
The Value of Youth Work Training

A sustainable model for Wales

October 2020



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- ⬆ independent specialist colleges
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Introduction

This report is in response to a request in the Minister for Education's annual remit letter to Estyn for 2019-2020, in which the Welsh Government asked us to undertake a review of the quality of the professional training available in Wales to meet the challenges of changed national youth work environment and policy developments. The Welsh Government has recently highlighted the importance of youth work and released a new Youth Work Strategy for Wales (2019c) in 2019.

The purpose of this report is to evaluate the quality of youth work training and the appropriateness of the training to provide youth workers with the skills they need to fulfil their role and meet the demands of modern youth work in all its forms.

In the report, we discuss the importance of youth work as a profession and the issues surrounding registration of workers. We also consider the contribution that youth work, wherever it is delivered, makes to supporting and empowering young people in their personal development and in becoming informed citizens.

This report follows on from our thematic report 'Youth Support Services in Wales: The Value of Youth Work' (Estyn, 2018). We also refer to progress made against recommendations in our previous report, 'A Survey of professional qualification training for youth workers in Wales' (Estyn, 2010). The report is based on the evidence base in Appendix 2. We carried out the research for this survey prior to the lockdown imposed as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. Throughout the report we use quotes from some of the 104 youth work students who completed our online survey.

Background

Estyn inspects youth work training under the Learning and Skills Act (2000) and the The Youth and Community Work Education and Training (Inspection) (Wales) Regulations 2006.

Youth work training at levels 2 and 3 is provided in Wales by Addysg Oedolion Cymru|Adult Learning Wales (AOC/ALW) and at degree and MA level by four higher education institutions:

- Cardiff Metropolitan University
- Glyndŵr University
- University of Wales Trinity Saint David
- University of South Wales

Until 2015, the Open University offered a BA Honours in Youth Work through a distant learning route in Wales. The university is no longer recruiting to the programme, although at the time of this survey they were supporting two students

through to the completion of their degrees. The Open University offers a degree in Childhood and Youth Studies, but we have not included it in this report as it is not a professional qualification for youth work, nor is it a Joint Negotiating Committee recognised qualification.

Urdd Gobaith Cymru offers a small number of apprenticeships at Level 2 and Level 3 for youth workers through the medium of Welsh. Several local authority youth services across Wales also offer apprenticeship routes for youth work training at Level 2 and Level 3. A very few voluntary youth projects offer apprenticeship training at Level 2. We do not comment on any of the apprenticeship routes in this report. Formal apprenticeship routes are an area that require further investigation.

Professional qualifications for youth work training are endorsed by Education Training Standards Wales (ETS), a body funded by the Welsh Government. Qualifications are recognised by the UK Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC). The ETS plays an active role in endorsing the standards of youth work qualifications. It also acts as an important link between the education and training providers, the Welsh Government and the profession.

The All Wales 'Coherent Route' for youth work training in Wales (ETS, 2015) sets out a blueprint for the training of youth workers in Wales. It maps the qualification levels from Level 2 to degree and master's level <https://www.etswales.org.uk/wales-coherent-route>. Youth workers are required to register with the Education Workforce Council and need a recognised qualification at Level 2 or 3 to register as a 'youth support worker' and at Level 6 to register as a 'youth worker'.

Youth work training in Wales is based on the legal definitions of youth work and follows the principles of the youth work curriculum statement for Wales (Wales Youth Agency, 1992). It is underpinned by the Youth Work in Wales Principles and Purposes (Youth Work in Wales Review Group, 2018) to deliver learning opportunities that are 'inclusive' as well as educative, expressive, participative and empowering. Training is mapped against the ETS National Occupational Standards (NOS).

'Youth work' is a recognised methodology for working with young people, which is underpinned by National Occupational Standards (NOS), regulated professional qualifications, and has a defined ethical base. Youth work builds on the establishment of good working relationships with young people in which their needs are put first, irrespective of whether the contacts with young people are voluntary or mandatory. The definition of young people is those between the ages of 11 and 25 years old.

The legislative basis for youth work and youth support services is provided through education legislation, beginning with the Education Act 1944. The Learning and Skills Act 2000 and Extending Entitlement: support for 11 to 25 year olds in Wales, Directions and Guidance (Welsh Assembly Government, 2002) form the basis for the services provided in Wales.

'Youth support services' are educational services, defined under the Learning and Skills Act 2000 (Great Britain, 2000), and paid for by direct or indirect public

funding. They include services provided in partnership with other agencies such as schools and voluntary sector organisations.

The National Youth Work Strategy for Wales 2014-2018 stated that: *“Youth work provision is offered through youth services. Youth work is an intrinsic element of youth support services, which seek to ensure that all 11 to 25-year-olds, have the services, support and experiences they need to achieve their potential. In Wales, the youth service is a universal entitlement, open to all young people. Through the Learning and Skills Act 2000, section 123, Welsh Ministers have directed local authorities to provide, secure the provision of, or participate in, the provision of youth support services”* (Welsh Government, 2014, p.4).

Youth work takes place in a variety of different settings. In this report we refer to the statutory sector, which includes non-education services, and the voluntary sector (sometimes referred to as the third sector). This sector includes, for example, voluntary youth groups and not-for-profit organisations such as housing associations. Youth workers often work as either voluntary or paid workers in this sector.

In 2016, the Children, Young People and Education (CYPE) Committee of the National Assembly for Wales (now Senedd Cymru - Welsh Parliament) commissioned an inquiry into youth work. The inquiry report [‘What type of youth service does Wales want?’](#) (National Assembly for Wales, 2016) found weaknesses in the Welsh Government’s strategic approach, including unrealistic expectations and limited engagement with stakeholders. The inquiry raised concerns about the funding and the impact of reduced resources on youth provision across Wales, and how this might affect particular groups of young people, including Welsh speakers. The Committee’s report made 10 recommendations for improvement around engagement, mapping youth provision across Wales, funding and reviewing the national strategy for youth work.

In March 2018, the Minister for the Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning published a written statement ‘Youth Work in Wales: Moving forward together’ (Welsh Government, 2018), which renewed the Welsh Government’s commitment to ensuring that every young person is supported to overcome barriers to reaching their full potential. The Minister acknowledged the importance of high quality youth work delivered through the medium of Welsh and English to support this aim.

In 2016, the Welsh Government set up a Youth Work Reference Group which met regularly to support the development of a new strategic direction for youth work. This group was replaced in 2018 with the Interim Youth Work Board, which is mandated until 2021 and is developing and overseeing youth work policy. The board published the Youth Work Strategy for Wales (Welsh Government, 2019c). This strategy was co-developed with young people and the sector. The board has a number of strategy participation groups (SPGs) and special focus sub-groups. The Workforce Development SPG is carrying out research into all aspects of youth work training in Wales.

The five key aims outlined in the Youth Work Strategy for Wales are:

- Young people are thriving

- Youth work is accessible and inclusive
- Voluntary and paid professional youth work staff are supported throughout their careers to improve their practice
- Youth work is valued and understood
- A sustainable model for youth work delivery (Welsh Government, 2019c)

The Welsh Government also published an Implementation Plan (2019a) that sets out arrangements for delivering the youth work strategy. The Workforce Development SPG is working on the strategy aim: ‘voluntary and paid professional youth work staff are supported throughout their careers to improve their practices’ and considering a workforce development plan for the sector.

Main findings

- 1 Youth work qualifications equip students with a sound background in youth work practice and provide them with the skills they need to carry out their profession. The youth work sector has made valuable progress against nearly all of the recommendations in 'A survey of professional qualification training for youth workers in Wales (Estyn, 2010). See Appendix 1.
- 2 Youth work students generally achieve well even though many have entered higher education from non-traditional education and social backgrounds, and may have faced significant challenges in their lives. Their own experiences often mean that they can understand and empathise with the issues affecting young people. Many progress from Level 3 to degree level and a few move onto achieving higher degrees.
- 3 Youth work training programmes align well with the five key aims outlined in the Youth Work Strategy for Wales 2019. Course content at all levels has a suitable balance between academic and practical training and gives students the skills they need to carry out jobs in a wide variety of youth and community work settings.
- 4 Addysg Oedolion Cymru|Adult Learning Wales and higher education institutions (HEIs) work well together to offer appropriate qualifications and worthwhile opportunities for students to progress to courses at a higher level, up to and including post-graduate courses at Level 7. A few employers offer apprenticeship routes for youth work training.
- 5 Many learners complete their courses successfully and attain their qualifications. Nearly all students provide sound explanations about why they are following their programmes of study and are highly motivated. Many refer to the transformative effect that youth work had on their own lives and display a passionate and genuine desire to influence young peoples' lives for the better. They also develop a broad range of other skills such as literacy, numeracy and digital skills alongside the core course content.
- 6 The standard of teaching and instruction is effective across the various providers. Students praise the experience, the competence of staff, and the educational and pastoral support provided across all course providers. Youth and community work tutors are experienced and qualified youth workers, who use their practical experiences in the field to enhance their teaching and academic input. They bring commitment and passion to their role, as well as a sound understanding of partnership working, sector developments and international youth work.
- 7 Work placements are a vital element of youth work training programmes. They provide the practical setting in which students can use the theoretical aspects of their course and reflect on their own practice under the supervision of others. All HEIs have taken effective steps to improve the availability, suitability and supervision of work placements, but work placements remain a challenge due to fluctuations in location and demand. Most students feel that work placements are relevant and

beneficial to their professional and academic development. Many students organise their own placements and this can lead to a few experiencing issues regarding sourcing placements, the availability of qualified supervision staff, and the support offered to them.

- 8 Leadership and management in institutions offering youth work courses are effective. All providers have robust quality management processes in place for the management of youth and community work courses. These processes often set a good example to other courses within the university. Faculty and course managers use a variety of information and scrutinise data to manage the quality and effectiveness of courses. They have quality systems and plans in place to document the management processes. Student outcomes are subject to robust external moderation for academic performance and scrutiny by Education Training Standards Wales (ETS). Most providers have effective measures in place to assure the quality of work placements and student progression during the placement. All are aware of the challenges work placements present and work hard to improve them.
- 9 Institutions providing youth work training have increased their use of Welsh, although inconsistencies and common issues remain throughout Wales. Institutions have more Welsh documentation than previously and enable students to submit assignments in Welsh. Welsh-speaking students have appropriate opportunities to use their Welsh in work placement settings, but opportunities to study in Welsh remain limited, and bilingual learning remains underdeveloped in the youth work sector.
- 10 All HEIs now integrate elements of teaching with other faculties within their institution. This sharing of theory and practice across specialisms develops understanding of the contexts in which other professionals work with young people, and support them to become confident, informed citizens.
- 11 There are similarities between youth work skills and methodology and the new ways of working set out in the Curriculum for Wales 2022 (Welsh Government, 2020a). HEIs are preparing youth work students for the contribution that they can make to formal and informal education by exploring relevant practice and policy documents such as Successful Futures (Donaldson, 2015) in course modules at undergraduate and post-graduate levels.
- 12 The close involvement of ETS with the sector and adherence to UK Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) standards ensures that youth workers are qualified and trained to the highest professional levels. Youth work training gives practitioners a very wide range of skills for working with young people. These skills reflect the five pillars of youth work: educative, expressive, participative, inclusive and empowering (Youth Work in Wales Review Group, 2018) and equip workers to carry out youth work in a wide variety of statutory and non-statutory settings. Professional training also equips youth workers with the skills to work in managerial positions. However, currently there is no regular audit of the skills youth workers have or are required by the wide variety of employers.
- 13 Many secondary schools are now beginning to see the value of having a youth worker on the staff, but in many cases they work only with challenging young people

and are seen as aids to behaviour management, or support for young people with 'problems', and are often undervalued as educators in their own right.

- 14 The number of formally registered youth workers and youth support workers underestimates the number of these workers delivering youth work across the full variety of settings. Only 429 youth workers and 692 youth support workers are registered with the EWC at 1 March 2020 (EWC, 2020). Some of the reasons for this underestimate include: the list of qualifying qualifications is inaccurate and out of date, youth workers who have not completed their degree cannot register, and youth workers in certain organisations are not required to register. The EWC is working with the Welsh Government, ETS, the Interim Youth Work Board and the Workforce Development Strategy Participation Group to resolve these issues.
- 15 After training, youth workers are not required, as teachers are, to complete a probationary year, nor are they entitled to professional learning opportunities as a right. The lack of a qualified youth worker status (QYWS) equivalent to qualified teacher status (QTS) for teachers means that youth workers do not benefit in the same way as teachers from ongoing training for and recognition of their professional skills. There is also a lack of funding to support ongoing training opportunities. Senior youth workers are not included in national or regional educational leadership programmes and this hampers the development of leadership within the profession.
- 16 Local authorities play an important role in supporting and developing youth work training. However, they do not always have the resources to support the development of courses or to contribute to the training of youth workers (both statutory and voluntary) including those in non-education settings in the local authority.

