are positive contributors to our communities. Whilst underpinned by its core set of values, the Youth Service has a history of being flexible to the needs of young people and has a tradition of successful joint working between the voluntary and statutory sectors in improving outcomes for young people.