

I confirm that I have not used any AI tools in the research and creation of this assignment. I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated materials as my own work. I confirm that I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used, which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

Summary of Learning:

In this assignment, I will be exploring the main things that I have learned as a student on placement in Canolfan Elfed based in Queen Elizabeth High School.

Canolfan Elfed is a special needs education centre, focused on inclusion and giving an education to young people who cannot be in mainstream education (Canolfan Elfed, 2025). This includes my observations and learning about communication with young people with a range of special educational needs and additional needs, and the role of play in education. I will also evaluate the development of my skills in a youth worker role, while being in placement at Canolfan Elfed.

As someone who struggled to communicate and socialise as a young person, it has been an interesting learning experience being immersed in practice with various young people who communicate with a range of methods. These include young people who sign (with BSL or sign-along), young people who are non-verbal, and young people who use activities and games to socialise. As a practitioner, I have been working on learning sign language to communicate with those young people who use a version of sign. These include young people who are hearing impaired, deaf, and non-verbal. I have also found that when working with young people who are non-verbal or young people who sign, firstly attempting to communicate with them enables the young people to feel some level of comfort around you and lets them know that you acknowledge them and are looking out for them. This opens a line of communication to begin to have more conversations with them, to connect with them and build strong relationships with them. Some young people also like to use activities and games to open a line of

communication; for example, at a breaktime outside, one young person asked me to try bottle flipping with them and this took the pressure away from having a conversation by playing, and the young person started chatting to me because of that. The key to building a line of communication with young people is to make them feel safe and to make an effort to communicate with them in whichever way they would feel most comfortable. Using and recognising non-verbal communication goes a long way to building relationships with those young people in the workplace wherever that may be (Singh, 2024).

Another interesting aspect of this placement has been learning about the alternate curriculums, which means that education is accessible to more than the young people who can be in a mainstream education setting. As well as teaching GCSE and A-Level curriculums, there are WJEC Entry Pathways, the ASDAN curriculum and the Duke of Edinburgh awards that are used to give every young person in Canolfan Elfed an education that they can easily access. One thing that is encouraged as a part of the students' learning is independence as far as possible. Activities like cooking, litter-picking, and gardening are included in the learning as well as external activities such as work-based activities, work experience, enterprise opportunities, and bikeability. Activities like these encourage knowing their limits but also having a go at everything they are able to. The aspect of play in the students' learning is important in the young people's growth and development. There is the use of board games, card games like UNO, and jigsaw puzzles, and the use of the internet for websites like Blooket and Online maths games. Another way play is incorporated into the students' learning is through Paul Eugene's workout videos that aim to make physical exercise accessible to

ages and abilities. There is a place for play in education throughout all ages between two and eighteen (FUNDamentally Children, 2025).

Through being immersed in this placement, it has opened my mind to the realisation that some options for young people to engage in youth work may exclude some young people with additional needs. For example, some hearing impaired or deaf young people may be excluded due to no British Sign Language interpreters or no youth worker who knows BSL. This also applies to non-verbal young people who either sign or communicate in a different way. Obviously, there are special educational needs and additional needs that cannot be catered for in a general youth work setting. However, I think there may be a gap in many youth work provisions because of working with these young people with special educational needs and additional needs. This has led me to think about how we, as practitioners, can widen the outreach of youth work to more young people, to be more inclusive (Youth Work Review Group, 2022).

The skills that I have developed during this placement are resilience, better communication skills, increased patience, and how to empower young people in their learning more often, as well as how to help young people academically in addition to supporting their physical, mental, and emotional growth. This placement has helped me to increase my patience because tasks that would be done quickly in a mainstream setting, for example, take longer to do well due to the needs we are accommodating. This also links to building resilience as a professional practitioner. Being in a setting like the one in Canolfan Elfed increases your resilience and perseverance because as a

professional in a youth work and/or a school setting are expected to support young people through their personal, physical, emotional, mental and spiritual growth and everything else that comes with growing up into their teenage and young adult years. This can be draining for a professional, especially on days when plans are changed or when things are unable to go on as planned. This is because things and situations, even ones that you have planned to the last detail, may not go well or as planned; but as a professional practitioner, you have to carry on, adapt or try again. This also makes you a practitioner that is adaptable and flexible to change, which is a great skill to have as a practitioner in a field as unpredictable as youth work can sometimes be. This is also what makes problem-solving a great skill to be able to use as a youth worker in a professional setting. All of these skills, such as resilience, problem-solving, patience, and good communication, are all vital to becoming a professional and trustworthy youth worker (Social Care People, 2025).

In conclusion, this placement has had many learning opportunities for me and has been extremely insightful. It has given me new perspectives and skills to take forward in my practice in the future. This placement has also improved my confidence in learning and trying out new things and skills as well as giving me the opportunity to increase my communication skills, and therefore also gradually increasing my confidence in that area of skills as well.

Reference List:

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