Recommendations

The Welsh Government should:

- R1 Continue to work with all partners in the youth work sector to support the development of youth work and youth work training, including leadership capacity
- R2 Continue to work with the EWC and ETS to update and improve the registration arrangements for youth workers to ensure that youth work is treated in the same way as other education professions
- R3 Commission a full skills audit for the sector, to include skills needed by employers and the existing skills of both youth workers and youth support workers registered with the EWC and those who carry out youth work and are not registered
- R4 Investigate the provision of formal apprenticeship routes for the training of youth workers and youth support workers
- R5 Work with the providers of youth work training and other relevant organisations to increase the use of the Welsh language in youth work training.

Providers of youth work training should:

- R6 Make sure that youth workers and students from other professions working with young people have opportunities to train together
- R7 Improve the availability, variety and quality of work placements

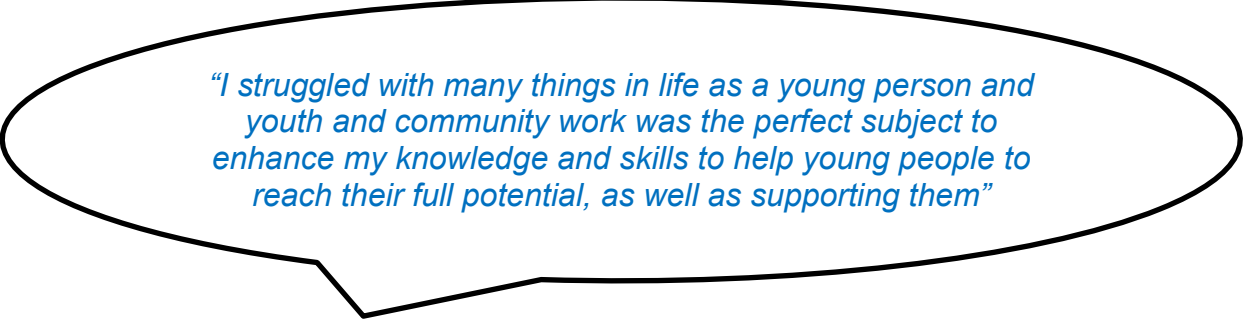
Local authorities should:

- R8 Encourage schools to recognise the specialist skills and professional knowledge youth workers bring to supporting the development of the new curriculum
- R9 Support and contribute to the development of courses for the training of statutory and voluntary youth workers, including those in non-education settings

Regional consortia should:

- R10 Explore ways to include youth workers alongside teachers in professional learning and educational leadership training opportunities

Youth work training qualifications: Level 2 and Level 3 - youth support worker



"I struggled with many things in life as a young person and youth and community work was the perfect subject to enhance my knowledge and skills to help young people to reach their full potential, as well as supporting them"

The courses available through Addysg Oedolion Cymru|Adult Learning Wales (AOC|ALW)

- 17 AOC|ALW offers youth work (youth support worker) qualifications at Level 2 and Level 3 and continuous professional development training units to voluntary and statutory youth work providers across Wales. Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications are generally delivered as units in the community, although in a few cases they now form part of foundation courses within higher education (HE) provision.
- 18 The content of AOC|ALW youth work training programmes aligns well with the five key aims outlined in the Youth Work Strategy for Wales, and contributes particularly well to aim three, that 'voluntary and paid professional youth work staff are supported throughout their careers to improve their practice' (Welsh Government, 2019c, p.9).
- 19 AOC|ALW offers a range of courses validated by the awarding body Agored Cymru. These include:
 - Award in Youth Work Practice Level 2
 - Certificate in Youth Work Practice Level 2
 - Certificate in Youth Work Practice Level 3
 - Level 3 Diploma in Youth Work Practice (including Level 3 Youth Support Worker qualification and continuous professional development)
- 20 AOC|ALW also deliver other ETS endorsed units at Level 3 to enhance continuous professional development or as add-ons to the youth support worker qualifications. For example, they deliver units on supporting young people with mental health problems, detached and outreach work, and supporting young LGBTQ+ people.
- 21 According to AOC|ALW's data, they provided approximately 80 courses in 2018-2019. This is almost double the number held during 2016-2017 and was in response to increased demand, due in part to workers needing to register with the EWC since March 2017. Students achieving the Award in Youth Work Practice Level 2 must register with the EWC if they apply for paid youth support work posts in local

authorities, schools, further education establishments in Wales and voluntary bodies. We discuss registration in depth in a later chapter.

- 22 The table below shows AOC|ALW's data showing the increase in the numbers of learners registering on Award in Youth Work Practice Level 2 and the Certificate in Youth Work Practice Level 3 in order to achieve the Youth Support Worker qualification.

Table 1: Number of learners and teaching activities (units completed)

	Number of learners		Number of teaching activities	
	Award in YW Practice L2	Certificate in YW Practice L3	Award in YW Practice L2	Certificate in YW Practice L3
2016-2017	180	62	229	255
2017-2018	224	90	854	439
2018-2019	281	92	1058	361

Source: Unpublished data from Addysg Oedolion Cymru|Adult Learning Wales

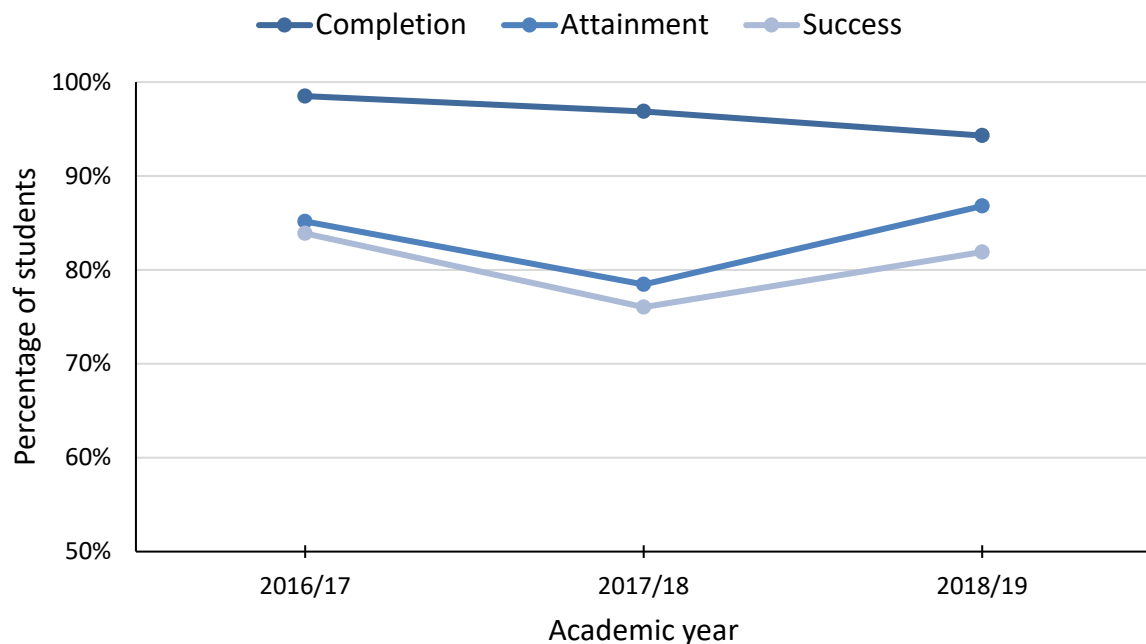
- 23 According to AOC|ALW's student questionnaire completed in February 2020, many students are female with only a few male students. A majority gain qualifications for employment purposes, although a few use them to progress into higher learning. Students who use the qualification for employment purposes do so in a wide range of settings in the statutory and voluntary sectors. These include settings that provide targeted support for black and ethnic minority young people, and for young people with mental health issues.
- 24 AOC|ALW works in partnership with statutory local authority youth work providers across Wales to provide youth support worker qualifications for their staff. In addition, it has partnership agreements with the Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services (CWVYS) to provide training for the voluntary sector. There is a large demand for training across the voluntary sector in Wales. Courses are often made available to youth workers working in other sectors such as youth justice. As a result, there is a diverse mix of students attending courses. This enables them to share different experiences from a variety of youth work backgrounds and to learn from each other.
- 25 The AOC|ALW delivery model (offering courses at a wide variety of locations throughout Wales and at different times including during the evenings), is particularly suited to youth work training. It increases the accessibility of these courses to prospective students who are often already employed or volunteering in youth settings. Students may also be engaged in other occupations where they work with young people, such as the police force, and the model enables these students to access youth work qualifications that will help them in their work.
- 26 AOC|ALW also works in partnership with all four of the HEIs in Wales that deliver youth work qualifications. These HEIs host the Level 2 and Level 3 youth support

worker courses that offer the opportunity for students to receive tuition on HEI sites. This enables students to consider progression into higher education courses at Level 4 and above. This is a particularly important feature of the training as many of the students on these courses come into learning from non-traditional backgrounds and would otherwise not have entered into higher education. The partnership delivery on HEI sites helps to dispel the mystique of university learning and to widen participation in higher education. However, a lack of available funding often hampers learners' progress into higher education course at level 4 and above, and there are ongoing discussions between the youth sector and HEIs about how this can be overcome.

The quality of provision in AOC|ALW and the student experience

- 27 Overall, students receive useful and relevant advice and guidance from AOC|ALW tutors before enrolling to ensure that the training programme matches their professional needs. Nearly all of these students already work in youth work settings in the voluntary or statutory sector or in allied services for young people. AOC|ALW has a strong, long-running partnership with CWVYS and the Welsh Local Government Association's Principal Youth Officers Group that ensures they understand the training needs of learners. Following enrolment, learners complete individual learning plans. They review them regularly with tutors and discuss options for progression and skills development specific to their educational and professional development needs.
- 28 Many learners complete their courses successfully and gain their qualifications. Individual year data does not always reveal the full picture of successful completion as students are, under awarding body and ETS regulations, permitted to complete within a two-year period. This completion period provides a useful opportunity for students to complete their qualification over a longer period, which helps those students facing personal challenges or those who have been out of education for some time. This also means that students who are already in employment have more flexibility and time to complete their studies. There is however a decrease in the number of students completing their courses over a three-year period.

Figure 1: Addysg Oedolion Cymru|Adult Learning Wales National Delivery Youth Work - Completion, Attainment and Success rates



Source: Unpublished data from Addysg Oedolion Cymru|Adult Learning Wales

- 29 Many learners make good progress during their studies and gain in confidence. They improve their ability to analyse their work and practice and to reflect on how to improve. Nearly all develop their digital literacy skills through accessing and using electronic systems and resources.
- 30 These courses develop students' knowledge of youth work theory as well as embedding the values required to practise successfully as a youth worker or youth support worker. Courses also include other units including safeguarding, e-safety, adolescence, working in local community, legislation and policies that shape youth work practice (locally, nationally, globally), communication skills, group work skills, working with challenging behaviour skills, project planning and delivery skills, reflective practice skills, and supervision skills. The flexible delivery model supports ongoing professional development. For example, CWVYS encourages trustees of smaller youth work organisations to follow individual training units, especially for safeguarding.
- 31 Courses enable learners to reflect on theory in the classroom with peers and tutors, and then apply it practically on work placements. The way that courses are structured and timetabled means that students can progress seamlessly from Level 2 to Level 3 at times and locations convenient to the students.
- 32 Work placements are an integral part of courses. AOC|ALW youth support worker certificate qualifications include 100 hours of learning and practice which fulfils the ETS requirements for entry to higher education. Students undertake 35 hours of practice at Level 2 and 65 hours of practice at Level 3. This allows learners without A levels to apply for entry to higher education at Level 4 having fulfilled necessary

qualifications, including 100 hours of practice. This makes higher education accessible to learners who have returned to learning after a gap or have not pursued an academic route in the past.

