

YOUTH WORK IN WALES: PRINCIPLES AND PURPOSES



INTRODUCTION



This document has been produced for the managers and trustees of youth organisations, politicians, local authority elected members and officers, practitioners, trainers, and people training to be youth workers. It has also been written for young people, those already involved in youth organisations as well as those wishing to find out more about the kinds of experience youth organisations can provide.

The main objective of the document is to set out the key principles which underpin youth work and to provide an overview of its nature, purposes and delivery. The content of the document applies specifically to youth work in Wales but is likely to be consistent with youth work principles, purposes and practice in other parts of the UK and in the Republic of Ireland.

The delivery of youth services provides a powerful mechanism for engaging with and listening to young people. In Wales, the 'Rights of Children and Young Persons Measure, 2011' strengthens and builds on the rights-based approach of the Welsh Government to making policy for children and young people in Wales. Welsh Ministers must have due regard to the rights in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) when making decisions about proposed new policies or legislation or about reviewing or changing existing policies. From 1 May 2014, Welsh Ministers must have due regard to the rights in the UNCRC whenever they use any of their legal powers or duties.

The National Youth Work Strategy for Wales (see Section 08, 'Signposts to Other Information') sets out national priorities for the Youth Service and for supporting young people in Wales.

Whilst the youth work sector in Wales recognises and contributes to a number of national policy priorities such as the National Youth Work Strategy for Wales, it seeks to respond to and inform policy on the basis of the values and principles set out in this document.

Youth Work in Wales: Principles and Purposes has been produced by representatives of the voluntary and local authority youth work sectors in Wales. A web-based version, designed primarily for young people, is available at www.cwvys.org.uk or www.wlga.org.uk

WHAT IS YOUTH WORK?

Youth work in Wales is based primarily on a voluntary relationship between young people and youth workers. The Youth Service is a universal entitlement, open to all young people within the specified age range 11-25.

Youth work respects the views and opinions of young people through their participation in the design, creation and establishment of services and provision which meet their needs and aspirations. Such provision is determined as a result of the participation of young people taking into account their requirements, desires, interests and aspirations.

Youth work provides or facilitates:

- places and relationships within which young people can enjoy themselves, feel secure, supported and valued, learn to take greater control of their lives, and recognise and resist the damaging influences which may affect them;

- non-formal, informal and structured educational opportunities and experiences which challenge both the institutions and young people themselves to enhance their personal, social and political development;
- access to relevant advice, information, support and guidance.

Good youth work provides all young people with opportunities, can support them through significant developments in their lives, assists them to understand their rights and encourages them to develop knowledge and skills.

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 National Occupational Standards

THE DELIVERY OF YOUTH WORK IN WALES

Youth work is provided through both the voluntary and local authority sectors and through a variety of youth work settings and methods.

Settings:

- centre-based work;
- street-based, outreach and mobile work;
- work with a broad range of members of the community, irrespective of age;
- residential work;
- targeted provision for specific groups in a variety of environments including, for example, schools, the youth justice system and health environments.

Methods:

- curriculum specialities like arts and culture, first aid, sport, etc;
- youth forums and councils;
- information, advice, guidance and counselling services;
- project work;
- group work;
- one to one work;
- the use of new technologies and media;
- opportunities for young people to be involved in decision-making processes;
- opportunities for volunteering in Wales, the UK and internationally.



Collaboration and partnership between organisations is often a key aspect of delivering youth work.

Although youth work is delivered by two distinct sectors, statutory and voluntary, the sectors work together to achieve the best possible outcomes for young people.

THE PRINCIPLES OF YOUTH WORK IN WALES



- Youth work is based on the voluntary engagement of young people.
- Young people should be empowered partners in the processes and opportunities that youth organisations provide.
- Youth work starts at whatever point young people are in their lives, regardless of circumstance, and recognises their potential.
- Fundamental to youth work are the principles of equality and inclusion.
- Youth work recognises that young people have rights and seeks to work in a rights-based way.
- Youth work recognises that young people have responsibilities and requirements placed upon them. Youth work seeks to help them address those responsibilities and requirements.
- Youth work is essentially focused on activity which is both informal and non-formal. Informal activity seizes opportunities that are not necessarily planned. Non-formal activity provides planned opportunities which lie outside formal systems such as school-based education. Both kinds of activity might lead to accreditation or recognition.
- The identification of youth work as a partnership with young people outside formal or legal requirements is an important element in securing the voluntary engagement of young people.
- Youth work has at its core the importance of providing safe environments for young people and of supporting the safety as well as the development and well-being of young people.

THE PURPOSES OF YOUTH WORK IN WALES

Youth work in Wales is intended to:

- promote and actively encourage opportunities for all young people in order that they may fulfil their potential as empowered individuals and as members of groups and communities;
- support young people through significant changes in their lives and assist them to understand their responsibilities;
- support young people to be able to understand and exercise their rights;
- encourage young people to gain and develop knowledge, understanding, attitudes and values and to make constructive use of their skills, resources and time;
- promote opportunities and access for all young people whatever their race, gender, sexual identity, language, religion, disability, age, background or personal circumstances;
- challenge oppression and inequality;
- support and enable young people in keeping themselves safe.

Youth work in Wales also:

- recognises the importance and value of the Welsh language and the need to promote its use;
- recognises that Wales is a country with a diversity of languages and cultures;
- recognises the importance of sustainable development and equips young people with the knowledge and skills to play their part in shaping the future;
- encourages young people as local, national and global citizens to exercise their responsibilities;
- encourages young people to protect their own rights and those of others.