- 33 AOC|ALW has increased the number of tutors employed to meet the increased demand for courses. Tutors are qualified and experienced youth workers who teach and also support students on work placements. The provider gives strong support to students returning to education. Many students identify as having additional learning needs, though this is often due to a lack of confidence. Tutors support those with particular needs, for example through literacy and numeracy support, and help all learners to gain confidence.
- 34 AOC|ALW follows the quality assurance processes of further education provision. Leaders clearly identify areas to improve the quality of students' educational and practical experiences, and their completion rates. Recent actions for improvement include providing useful extra support to tutors teaching larger groups, strengthening recruitment processes and initial assessment to ensure that prospective students understand the expectations of their chosen course of study, and improving how to assess the level of any extra support required

Youth work training qualifications: Degree and post-graduate level

"I decided to join the youth and community course because I have witnessed first-hand, how much of an impact youth workers can make to a young person's life. I wanted to help young people as much as the youth workers helped me when I was younger."

Degree and MA courses

- 35 Four HEIs in Wales offer ETS-endorsed and JNC-recognised youth work programmes at Levels 4 to 7. BA Honours Youth and Community Work programmes at Levels 4 to 6 are offered at:
 - Cardiff Metropolitan University
 - Wrexham Glyndŵr University
 - University of Wales Trinity Saint David
 - University of South Wales
- 36 Cardiff Metropolitan University and Wrexham Glyndŵr University also offer a Foundation Year, which includes the Level 2 and Level 3 youth work qualifications. University of Wales Trinity Saint David has put in place an integrated four-year foundation degree from September 2020.
- 37 Four HEIs offer endorsed post-graduate qualifications at Level 7:
 - Cardiff Metropolitan University – Post-graduate Diploma in Youth and Community Work and MA Youth and Community Work; they also offer an MA Community Practice (this is not a professionally endorsed programme)
 - Wrexham Glyndŵr University – Post-graduate Diploma in Youth and Community Studies and MA Youth and Community Studies
 - University of Wales Trinity Saint David – Post-graduate Diploma and MA in Youth and Community Work
 - University of South Wales – MA Working for children and young people (Youth Work Initial Qualifying) incorporating the Postgraduate Diploma Youth and Community Work
- 38 According to the ETS Wales *Annual Monitoring of Endorsed Youth Work Programmes Delivered in Wales 2018-19* (2020a), there was a small fall in student numbers studying on the BA programmes from 265 in 2017-2018 to 253 students in 2018-2019. This may be due in part to declining numbers on the Open University's courses. On all BA programmes, many students are female. However, there was an

increase in the proportion of male recruits during 2018-2019 to around a quarter of students. A minority of Level 4 recruits are under 21 years of age. The number of students gaining entry to courses through standard qualifications, for example A levels fell below half for the first time since 2011-2012. The number of students gaining entry with the Level 3 Youth Support Work qualification has risen from 6% to 24% during the same period. Many students complete Level 4, although this varies between providers. Nearly all students who complete Level 4 proceed to Level 5. A similar pattern occurs regarding completion at Level 5 and progression to Level 6. Most students in many of the providers complete and graduate at Level 6.

Table 2: Numbers of students on BA programmes

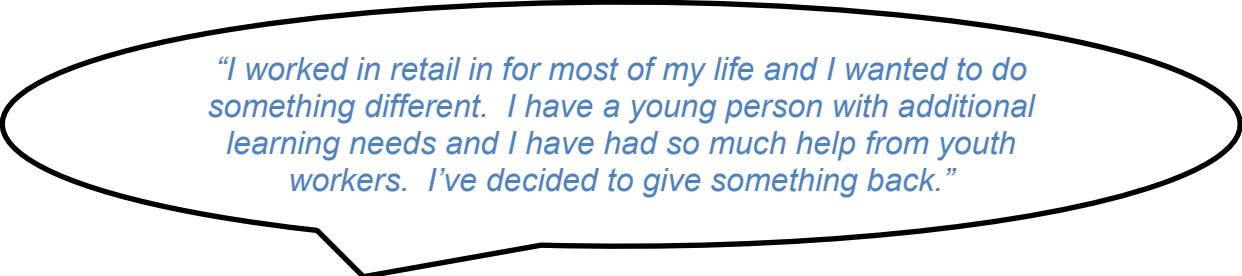
	Cardiff Met			Glyndŵr			OU			TSD			USW			Totals		
	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Level 4	45	41	35	22	24	16	4	1	N/A	13	17	27	22	23	26	106	106	104
Level 5	29	31	36	10	14	17	10	6	1	10	10	6	23	22	16	82	83	76
Level 6	45	30	34	17	10	9	4	8	1	12	11	10	38	17	19	116	76	73
Total	119	102	105	49	48	42	18	15	2	35	38	43	83	62	61	304	265	253

Source: ETS Wales Annual Monitoring of Endorsed Youth Work Programmes Delivered in Wales 2017–18 (2019a) and 2018-19 (2020a)

- 39 Figures from the ETS Wales *Annual Monitoring of Endorsed Youth Work Programmes Delivered in Wales Post-graduate Diplomas 2018-19* (2020b) show that there were 40 students, including 22 new recruits, studying Level 7 courses in the four HEIs offering such courses. Although these figures represent a downward trend, numbers overall remain high in comparison with previous reporting years. Many students undertake part-time study routes. Most recruits during 2018-2019 were female and, overall, around half are aged 30 years of age or older. For the first time during any monitoring period, all new recruits gained access to post-graduate courses after completing their degree. Of those students who completed their qualification, 89% achieved a Diploma and 11% the Master's Degree.
- 40 Students entering higher education to study youth and community work generally have different characteristics to those following most other courses. For example, they are often returning to education and will not have come straight from school. Institutions report higher numbers of students with additional learning or emotional needs than on similar degree programmes. Students following youth work training courses vary widely in age, life experience and prior academic achievement. Many do not have a traditional academic background, and often achieve well and gain qualifications later in life. Many have faced their own difficulties and challenges growing up and this makes them better able to understand and empathise with the issues facing young people. They enter courses with a real sense of moral purpose and an understanding of the needs of young people. Many demonstrate great commitment to their studies and fulfil their course requirements with determination and diligence.

- 41 The Foundation Certificate acts as an important pathway into higher education for learners who have come through non-traditional routes. The HEIs support students undertaking the Foundation Certificate to gain EWC recognised Youth Support Worker qualifications. The foundation year prepares students well to continue to higher-level courses if they wish to do so.
- 42 On all courses, students enhance their skills, knowledge and understanding beyond the requirements of the course. Many students develop a wide range of valuable transferable skills, including partnership working, interpersonal communication, group work and team-building skills throughout their study. Many develop and improve their public speaking and presentation skills as well as their literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills.
- 43 As well as achieving their main qualifications, students also benefit from their programmes in other ways. They improve their knowledge of the different settings in which youth work takes place and a few gain a valuable insight into how other countries provide youth work through exchange programmes. Others gain valuable insights from working alongside fellow students who work in challenging settings, such as prisons, youth offending teams and behaviour support teams, or with the homeless and with refugees. Through these learning experiences, youth work students display increasing levels of confidence and self-esteem. Many students develop and display a genuine passion for learning and express enthusiastically their desire to better themselves both educationally and professionally.

The quality of provision and the student experience



"I worked in retail in for most of my life and I wanted to do something different. I have a young person with additional learning needs and I have had so much help from youth workers. I've decided to give something back."

- 44 Most students state clearly that one of the strongest aspects of youth work training are the lecturers themselves. Since our report in 2010 (Estyn, 2010), the HEIs have made a positive effort to recruit more lecturers who have wide practical experience of working in the youth work sectors as well as having sound academic and teaching ability. During visits undertaken for this report, we saw very high quality teaching at degree and MA level.
- 45 Lecturers are as dedicated to youth work and to understanding of the needs of young people as their students. They are able to draw on their own wide range of skills and experience and use a mixture of practical application and theory to teach students the skills they need to work in difficult situations. They enhance and consolidate the skills that many of the students already possess. Students appreciate greatly this contextual authenticity from experienced practitioners who combine theory and practice effectively, and draw on their personal knowledge and professional experience to explain and exemplify the themes studied.

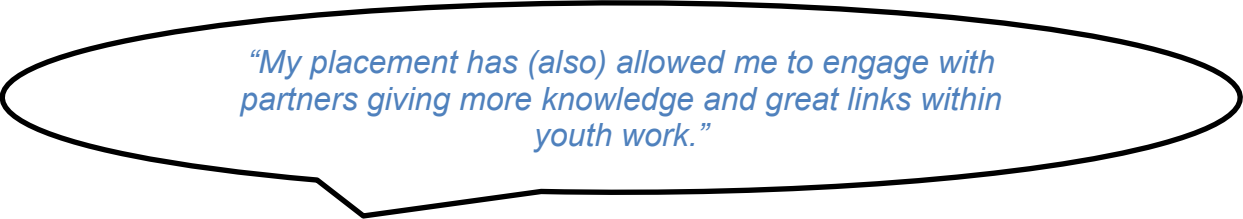
- 46 In all courses, students benefit from inputs by guest speakers, including visiting academics, experts from outside organisations such as the police, and lecturers teaching on other courses within the university such as social sciences, health and social care, education and youth justice. They also benefit from exchange visits with youth workers in Europe, and in a few cases they can undertake their youth work practice placements abroad. These activities enable them to gain insight into professional practice in a range of other professions working with young people in a wide variety of contexts.
- 47 Teaching is practical and designed to give students the skills they need as well as the underpinning knowledge base. For example, students in University of South Wales write applications to funding bodies to sustain an aspect of work with young people. They make a digital presentation before a panel of lecturers and a leader from a well-known charity. Their work is appraised by the panel and peer reviewed by fellow students. They benefit from hearing the views of others and from receiving advice from members of the panel who award actual funding.
- 48 Nearly all lecturers develop strong working relationships with their students and explain concepts clearly. They plan activities to review and build on prior learning, and offer valuable individual attention to students when needed. Nearly all lecturers facilitate robust and thought-provoking discussions with peers. They use a range of questioning techniques to elicit thoughtful responses from learners to help deepen their understanding. Lecturers are aware of the dynamics within their groups and draw less confident and more reticent students into conversations sensitively. As a result, many students make strong progress and enhance their critical awareness and reflective practice skills that are essential tools of the youth work profession.
- 49 Tutors often use their own youth work skills to support students. Regular tutorial sessions are an important feature of courses in all providers. Students who have returned to learning gain important support from one-to-one contact with course tutors. Students are often juggling work and family life alongside their academic study. Tutorials provide effective opportunities for students to discuss issues that are affecting them, explore their work placement issues, reflect on developmental opportunities, and further enhance self-reflection. Lecturers often refer students to more specialist support early in the course, such as literacy and numeracy development or support for pastoral issues.
- 50 Course documentation is thorough and conveys the providers' expectations clearly to students. Marking schemes give clear guidance to students to show what they need to do to achieve. Lecturers provide formative and summative feedback, both oral and written, that highlights relevant points and shows students what they need to do to improve the standard of their work. Feedback to students was an area for development in our last report and most universities have improved how they mark work and provide prompt feedback. In a very few cases, there are not enough teaching staff for the number of students, which delays timely feedback.
- 51 Providers use a range of assessment practices that includes written assessments, presentations and resource design. This diverse range of approaches, combined with the work placements, is particularly suitable for students from non-traditional

academic backgrounds and is successful in developing their potential as practitioners.



“The strongest features are the way in which assessments are given - there is variety such as presentations and written work and chances to be creative for example the scrapbook at Level 4. Also the chance to gain valuable experience in the field is brilliant. The lectures are fantastic and support is brilliant too - their knowledge is great.”

Work placements and placement supervision



“My placement has (also) allowed me to engage with partners giving more knowledge and great links within youth work.”

Work placements – availability and the importance of practical experience.

- 52 The most important area for improvement identified in our report on youth work in 2010 (Estyn, 2010) was the availability and quality of work placements. Practical work experience prepares students to work in the wide variety of statutory and voluntary settings where youth work takes place. It is important that placements reflect the realities of the jobs where students find employment.
- 53 Supervised and assessed work placements are a core activity of youth work training courses. The ETS Wales Endorsement Guidelines (2010) state that:
- **For Undergraduate Awards:** a course must include at least 800 hours of assessed professional practice across the programme, a minimum of 50% of this time spent in face-to-face contact work with young people aged 11 to 25.
 - **For Postgraduate Awards:** a course must include at least 300 hours of assessed professional practice across the programme, a minimum of 50% of this time spent in face-to-face contact work with young people aged 11 to 25.
- 54 Varying amounts of supervised practice activity and completion of activities within working environments are also a requirement for Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications.
- 55 The quality of the placement, the student experience on the placement, and the effectiveness of the work placement supervisor are key factors in the success of the learning experience of students at all levels of training.
- 56 It is still a challenge for providers, particularly at higher education level, to find the number of quality placements needed each year, but all the providers have committed considerable resources to this and have made substantial progress towards improving the availability and quality of placements.
- 57 Although HEIs have been creative in finding solutions, it is clear that that work placements still pose a challenge to faculty staff. Staff have made a great effort to solve the issues that arise yearly depending on the differing needs of individual cohorts of students. As placements are often hard to find, most students who are already in employment carry out one of their placements in their current workplace.
- 58 Local authority youth service provision, which was the main provider of placements in the past, offers fewer opportunities due to substantial reductions in provision. In a

few areas, local authority youth work managers and staff are now reluctant to offer placement opportunities because of their increased workloads.

- 59 Youth workers are now employed in a wider range of departments in local authorities such as housing, sport and leisure and social services, but the opportunities for work placements, and thus the benefits of learning from joint working, have not yet been extended to these services.
- 60 Many work placements now take place in voluntary sector settings and community projects, including housing associations. These settings offer students a broad experience as they cover a range of services and activities, not only to young people but to their families and the wider community. HEIs have strong links with CWVYS and the good relationship with voluntary settings often results in work placements in sport, the arts, and community based settings. In a few cases, this good collaboration has led to course programme development and changes to the curriculum.
- 61 In spite of the challenges, local authorities and voluntary settings generally work well with AOC|ALW and HEIs, and are broadly supportive in offering placement opportunities. Providers need to commit considerable resources and energy to hosting a placement and the education providers make sure that placement providers understand the commitment they are taking on. It is important that students are not seen by busy providers as just ‘another pair of hands’. For example, placement staff need time away from their usual duties to reflect on their own practice so they can ensure that the student experience is a valuable part of their youth work training.
- 62 Where youth work students are already employed in a less traditional setting, they are able to share their experience with fellow students through presentations and feedback sessions during their course. Good examples include a student who is employed in a woman’s prison and is able to share and discuss how she helps young women regain their self-confidence and supports them through their release panel interviews. Sharing this experience not only helps her to reflect on her own practice but broadens the experience of her fellow students and provides them with a practical work-based application of the skills they are developing.
- 63 The University of South Wales has developed an innovative way to provide accessible work placements for students. A voluntary youth work project is now based on the University’s Newport campus and uses university facilities in the evenings and at weekends. The project leader completed her professional training at the university and now works closely with university staff to develop opportunities for students as well as young people in the area.

Case study 1: University of South Wales

Context and strategy

The **Urban Circle** voluntary youth project in Newport is funded by the Arts Council and the local Police and Crime Commissioner. It is an arts, dance and performance-based project with a unique partnership with the University of South Wales. The project is run by an ex-student who is JNC qualified to MA level, and caters for a wide range of young people over the age of 13, many from very disadvantaged backgrounds or who are not in education, employment or training (NEET).

Since 2018, the project has used the facilities of the university campus in Newport three nights a week and at weekends. They now have access to the professional standard dance and performance areas instead of local community centre facilities. Much of the performance and events work is managed by the young people themselves. The project develops young people's talents, engenders a love of learning, and gives them skills and qualifications for employment. It also widens young people's horizons by giving them access to higher education (HE) facilities and institutions they would never normally experience.

Action and outcomes

Young people are responsible for setting up and managing performance events such as dance, music and drama, and awards ceremonies. They manage at least three events a year. Large events are attended by more than 600 young people who are recorded on a database and sent information about volunteering and learning activities. The project also enables students on youth and community work degrees and MA courses to use the project as a work placement setting and HE staff and qualified ex-students often work as supervisors to the trainees.

The project leader who started the project would not have realised that she could attend university if it were not for her connection with University of South Wales staff, who volunteer in youth work settings in the area and who have encouraged and supported her through her education. She understood that to achieve her potential she needed knowledge and qualifications and she now passes this wisdom on to other young people. The HE staff also continue to act as mentors and support for her as she deals with the increasingly complex issues that young people are facing including mental illness. She and the university have access to a large range of expert services to refer young people to.

Outcomes

This project is an excellent example of partnership working in the community and of the principle of educating and growing community leaders who lead by example and in turn educate the community around them. In this way, creative practitioners continue to drive change and improvement for young people.

- Most young people in the project were NEET but now have voluntary engagement with youth workers.
- Youth workers and students engage the young people using youth work values and principles.
- Over 100 young people a year gain qualifications in health and safety, dance and sports leadership, stewarding, and Level 1 and Level 2 youth work. One student is now on the first year of a degree qualification.
- Five students now have a degree as a result of working with Urban Circle.

The young people in the project gain self-confidence, leadership skills, an enthusiasm for learning and a realisation that through learning they can achieve their goals and secure employment.

The quality of placement supervision

- 64 In response to the recommendations from the last Estyn report, all HEIs have worked hard and been generally successful in improving the placement experience for students and partner providers. For example, the University of South Wales (USW) has appointed two placement co-ordinators who are responsible for finding placements, supporting the student's contact with a placement, and quality assuring the interactions between the placement supervisor and the student.
- 65 The quality of placement supervision is key to the success of the placement and to the student's learning. Generally, HEIs have improved the robustness of the placement agreement with partner providers since Estyn's 2010 report. All have worked to ensure that there is better quality management of placement activities and supervision in place.
- 66 All HEIs have comprehensive training programmes for placement supervisors which are valued by the supervisors and their employers as professional learning opportunities. These programmes include information about the National Occupational Standards, expectations for students at different stages in their degree course, an overview of course content and assignments required, theory about how students make progress, and practical arrangements about practice learning agreements and general procedures. A few HEIs still report that supervisors do not always take advantage of the training offered.
- 67 Many placements work well for both students and providers. Many placement providers report that arrangements benefit all partners. The setting gains fresh ideas and new ways of working from students and the student gains practical experience of working with young people. Placement arrangements also widen the list of partners working with lecturers and tutors to their mutual benefit. Placement settings gain a better understanding of university education and lecturers broaden their experience and keep up-to-date with developments in the field.
- 68 Most students learn a great deal from their placements. Those who are new to youth work gain valuable practical skills supported by the placement supervisor. Those who are already employed as youth workers or have experience of working with

young people are able to use their placement to reflect on their practice and the way they interact with young people in different settings.

- 69 Most HE providers use student workbooks to document experience and assess student progress during a placement. In the best cases, these workbooks guide the development of the placement. The emphasis on self-reflective practice not only helps student to see how they have progressed but also documents the process. All providers have a variety of processes to monitor work placements. For example, in the University of South Wales, placement co-ordinators quality assure the interaction between the placement supervisor and the student twice a year.

Case study 2: University of Wales Trinity Saint David

A strong feature across the youth work training providers is how they collaborate with work placement providers to ensure that topics for students' dissertations are relevant and useful. This practice benefits everyone as it generates research that can support practice development in placement settings and be used as an evidence-base to support funding bids, as well as supporting learning outcomes for the student.

The University of Wales Trinity Saint David works productively with Ysgol Rhydygors, a school in Carmarthenshire that specialises in provision for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Youth work students on placement at the school have researched the impact of youth work initiatives on learners' development. Their research has been used to develop a monitoring process on the impact of youth work in the school. Another student completed research on the benefits of thematic overseas exchanges. This evidence base was used to support and challenge elected members who questioned the rationale for taking young people on European residential visits. Students take an objective approach and invest time in their research which means their dissertations are meaningful for them and impact on the practice of others with long-term benefits for young people.

- 70 When speaking with students during our fieldwork we found that most were very positive about their experience on their work placements and developed a strong commitment to the project and to the young people they worked with. In some education settings such as pupil referral units however, students felt that their skills were undervalued by the setting and that they were given tasks at a level well below their skills and training levels. We report student views on their work placements in detail in the chapter 'What students' say'.

Leadership and management

- 71 Youth work training sits within different faculties or schools in universities across Wales. All are appropriate and there is a clear rationale for the arrangements. In each case, leaders have given careful consideration to the benefits of joint working and the interaction between youth work training and other professional programmes. They maximise the linkages with other professions relevant to youth work such as education, social sciences, health, criminology and sport. Where related and relevant specialisms sit outside the department where youth work training is seated, joint working is optimised through sharing lecturers and expertise.
- 72 Senior leaders and heads of school understand the context of these courses well. They make sure that the professional work-related aspects of the courses are facilitated and that the particular characteristics of youth and community work students, many of whom are in employment and are returning to learning, are supported.
- 73 In all cases, courses provide a good balance between theory and practice as determined by ETS Wales. Leaders and staff take good account of developments in youth and community work and make sure that courses reflect national policy and current youth work practice. The subject matter of courses matches the skills youth workers will need to work in the variety of settings where employment is available. Institutions supplement learning by adding modules to deepen students' understanding of a particular area of work. For example, different universities teach combinations of modules on the emerging school Curriculum for Wales, practice modules on leadership and supervision, extra discussion modules that relate experience to theory, and arrange exchanges with overseas youth workers.
- 74 A strength of the sector is the focus on the needs of young people, and the willingness to work together. This leads to strong collaboration between all elements of the sector and a commitment to making the training effective. All providers have built a wide network of statutory and non-statutory partners which helps to keep courses grounded in the realities of current youth work practice. These partnerships provide forums for discussions about practicalities such as procedures for work placements and also help to monitor the quality of the provision.
- 75 HEIs work well together through the Training Agency Group Cymru (TAGC) and with wider partners to share ideas about the quality and development of youth and community work courses. This results in the sharing of ideas across the sector. Work with local authorities and other employers to identify skills gaps is ongoing, but it is difficult for HEIs to respond to skills deficits in the absence of a full skills audit. An audit of youth workers and youth support workers registered with the education workforce council is being commissioned by the workforce development strategy participation group of the Interim Youth Work Board, but this does not include those who carry out youth work but who are not registered with the council.

- 76 All providers have a variety of quality assurance processes in place to monitor the quality of youth work training. They use a variety of information and data to improve the quality and effectiveness of courses. Student outcomes are subject to robust external moderation for academic performance. Since our last report, there has been an improvement in how HEIs monitor the work placement elements of the courses through introducing measures such as detailed student notebooks and assessment of practical tasks. Generally, leaders take good account of student feedback on all aspects of the student experience.
- 77 A few HEIs have introduced innovative ways of assessing student progress by using social media, audio feedback, and 'live' assessment of student presentations. This gives staff and students the opportunity to communicate on a regular basis in-between formal college sessions. However, this assessment model varies between institutions and is therefore an area that requires ongoing scrutiny and development across the providers.
- 78 Staff who teach on youth and community work courses take part in annual reviews that identify staff strengths and areas for development, and facilitate the sharing of good practice. Staff in youth and community work faculties generally welcome robust discussion about their work and seek to improve their practice. All HEIs offer staff the opportunity to access professional learning through a variety of means including study at doctoral level. Several HE staff across Wales sit on either the National Interim Youth Work Board, which represents young people, the sector and provides advice to Welsh ministers, or its working groups, and are involved in related research projects.
- 79 Addysg Oedolion Cymru|Adult Learning Wales provides courses at Levels 2 and 3 in partnership with the HEIs and has a long-established management system for monitoring quality and performance. It has a robust quality improvement plan in place that identifies appropriate issues such as improving completion rates and recruitment processes. There are well-established and regular meetings between managers and tutors to monitor performance and drive improvements. Curriculum delivery officers are familiar with local youth work settings and placement agreements are in place to support learners during work placements. AOC|ALW acknowledge that they need to improve work practice placements, and especially the quality of supervision. They also recognise that they need to develop more formal engagement with employers to make use of their experience and in turn give employers feedback about courses.

Case study 3: Wrexham Glyndŵr University's contribution to national policy by working with the Interim Youth Work Board

Context

Working with the Interim Youth Work Board, the Welsh Government commissioned a piece of work to make the content of the Youth Work Strategy more understandable to young people. Wrexham Glyndŵr University was awarded the contract to be delivered by students on its Youth and Community Work courses.