THE FIVE PILLARS OF YOUTH WORK IN WALES

Youth work has a value base which is grounded in respect for young people and in the principles of inclusion and equal opportunity. Through its voluntary relationship with young people it offers opportunities for learning that are:

EDUCATIVE

Enabling young people to gain the skills, knowledge, understanding, attitudes and values needed for their own personal development and fulfilment and as a means of contributing to society as members of groups and communities, locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally.

EXPRESSIVE

Encouraging and enabling young people to express their understanding and knowledge and their ideas, opinions, emotions and aspirations through a broad range of creative and often challenging opportunities.

PARTICIPATIVE

Encouraging and supporting young people to become partners in, and share responsibility for, the opportunities, learning processes and decision-making structures which affect their own and other people's lives and environments.



INCLUSIVE

Enabling young people to develop knowledge, understanding and positive attitudes and behaviour in relation to:

- › racial, social, and cultural identity and diversity;
- › heritage;
- › languages and the value of one's own and other languages;
- › citizenship;
- › respect for other people's choices.

EMPOWERING

Equipping young people with the understanding and skills to enable them to exercise their rights including:

- › recognising that all young people have rights and that this implies respecting the rights of others;
- › supporting young people to carry out their responsibilities as citizens and members of their communities;
- › encouraging young people to engage with the personal, social and political issues which affect their lives and the lives of others and to develop qualities of leadership.

DELIVERING HIGH QUALITY YOUTH WORK

To deliver the Five Pillars of Youth Work (see Section 06), organisations and youth workers use a range of processes including:

- › developing relationships and trust;
- › emphasising the role of the young person in the processes of youth work;
- › assessing need;
- › providing information;
- › referring young people to other provision as appropriate whilst offering continued support if required;
- › mentoring;
- › advocating;
- › challenging;
- › building personal and social development and resilience;
- › planning, monitoring and evaluation.

Youth work organisations and all engaged in youth work are expected to assess outcomes and impact and to have systems for the planning, monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of their work with young people. Organisations and individual youth workers should be able to use self-assessment and self-assessment tools to identify positive benefits for young people and to reflect on and develop their practice.

In developing and evaluating their work, providers should take account of the National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Youth Work, the Participation Standards and the Information Standards. Links to these standards have been provided in Section 09, Signposts to Other Information.

Youth work seeks to implement these processes whilst ensuring the health, well-being and safety of young people.



EWFC AND YOUTH WORK

On 1 April 2017, qualified youth workers and youth support workers joined school and FE teachers, school and FE learning support workers, and work-based learning practitioners on the EWC list of registered practitioners, making the EWC the largest professional body in Wales with over 80,000 registrants.

This means that Wales is one of the few countries in the world that regulates qualified youth workers and youth support workers, bringing their skills and expertise in line with those working in formal education and valuing their contribution to education in Wales.

By bringing non-formal and in-work education in line with formal education, we are enhancing the status of the often overlooked profession of youth work and the important role that it plays in young people's wellbeing and education.

The youth work landscape in Wales is rich and varied, with local authority services and voluntary organisations supporting our work to raise the profile of the profession and to give the youth work sector and the young people they work with a voice. Our unique data and insight into the youth work sector can then be used for workforce planning and development.

How we support youth work in Wales

Being registered with the EWC has many benefits. All registrants get free access to the Professional Learning Passport, an online platform which allows users to record and reflect on their professional development by uploading documents, videos, presentations, and audio files as you progress through your career.

Registrants can also share best practice with colleagues.

It includes free access to EBSCO, an online database of over 4,500 academic education journals and e-books.

We also offer full support and guidance through bespoke presentations and workshops where registrants can learn more about their rights and the professional conduct expected of them. Our popular good practice guides on topics such as using social media responsibly are available on our website.

Registrants can apply for the EWC research bursary. Those interested in conducting close-to-practice research as part of their career development, and meet the criteria can be awarded up to £2,000 in funding.

Anyone wishing to work as a qualified youth worker or qualified youth support worker in Wales must be registered with EWC. Contact us on 029 2046 0099 or e-mail registration@ewc.wales for more information.

Follow us on Twitter using @ewc_cga and visit our website at ewc.wales.

SIGNPOSTS TO OTHER INFORMATION

Interim Youth Work Board for Wales

E-mail: youthworkboard@gov.wales

Welsh Government Youth Engagement Branch

www.gov.wales

Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services (CWVYS)

www.cwvys.org.uk

Principal Youth Officers' Group (Wales)

www.wlga.wales/principal-youth-officers-group-wales

Education and Training Standards Wales

www.etswales.org.uk

Education Workforce Council

www.ewc.wales

Estyn

www.estyn.gov.uk

Association of Youth Workers Cymru

www.aywc.co.uk/

Youth Resource Base

www.youthworkwales.org.uk

National Occupational Standards

www.youthworkwales.org.uk

Code of Professional Conduct and Practice for Registrants

www.ewc.wales

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

www.childrensrights.wales/index.php

National Participation Standards for Children and Young People in Wales

www.gov.wales

Children's Commissioner for Wales

www.childcomwales.org.uk

Learning & Skills Act 2000 (Section 123)

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/21/contents

Welsh Government 'Rights of Children and Young Persons Measure' 2011

www.legislation.gov.uk/mwa/2011/2/contents

Welsh Youth Parliament

www.youthparliament.wales/

National Academy of Educational Leadership

www.nael.cymru

Education Act 1996

www.legislation.gov.uk

Future Generations Commissioner for Wales

www.futuregenerations.wales