Action

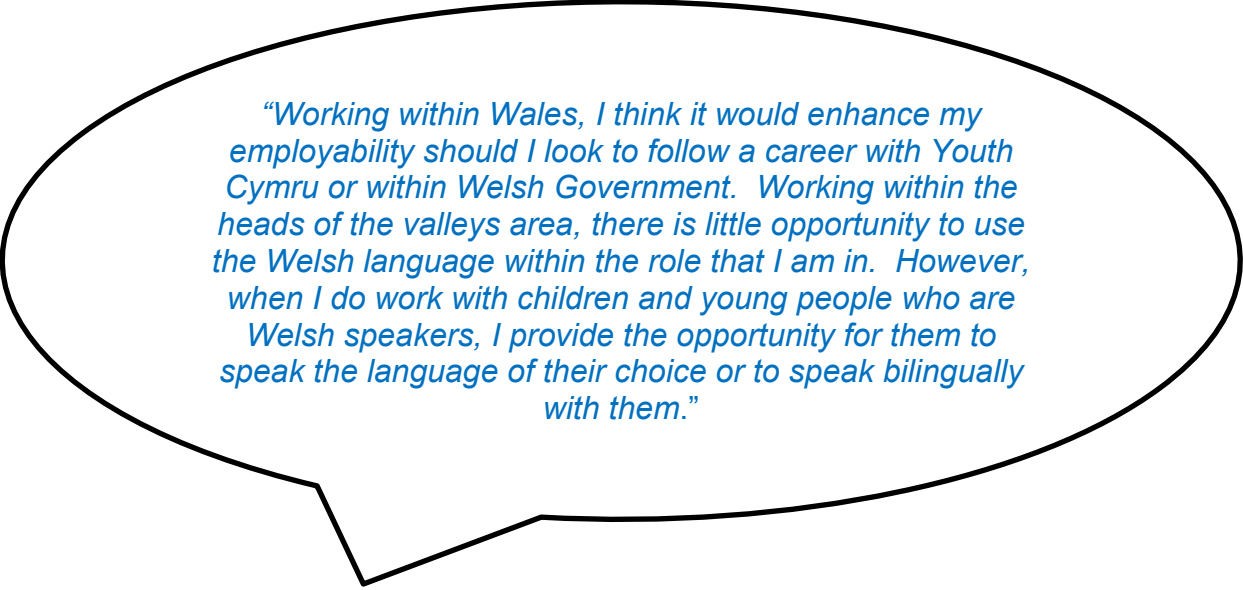
Staff at Wrexham Glyndŵr University engaged students to determine how the Youth Work Strategy could be translated into terms suitable for young people. Students were supported by a senior lecturer. Students arranged three focus groups across Wales to speak with young people about how the content of the strategy could be made accessible to them. A media student joined the project, introducing cross-faculty working. The media student filmed interviews and focus groups, and worked with the students to collate the information and to produce a video that was mainly narrated by the students.

Outcomes

Students on the Youth and Community Work course gained increased understanding of the Youth Work Strategy. In turn, the young people in the groups across Wales also gained greater understanding of the strategy. Students gained experience of consultation approaches such as holding focus groups and working with a range of young people.

The video was launched during the Youth and Community Work conference held in Cardiff in February 2020. The students from Glyndwr gained additional experience from attending the conference and shared this with their peers. The video is available through the Welsh Government website <https://gov.wales/youth-work-strategy-through-voices-young-people> (Welsh Government, 2020e)

Youth work and the Welsh language



“Working within Wales, I think it would enhance my employability should I look to follow a career with Youth Cymru or within Welsh Government. Working within the heads of the valleys area, there is little opportunity to use the Welsh language within the role that I am in. However, when I do work with children and young people who are Welsh speakers, I provide the opportunity for them to speak the language of their choice or to speak bilingually with them.”

- 80 One of the main finding of Estyn’s report on Youth Support Services in Wales: The Value of Youth Work (2018, p.5) was that, ‘There is no effective strategy to ensure that Welsh and English languages are treated equally in the delivery of youth support services. Open-access provision in Welsh is usually provided by the voluntary sector, but there are few Welsh or bilingual services, and especially a lack of specialist support services through the medium of Welsh.’
- 81 We also noted that, ‘most providers report that young people generally do not ask for support services though the medium of Welsh. This statement however may mask institutional barriers, which make it difficult for young people to assert their wish for Welsh-medium services. There is a lack of support services such as counselling, help with mental health issues, drug and alcohol abuse and behaviour management through the medium of Welsh, although this inevitably varies across predominantly Welsh and non-Welsh speaking areas within the country. However, when a young person is in trouble and in need of an immediate service, he or she is less likely to ask for a Welsh-speaking worker when they are aware that there may be none readily available and that there are long waiting lists for specialised support through the medium of Welsh. Whereas, in open-access and Welsh culture focused services, young people may make good use of their Welsh language skills. However, there remains much work to be done to develop strategic thinking around promoting and embedding Welsh-medium provision.’ (Estyn, 2018, p.19).
- 82 There is no national overview of the demand for youth services through the medium of Welsh, but given the issues above the underlying need is likely to be higher than anecdotal reports. The increasing number of young people from non-Welsh speaking homes who are educated through the medium of Welsh means that it is important that there are opportunities for them not only to be able to access services in Welsh but to use Welsh socially and in contexts out of school.

- 83 The Youth Work Strategy for Wales (Welsh Government, 2019c, p.5) states that the principles of youth work in Wales ‘recognises the importance and value of language and culture, particularly that of Wales and the need to promote the Welsh language’. In addition, it states that ‘Youth work opportunities and experiences contribute to the ambitions of Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers by providing more opportunities for young people to learn and use Welsh in social situations beyond the school gate or home’ (Welsh Government, 2019c, p.24).
- 84 The Youth Work Strategy for Wales outlines how this shared vision will be moved forward. It identifies the need to:
- ‘Continue to invest in the development and delivery of consistent and quality youth work provision in Welsh and English, no matter where young people live, their age, identity or background’ (Welsh Government, 2019c, p.13)
 - ‘Develop a better understanding of the role and availability of Welsh language provision across Wales, and develop a programme of work to increase opportunities for youth work in the medium of Welsh’ (Welsh Government, 2019c, p.17)
- 85 In order to ensure that voluntary and paid professional youth work staff are supported throughout their careers to improve their practice the strategy highlights the need to ‘understand and respond to existing Welsh language training needs’ (Welsh Government, 2019c, p.21). The Welsh Language Task and Finish Group is working with the Workforce Development Strategy Participation Group to address these issues.
- 86 Addysg Oedolion Cymru|Adult Learning Wales offers youth work courses at Levels 2 and 3 through the medium of English throughout Wales and in conjunction with HEIs. The organisation ensures that training materials are available bilingually and that students can use their Welsh language skills. A few Welsh-speaking students note that although they follow their courses through the medium of English they can use their Welsh language skills in work placements or in their present employment. Around a quarter of the Addysg Oedolion Cymru|Adult Learning Wales tutors are able to speak Welsh and a very few courses are offered through the medium of Welsh. For example, Addysg Oedolion Cymru|Adult Learning Wales work with Urdd Gobaith Cymru to provide training in Welsh for their staff and in Gwynedd and Anglesey nearly all students follow courses in Welsh (C1) or bilingually (B1) (Table 3)¹. However, overall the numbers of students following courses in Welsh or bilingually, despite rising a little over a three-year period, remains low.

Table 3: Percentage of courses by medium of delivery

Year	B1Bilingual	C1Welsh	E1English	Bilingual or Welsh
2016-2017	0.0%	2.7%	97.3%	2.7%
2017-2018	0.0%	5.8%	94.2%	5.8%
2018-2019	3.1%	2.3%	94.6%	5.4%

Source: Unpublished data from Addysg Oedolion Cymru|Adult Learning Wales

Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR) codes used to identify language of provision

B1 Learning completed in a bilingual context and at least 50% of the available assessments within the learning activity completed through the medium of Welsh. The outcome may be achieved using any appropriate teaching methodology.

C1 Learning completed in a Welsh-medium context and all of the available assessments within the learning activity completed through the medium of Welsh.

E1 Learning and assessment in English only.

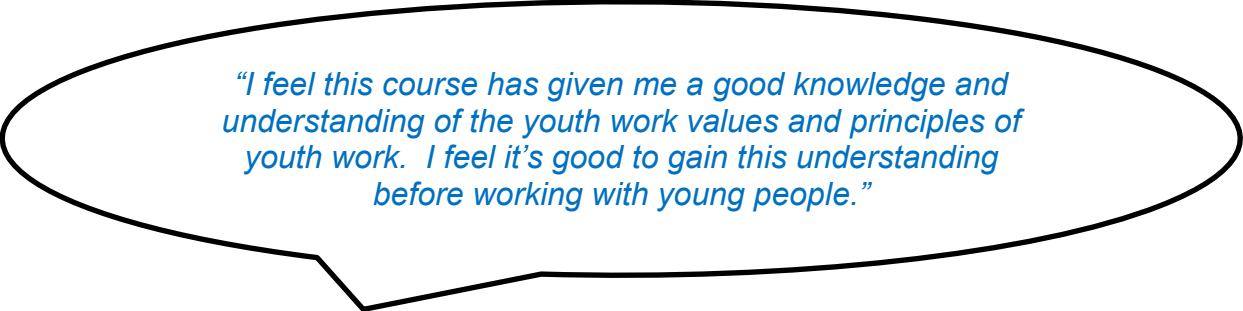
- 87 Urdd Gobaith Cymru offers the only apprenticeships for youth workers through the medium of Welsh. Since September 2018, it has offered Level 2 and Level 3 youth work practice qualifications to small groups of four apprentices each year. A strength of this provision is that the apprentices work on a daily basis in their placement and then attend monthly workshops where they learn about theory and information relevant to youth work. As a result, apprentices complete their apprenticeships entirely through the medium of Welsh and they develop their Welsh language skills and sector-specific vocabulary successfully.
- 88 Generally, HEIs respect students' linguistic requirements and preferences and ensure that students can submit assessments in Welsh. For example, Cardiff Metropolitan University appointed a Welsh-speaking tutor to provide personal tutor support through the medium of Welsh. However, in north-west Wales, despite the availability of Level 2 and Level 3 courses through the medium of Welsh, there is no Welsh-medium provision available on higher education courses at Level 4 and above. Higher education institutions take steps to offer professional placements in Welsh-medium and bilingual settings in order to develop students' Welsh language skills. However, there is a lack of consistency, and not all programme documents and handbooks are available bilingually across all levels.
- 89 University of Wales Trinity Saint David is the only HEI in Wales that offers the BA and MA youth work qualifications bilingually and through the medium of Welsh. Most students display positive attitudes towards the Welsh language, including English speakers when bilingual discussions are held in teaching sessions. Students also have the opportunity to undertake useful Welsh in the Workplace modules such as 'Welsh and the bilingual workplace' and 'Welsh and your career.' Although it is possible for students to undertake the BA and MA through the medium of Welsh, including Welsh medium placements, very few students decide to do so. As a result, there are insufficient numbers to date to offer separate Welsh-medium programmes. Students use bilingual resources and tutors enable students to use Welsh in lectures and tutorials. Many Welsh speaking students use their Welsh language skills while interacting with academic and support staff, including during tutorials and pastoral sessions, and find their bilingualism useful when undertaking work placements. The university is introducing twilight provision and aims to attract more Welsh speakers from local schools and staff working in Welsh language initiatives (Mentrau iaith), but this is at an early stage of development.
- 90 Institutions providing youth work training at all levels have increased their use of the Welsh language, often in accordance with the requirements of their institutional

Welsh language policies. Although Welsh speaking students have appropriate opportunities to use their Welsh language skills in work placement settings, opportunities to study meaningfully through the medium of Welsh remain limited. Institutions quote a lack of demand, although this lack of Welsh-medium provision is, in a few instances, also due to insufficient numbers of Welsh speaking staff. Similarly, providers such as Urdd Gobaith Cymru who provide valuable Welsh-medium training, face the challenge of accessing suitably qualified, Welsh-speaking, quality assessors. In addition, there are very few academic resources on youth work in Welsh.

- 91 As in other post-16 sectors, too many Welsh-speaking students lack confidence in their own linguistic ability. Although they value opportunities to use and develop their language skills in a professional context, particularly on work placements, they do not feel confident enough to study academically solely through the medium of Welsh. For example, during the last two academic years no students on BA or MA programmes made presentations or produced assignments in Welsh (ETS, 2019a, 2019b, 2020a, 2020b). The Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol report *Towards Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers: Further Education and Apprenticeship Welsh-medium Action Plan* (2019, p.4) (Section 2: Skills Development) suggested that most bilingual students would prefer to study bilingually. The report concludes that '[t]his data suggests that the infrastructure to support learners to choose bilingual learning will need to be carefully planned and considered to secure the highest possible take-up of provision.'
- 92 Overall, bilingual learning remains underdeveloped in the youth work sector. It is worth noting that in our Estyn student survey the number of respondents stating that they were Welsh speakers was in line with the percentage of Welsh speakers in Wales. While progress has been made regarding the Welsh language, further work is still required with regard to recommendation 8 that deals with the language in 'A survey of professional qualification training for youth workers in Wales' (Estyn, 2010).

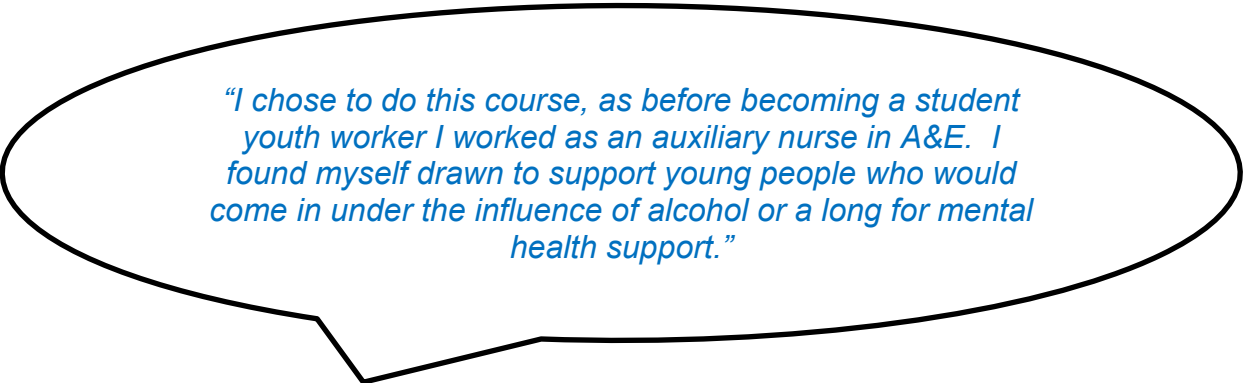
"With a class that is majority English speaking there hasn't been much in Welsh. But given the placement I've found having Welsh a benefit to be able to converse in both languages."

What students say



"I feel this course has given me a good knowledge and understanding of the youth work values and principles of youth work. I feel it's good to gain this understanding before working with young people."

- 93 Overall, youth work students responded very positively to the Estyn student survey. Nearly all youth work students explain clearly and eloquently why they are following their programmes of study. While the reasons vary, there are common themes.
- 94 One theme is that of youth workers seeking professional development and the need to be professionally registered, including those working in voluntary settings. Many students feel that youth work qualifications lead to improved employability and career prospects, including within fields outside of traditional youth work settings. A few students also expressed the opinion that youth work qualifications offered an accessible route for them back into full-time education.
- 95 Another particular theme was the fact that students consistently referred to the effect that youth work had on their own lives. This passionate and genuine desire to influence young peoples' lives for the better is difficult to quantify. Youth work students see youth work as a vocation rather than merely a route towards achieving a professional qualification. Nearly all students are highly motivated and view themselves as fulfilling an important if underappreciated role within society.



"I chose to do this course, as before becoming a student youth worker I worked as an auxiliary nurse in A&E. I found myself drawn to support young people who would come in under the influence of alcohol or a long for mental health support."

- 96 Nearly all students agree that their programmes of study are relevant to their future work or career plans. Nearly all have a clear idea regarding their academic or career progression once they complete their programme of study. For example, students express a desire to work in community centres and youth settings, as youth and family officers, with gypsy travellers, as custody and probation officers, and in fields dealing with mental health and substance abuse. A very few aim to establish their

own businesses or organisations within youth and community settings. Most students state clearly that their courses provide them with a wide knowledge base and understanding of youth work within contemporary society and develop their ability to work with young people.

"I'd like to work as a youth worker within a community setting. I am interested in county lines and would like to work with young people who may be stuck in the cycle"

"I'd like to have a long and interesting career in the youth sector. Provide support within my local community. Campaign for change. Support empower and engage with young people."

- 97 Most students feel that their courses strike a good balance between the theoretical and practical aspects. Most feel that work placements were relevant and of benefit to their professional and academic development. Many students arrange their own work placements, sometimes in their own place of work or in settings where they are already volunteering. Most receive advice and assistance from the educational provider during this process and a few students praise the use of placement fayres by their educational providers that assist them to talk to youth work settings and discuss placements. Students note a range of practical issues that in a few instances impact negatively on the quality of their placement experience. These include ensuring sufficient placement hours, and the lack of suitably qualified staff within the settings to supervise their placements. Many students feel that the supervision of placements and feedback received during and after work placements is effective, with only a very few disagreeing. A few students maintain that striking a sustainable work-life balance can be challenging, especially for those with family or care obligations or when travelling outside of their own area to work placements, although most students praise the flexibility of educational providers when dealing with issues such as childcare.

"I have to develop early intervention and serious organised crime programmes. I regularly work with young people on a face-to-face basis. My placement has also allowed me to engage with partners gaining more knowledge and great links within youth work."

“The fact that it’s supported by continual placement throughout the course. This means that the study is rooted in practical placement experience.”

“We had a placement fayre where the department invited local organisations with placement opportunities into the university and we then engaged with the organisations and sorted out our own placements from there.”

“The strongest feature of the course is the variety of placements and opportunities that we have provided for example, each person on this course are doing a completely different placement yet each are working towards the same goal.”

- 98 Many students said that they find adjusting to the academic demands and rigour of formal qualifications initially challenging. This is often due to their previous negative experiences of statutory education or because they have been out of education for a long time. Although most students feel that they receive sufficient training in practical skills, such as health and safety and how to deal with challenging situations in the field, a very few would like more emphasis on this element before undertaking work placements.
- 99 Most students praise the educational and pastoral support and encouragement they receive from providers. When asked to list the strongest features of their courses students raise common aspects. One particularly important aspect that students identify is the supportive and experienced course staff who have in-depth professional knowledge of youth work. Students praise lecturers for ensuring that discussions during sessions are engaging and emphasise the need for reflective practice. Nearly all learners also emphasise the collegiate nature of the provision and feel a strong sense of belonging to an inclusive educational community where students support each other.

“It highlights the importance of reflective practice and how best to promote our work within the youth service in order to ensure its sustainable.”

“Very knowledgeable tutors who create engaging content and offer great support. All of the tutors are themselves youth workers and have many years’ experience in the field. They are also available to provide support and guidance outside of university hours and often during unsociable hours.”

“Safeguarding... new to my role in the youth service I felt this aspect of the course essential. I now have a clear understanding of my role and responsibilities with regards to reporting concerns etc.”

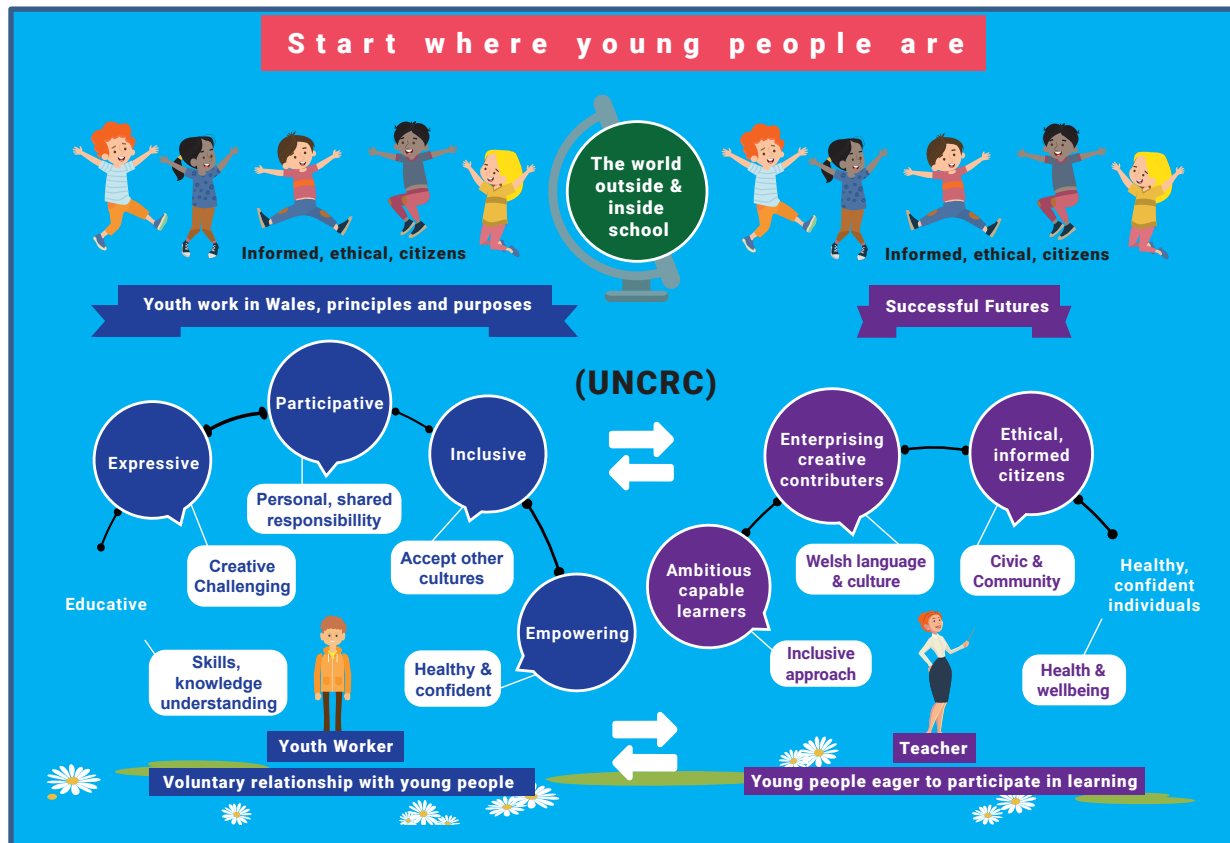
Youth work training and the youth work contribution to education reform

- 100 In the Youth Work Strategy for Wales, the Minister for Education, Kirsty Williams, sets out a sector-led vision *“to integrate formal and non-formal education, and informal learning. This requires the development of new ways of working, and innovative partnership approaches”* (Welsh Government, 2019c, p.4).
- 101 Youth work training is sufficiently broad to develop youth workers’ skills as educators in a variety of settings so that they act as a bridge between formal learning environments and the outside world where young people take part in informal and non-formal education. HEIs are strengthening this unique youth work function through the training provided. Youth workers are often skilled enough to maintain the fundamental premise of youth work (that the relationship with young people must be voluntary), even when working in formal settings such as education and youth justice.
- 102 In the best cases in HEI settings, the professional youth work qualification courses are delivered in collaboration with other allied programmes such Initial Teacher Education (ITE). These courses contain modules which directly explore education theory, including the contribution of formal, non-formal and informal educational provision to the development of young people. These HEIs have explored how inter-professional modules can bring together ITE students, social justice, social sciences students, and youth and community students, where common areas for professional practice are explored through lectures, course work and tutorials. These modules often include aspects covering youth justice, multi-agency working or joint project management and help to prepare students for working in complex situations.
- 103 This professional cross-fertilisation means that students are well placed to develop their understanding of the range of contexts in which young people learn and to apply the core principles of youth work in different contexts including formal education settings. It provides opportunities for students to recognise and gain respect for those other professions that provide help and support to young people as they develop through their teenage and young adult years. It also helps other professionals to understand the principles and value of youth work approaches in relation to their own practice.
- 104 By discussing the contribution of youth work to other social policy areas, youth workers gain a valuable sense of their own professional identity. In Estyn’s report: Youth Support Services in Wales (2018, p.5) we said that:

‘Youth work is a professional, skilled way of working that makes an important contribution to developing young people as individuals and in supporting the development of their social skills.’
- 105 For example, in the University of South Wales in 2020, lecturers from the MA Working for children and young people (Youth Work initial qualifying) team and MA Professional Learning (Education) team contribute to each other’s programmes. A

similar arrangement exists between the MA Working for children and young people (Youth work initial qualifying), MA Criminology and Criminal Justice and MA Working with Adult and Young Offenders. The intention is that this cross-discipline discussion and sharing of good practice will be extended to colleagues from Health and Education, once the youth and community work subject area is located in the Life Sciences and Education faculty.

- 106 Through professional practice and ethics modules and the alignment of youth work principles to the new Curriculum for Wales, youth workers are well placed to deliver a wider curriculum in partnership with teachers. For example, Cardiff Metropolitan University's module on the 'emerging curriculum' considers how Successful Futures contributes to the role of professional youth and community workers. This module explores in depth the four purposes (Donaldson: Successful Futures, 2015), and how they can be integrated into the wider youth work offer. It also covers how in a school's context, the youth work methodology enables staff to 'contract' with learners about how the curriculum is best explored with them. The institution's tutorial process enables students to consider in depth how to apply this in their work practice. In the University of South Wales the relationships between youth work and the new Curriculum for Wales are explored in both undergraduate and MA modules.
- 107 There are important similarities between youth work skills and the new ways of working set out in the new Curriculum for Wales 2022. The report by Professor Donaldson (2015) on which the new curriculum is based sets out an approach to education aimed at preparing young people for an uncertain future by giving them the skills to become independent learners and apply their learning to new situations. It promotes the idea that education should be 'child centred' and based on responsiveness to the needs of the individual, helping young people to work creatively and collaboratively. There is a cross cutting theme of 'ethical citizenship' across all curriculum areas. The illustration below sets out the synergy between youth work principles as set out in The Principles and Purposes of Youth Work and the ideas expressed in Successful Futures.



Infographic designed by Catrin Haf Jones.

- 108 Youth work has always focused on principles similar to the four purposes (Donaldson, 2015) of the new curriculum for Wales. Youth work facilitates the development of young people's social and emotional skills, including self-determination, self-control, confidence, persistence, and self-motivation. These skills help all young people improve their educational achievement and secure sustainable and rewarding employment. For the young people who struggle in the education system, the youth work approach can help remove barriers to learning, broaden horizons and give young people the confidence they need to engage and move forward. For a minority of young people, youth services can be life changing.
- 109 Youth work, wherever it is delivered, facilitates experience-based learning, encourages participation in learning and develops citizenship skills. It develops young people's confidence, decision-making skills, and practical collaborative skills and equips young people for work. Hence, youth work skills are therefore also important to the delivery of the Welsh Government's employability policies, such as the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (2013), and can support young people to remain engaged in education, employment and training, or re-engage where appropriate. Youth work in community and other settings also makes a wide range of qualifications available to young people across a variety of subjects and activities.
- 110 Although the Principal Youth Officers group produced in May 2016 a thought-provoking paper on the contribution that youth work can make to the new curriculum for Wales, the importance of youth work is still to be recognised by many education

professionals. The opportunity for youth workers to support teachers and deliver parts of the curriculum in schools is often missed, even when there is a youth worker working in the school.

Recognising and developing the youth work profession

Youth work skills

- 111 Youth workers work in a range of settings, and often provide vital support for young people in very difficult and sometimes dangerous circumstances. Such settings include outreach and detached work, and work involving homeless young people, sex workers, prisons, county lines, substance misuse and domestic violence. In these cases youth workers often work alongside the police or run projects funded by the justice sector. Others work in community and multicultural settings and improve community cohesion. Youth workers also work as sports leaders. Those who lead art and cultural activities often support young people to use their talents and achieve to a very high standard. Youth workers are trained to work with young people as individuals, starting from their current circumstances and meeting them on their own 'territory', both psychological and physical. They are experienced in building relationships with young people and supporting them to develop. These skills are often not fully recognised in the education sector where youth work sits. Funding for youth work training is often insecure and may be seen as less important than other education functions.
- 112 The training available at all levels to youth workers in Wales is of high quality. The close involvement of ETS Wales with the youth work sector, and adherence to JNC standards ensures that youth workers are qualified and trained to the highest professional levels. There is also a commitment and a passion within the sector that has helped to sustain the quality of training and thus of youth work during difficult times for the service. Further benefits from professional training are the managerial skills developed by youth workers, which helps them achieve managerial positions in youth work and allied services.
- 113 In spite of this, youth workers consider themselves undervalued as professionals. Youth workers and their trainers say that their professional skills are not recognised as educational and are underutilised particularly in formal education settings and pupil referral units. Youth workers with a degree (Level 6 qualification) are often given similar responsibilities as classroom assistants with a Level 2 qualification. Many secondary schools are now beginning to see the value of having a youth worker on the staff, but in many cases, they work only with the most challenging young people and are seen as aids to behaviour management, or as support for young people with 'problems', rather than for their educational expertise and particular skills in working with young people.

Registration of the profession

- 114 Although youth work has been enshrined in education legislation since 1944, not all youth workers see themselves as education professionals. All see themselves as facilitating the development of young people. The philosophy and ethics of youth work, and thus the training, straddle these two approaches to the work. However,

education legislation confers an important status to youth work and gives stability to youth work and the youth service.

- 115 The registration of youth workers is a contentious and emotive issue within the youth work profession. Registration gives appropriate status to the profession, provides essential safeguarding functions, and should also support and entitle youth workers to professional learning and support.
- 116 In 2017, legislation came into force (National Assembly for Wales - EWC Registration Order, 2016) stating that workers must register with the EWC if they provide 'youth development services for or on behalf of a relevant body'. This is confusing as the term 'youth development services' is not defined elsewhere in legislation or recognised within the profession in Wales. Youth workers and youth support workers must register if they work in a local authority, a school, a further education institution and a voluntary body. Youth workers can also register voluntarily, if they have a relevant qualification but are not currently working in the prescribed categories.
- 117 The legislation requires youth workers to register as either 'youth workers' (qualified to Level 6 or Level 7 JNC recognised and endorsed by the ETS) or 'youth support workers' (qualified to level 2). The registration category for youth support workers at Level 2 poses particular problems, as the JNC only recognises Level 3 as a professional qualification level for the delivery of youth work unsupervised.
- 118 Only 429 youth workers and 692 youth support workers were registered with the EWC at 1 March 2020 (EWC, 2020). A breakdown of the figures shows that there are larger numbers of youth support workers than youth workers registered as working in both statutory and voluntary sector roles. This may be because these figures are counted by employer and youth support workers often work for more than one youth project. It is thought that a significant number of trained youth workers and youth support workers working with young people are not registered with the EWC.
- 119 While there is no other data providing an overall picture of the youth work workforce in Wales, many estimate it to be larger than the figures reflected in professional registration numbers. Due to issues with the legislation, the registration process has not to date been fully successful and is beset with technical problems which the EWC is working hard with relevant bodies to improve. There are four major challenges:
 - The list of qualifications in the statute is incorrect and out of date. It does not include new qualifications or many legacy qualifications across the UK. Neither does it include many of the Level 7 post-graduate professionally qualifying qualifications specifically designed to give youth workers professional status.
 - There is confusion over the correct level of qualification for a youth support worker between the profession and the legislation and this is unhelpful, particularly to the voluntary sector. The legislation sets the level for registration as Level 2 but ETS and the JNC only recognise Level 3 as the professional qualification to practise unsupervised.
 - Youth workers who have not completed their degree or have heritage qualifications to Level 2 and 3 and who are already working with young people are not able to register. There are also instances where workers are at Level 4

and Level 5 but are unable to register in any category as do not have Level 2 which is the level required in legislation for registration as a youth support worker.

- Youth workers in health, housing, the fire service, the National Trust, faith-based organisations and the army are not required by law to register.

120 The arrangements for managing the lists of registered qualifications are not currently flexible enough to make registration effective. Also, there is no provisional registration status for youth workers and youth support workers completing training, to mirror that for school support staff. This leaves a cohort of trained and employed workers unable to register under the current arrangements. The Interim Youth Work Board and Workforce Development SPG are working on these issues with the EWC, the Welsh Government and ETS, but even when improvements are agreed, it will take time to change the necessary legislation.

Induction and ongoing professional learning

121 The current arrangements for professional learning do not ensure that youth workers are treated the same as other education professions. There are no nationally agreed induction arrangements for newly qualified youth workers and no national offer of further professional learning opportunities. On completion of training, youth workers, unlike newly qualified teachers, are not required to carry out a probationary year with entitlement to support, coaching and mentoring and ongoing professional learning opportunities. Youth workers are subject to the same registration requirements but without the benefit of a qualified youth worker status (QYWS) equivalent to Qualified Teacher Status for teachers. Without similar arrangements to teachers, youth workers may not always be encouraged to continue on the professional learning journey.

122 The building blocks for continued professional learning are already in place. The unit-based nature of youth work training from Level 2 and right through the degree levels provides ideal opportunities for youth workers to follow units that they have not completed before. The flexible and increasingly online nature of youth work training delivery also makes continued learning accessible to those in employment. Adequate funding for such arrangements is not currently available, but without access to these opportunities alongside other education professionals, the status of the profession will not be fully acknowledged. In addition, the Professional Learning Passport, a key tool used by EWC to promote ongoing professional learning for registrants, has not yet been developed to reflect the national occupational standards for youth work.

123 There is also a lack of ongoing senior leadership development for youth workers. Work on a leadership programme was historically developed by the now disbanded Wales Youth Agency but the work has not been continued. A small amount of funding was made available a few years ago for leadership courses but these were discontinued. Presently, the National Academy for Educational Leadership (NAEL) does not include the youth work profession when developing leadership opportunities and programmes, although youth work is defined in law under education legislation. The Workforce Development SPG has recently been successful in attracting funding

from the NAEL to redevelop a leadership and management programme for the youth work profession.

- 124 Regional consortia for school improvement in Wales also have responsibility for delivery of professional learning and leadership programmes for teachers. At present, there is little collaboration between youth work professionals and regional consortia to build shared professional learning and leadership development programmes and promote understanding and respect between professions.
- 125 Youth work is a powerful tool to guide and educate young people in a wider range of settings than formal education and workers in all settings including the voluntary sector should be included in a leadership programme to develop leadership in youth work in Wales. Strong leadership would enhance and promote the passion that youth workers and their trainers have for their work and help to sustain and consolidate youth work as a respected and valued profession.

Appendix 1: Progress against recommendations in ‘A survey of professional qualification training for youth workers in Wales’ (Estyn, 2010)

The Welsh Government should:

R1 Assume the strategic lead in working with all stakeholders to ensure that partners undertake full responsibility for contributing to the successful implementation of the National youth service strategy

Over the last ten years there have been many changes to national policy and to the way that youth work is delivered in Wales. There have also been significant cuts to funding. Youth work providers and trainers have had to change and adapt to difficult circumstances. They have responded well to these challenges and youth work has continued to thrive in Wales although in very different settings to the traditional youth club. The Welsh Government, in spite of having to administer financial cuts and divert funding to complementary priorities such as the NEET and employment agenda, has continued to provide support for youth work. In 2016, the Children, Young People and Education committee of the National Assembly for Wales re-invigorated the debate about the value of youth work. In 2016, the youth work reference group was set up to support a new strategic direction for youth work. The subsequent Interim Youth Work Board has several sub groups, one of which is the Workforce Development SPG which is researching into all aspects of training and professional issues. The Welsh Government is supporting the development of youth work in Wales and is proactive in facilitating the work of groups, and provided funding for vital research.

Higher education institutions should:

R2 Make arrangements for discussion and sharing of good practice between youth and community, health and social services and trainee teacher courses, in order to improve arrangements for youth and community studies

Current youth work policy and strategy has driven an increase in partnership working and youth workers currently work in an even wider variety of roles and professional settings than when the original recommendation was made. They also often contribute to a multi-agency approach to meeting the needs of young people. It is now even more important that there is a shared understanding of ethics and practice between professions.

In response to the 2010 recommendation and the introduction of the newly endorsed JNC Inter-professional Practice module, HEI providers expanded their work with other disciplines such as education, sport, social work, health, criminology and counselling. As a result, students gain more understanding of other professions and to prepare them for the challenges of working in integrated services. For example, the then University of Wales, Newport introduced interdisciplinary teaching of this module across subject areas where students learned together. However, because of

the re-organisation of campuses and the merging of universities this is not always now logistically possible. There may be scope for universities to reconsider how they can deliver teaching across faculties with the post COVID-19 increase in digital learning which would remove any 'physical' barriers to student and staff groupings. Generally, universities deliver this module to youth and community work students by inviting lecturers from different professional areas such as police, housing, social work and teaching. This helps to give students and understanding of the other professions they will work with. Staff also share good practice between different courses and disciplines. However, this approach does not give students from the other disciplines enough vital understanding of the value that youth work professional practice can bring to their disciplines.

Students regularly comment in feedback that they should train together with other professions before qualification as they know that they will be working together after qualification.

R3 Organise regular meetings with all employers of qualified youth workers, to consult on the design, content and delivery of youth and community courses

Most HEIs consult both formally and informally with local employers about the design of courses. They work closely with a wide variety of partners (including ETS Wales) to ensure that the courses and specific content is relevant to the needs of the youth work sector and other settings in which youth work is carried out.,

Local authorities identify the following benefits of working closely with HEIs on course design:

- opportunities for shared professional discussion
- blending study and practice
- student dissertation research informs and improves every day practice in their youth work settings

R4 Develop effective agreements with work placement providers that: clearly define the responsibilities of all parties; improve quality assurance of work placements; and secure sufficient placements to meet the needs of their student cohorts

Although it is still a challenge for providers to find placements within easy traveling distance for students, all the providers have made good progress in addressing this recommendation. Many students still find at least one of their own work placements themselves, especially when they are employed in a youth work setting. Generally they receive very good support from university staff. Providers have worked well to put written agreements in place with placement providers which define and agree responsibilities and quality assurance processes for the provider and the placement supervisor.

R5 Make sure that curriculum planning develops knowledge, understanding and skills in contexts that integrate practice with theory

Generally, course content and delivery across all the providers, and all levels of the degree and Master's awards contextualises theory with practice well. Students' portfolios demonstrate that they understand the relevance of their academic study to their practice experiences. Practice and theory are very well integrated into modules, including at MA level. The appointment of experienced practitioners as lecturers in all HEIs has ensured that very good practical teaching and advice is integrated with academic theory. Ethics modules are a good example of how theory can be integrated with everyday practice and help students to understand concepts within real life situations that they have encountered.

R6 Improve the clarity and guidance to work placement supervisors about their educational role in courses, so they know clearly their responsibilities for developing trainees' professional skills, knowledge and understanding

The providers have made very good progress on this recommendation. Nearly all supervisors receive training from their partner university and understand their roles well. A few supervisors contribute to teaching on specific issues such as play and adolescence and wellbeing.

HEIs generally have comprehensive and detailed training courses for placement supervisors that not only help them undertake the supervision of the student but also enhance their own knowledge and practice. For example, the University of South Wales course includes:

- National occupational standards
- Understanding of supervisor role and context of student courses at all levels
- What is required from supervisor at different levels of course
- Practice learning agreement
- Self-reflective practice
- Thompson PCS model (a social work model highlighting discrimination and anti-oppressive practice)
- ETS Wales guidelines for supervising students

Students (and supervisors) also benefit from placement workbooks that guide discussions and record actions and progress and moderation process as the end of placements.

R7 Improve access to training for work placement supervisors, to ensure that they can undertake their training responsibilities and assessment roles effectively

Providers have addressed this recommendation well. Generally, HEIs offer thorough, good quality training for supervisors. This includes formal training sessions, sharing of experience and moderation sessions. There are examples of very good training packages and robust quality assurance measures in place. This training is often highly valued by supervisors as professional learning and by employers as contributing to raising standards in provision. However, a few

providers report that supervisors, due to work pressures, are not always able to attend training sessions.

R8 In co-operation with local authority youth services, research:

- **The impact of work placements on youth service provision, in terms of their cost, value for money and the raising of standards**

The HEIs initially worked closely together with stakeholders through the Training Action Group Cymru (TAGC) on this issue which was first identified by the group in 2008 prior to the Estyn report. In 2011, a pilot exercise was carried out in the South Wales region to identify the cost benefits of placements and how they contribute to raising standards. (ETS requires 800 hours of work experience in varied youth and community organisations before a student can qualify.)

The internal study identified the cost to both academic and placement providers and to students and compared these costs with the benefits of fieldwork experience. It calculated the actual benefit of 'an extra pair of hands' to providers in real monetary terms. Focus groups of placement providers documented the advantages of student placements and the extra resources needed to support this. In the best examples, HEI's have made funding available to mitigate costs of placement supervision but this does not necessarily cover costs, and particularly extra cost such as transport incurred by students. Where this funding is not made available, providers are sometimes less keen to take on the responsibility for a student. Student focus groups as part of the study, demonstrated that students overwhelmingly recognised the value and benefits of fieldwork practice.

However, this research took place a few years ago and progress against this recommendation has been limited in terms of research on cost, value for money of placements.

It is known that local authority placements have declined in number as a result of funding cuts to local authority services. Based on its own internal research the sector believes that traditional youth services such as youth clubs and youth workers have been cut by 69% since 2010/11. However, a large proportion of youth work now takes place in other professional settings. The value in terms of support and the impact of the youth work approach is beginning to be recognised in settings such as housing associations and schools but this value is not yet documented or recorded in monetary terms.

- **The demand for Welsh-medium provision on youth and community courses**

HEIs report that there is little demand from students to be placed in Welsh medium settings. Most students are asked if they would like to submit assignments and carry out placements in the medium of Welsh at the beginning of their courses. Most HEIs do have access to Welsh medium placements and supervisors but report little take up. This is despite the increase in Welsh medium secondary education. As yet, there has been no research as to why this should be.

Further work is needed on this recommendation.

R9 Ensure that all students receive clear, constructive and timely feedback on their assignments and progress during placements

Scrutiny of students work and marking and feedback processes has shown that nearly all students receive constructive comments on their feedback in a timely fashion. The use of online platforms where students upload their work and can communicate with tutors has greatly improved and enhanced the feedback process. Students and tutors can also easily communicate electronically. We saw many examples of prompt replies to student's queries across the providers.

Many elements of the training are discussion and practice based. Students receive useful feedback and peer-review during sessions. There is wide use of self-reflective practice and most students report that supervisor feedback during placements is supportive and useful.

Regional consortia of local authority youth services should:**R10 Attend HEI programme development meetings to represent the interests of local authority youth services**

The contexts in which youth work is delivered has changed considerably since the publication of the last Estyn report (2010). The structures that facilitated collaborative arrangements between the principal youth officers and the regional consortia no longer exist.

However, there are local arrangements for work between HEIs and local authorities in all areas of Wales. These are generally positive, constructive, and developmental.

The ETS has held useful consultation events with the field as is now playing a very proactive role in the national workforce development working group to contribute to research to support and develop training for the profession.

Local authority youth services should:**R11 In co-operation with HEIs, contribute to the research into:**

- **The impact of work placements on youth service provision, in terms of their cost, value for money and the raising of standards of provision**
- **The demand for Welsh-medium and/or bilingual youth and community qualification courses**

Local authority youth services made a good start on this recommendation but changes in national policy and funding cuts have hampered progress.

We have discussed these issues elsewhere in the report but there is still a need for appropriate funding to be made available so that academics can be released to undertake this work in collaboration with colleagues from the field.

R12 Improve the quality assurance of work placements provided by their staff, to ensure that supervisors undertaking mentoring and assessment roles are appropriately qualified and fulfil their responsibilities

Local authorities have worked well with the HEI providers to improve the standard of supervision. HEIs have also embedded the importance of supervision skills into their modules to ensure that graduates are appropriately equipped with knowledge skills and confidence to become effective future fieldwork facilitators. This is an efficient way of making sure that supervisors of the future have the necessary skills.

HEIs have developed clear contracts with placement supervisors in all settings, which set out clear expectations and include health and safety requirements, and complaints and evaluation processes.

R13 Ensure that the arrangements for staff to undertake professionally qualifying courses are equitable taking into account the work-study balance required to achieve the qualification, and to make commitments to funding courses fully transparent

Part time study routes at undergraduate and post-graduate level now make it easier for employed staff to undertake training. It is still a heavy commitment for staff to follow courses in the context of heavy workloads and 'stretched' services. Youth work staff are often required to carry out other duties within a local authority setting against a background of heavy funding cuts to staffing and services. However, local authority managers report that they recognise the benefit of higher level training, both for their staff and for the organisation as a whole. Most local authorities are supportive of staff achieving professional status whilst in employment.

We did not research the equitability of training opportunities or funding for this piece of work.

Appendix 2: Evidence base

The findings and recommendations in this report draw on:

- desk-based research into a variety of policies and legislation
- meetings with ETS, EWC, CWVYS, WLGA's Principal Youth Officer's Group and members of the Interim Youth Work Board Workforce Strategy Group SPG
- questionnaire results from 104 respondents to an online survey of youth work training students conducted between December 2019 and February 2020
- conversations with students, educational and support staff, supervisors, senior managers and young people during visits to educational providers and workplace placement locations
- observations of various teaching and tutorial sessions at a range of levels as well as observing and interviewing students, and supervisors, in their workplace placements

We visited and interviewed the following bodies

Providers of youth work training courses:

- Addysg Oedolion Cymru-Adult Learning Wales
- Cardiff Metropolitan University
- The Open University
- University of South Wales
- University of Wales Trinity Saint David
- Urdd Gobaith Cymru
- Wrexham Glyndŵr University

Locations and organisations visited and/or interviewed providing work placements for youth work students:

- The Urban Circle Youth Arts Project (Newport)
- Monkton Priory Community Primary School, Pembroke
- Tanyard Youth Project, Pembroke
- Ysgol Rhydygors, Carmarthen
- Burns in the Community, Kidwelly
- Dr. M'z (Carmarthen Youth Project)
- Ruabon Youth Club and detached youth provision in Brymbo (Wrexham County Borough Council)
- Ysgol Clywedog (supported youth provision in a school environment in partnership with XL Mentoring)
- Boys and Girls Clubs of Wales (St. Athan Community Centre)

Appendix 3: Demographic data for young people

The total population in Wales at 2018 was 3.1 million and is expected to increase slightly by 2039 (ONS, 2020)

Table 3: Population and population projections for young people in Wales

Age Range	Population 2018 (%)	Population 2018	Population projection 2039	Population projected % change
Aged 11-25	18%	560,277	538,489	-4%
Aged 11-18	9%	274,779	268,880	-2%
Aged 19-25	9%	285,498	269,609	-6%

Sources: ONS, 2020

11 to 25-year-olds make up around 18% of the population in Wales, with 9% from the 11-18 age range and 9% from the 19-25 age range. The number of young people in the age range 11-25 is set to fall, with a projected decrease of 4% by 2039.

Table 4: Numbers of learners in Wales, 2020

Cohort	Age range	Number of young people
Learners in school	All school age	469,176
	11-15	165,998
	16 and over	22,478
Learners in further education institutions	16-24	61,700
Learners in work-based learning provision	16-24	26,050
Not in education, employment or training (APS 2020 Q1 estimate)	16-18	9,200 (9.2%)
	19-24	36,400 (15.4%)

Sources: StatsWales 2020b; 2020c; 2020d; Welsh Government 2020d

- In 2019, there were 6845 looked after children in Wales (StatsWales, 2019b).
- There were 82,400 11 to 25-year-olds accessing local authority youth provision in Wales; 15% of all 11 to 25-year-olds (Welsh Government, 2019b).
- Around 97,500 school-aged children have additional learning needs (21%) (Welsh Government, 2020c).
- Over 64,000 children of age 5 and over are fluent in Welsh (16%) (StatsWales, 2020a).
- In March 2019, 19,300 young people under 18 were sentenced in the criminal courts in England and Wales, over 3,600 fewer (16%) compared with the previous year (Youth Justice Board/Ministry of Justice, 2019).

- 28% of children in Wales were living in relative income poverty between 2016-2017 and 2018-2019, compared with a figure of 23% for people of all ages (Welsh Government, 2020b).
- More than 75,000 children (20%) of pupils of statutory school age are known to be eligible for free school meals (Welsh Government, 2020c).

Appendix 4: The All Wales Coherent Route

<https://www.etswales.org.uk/wales-coherent-route>

Glossary

Agored Cymru	Welsh awarding body for education and training providers in Wales
AOC/ALW	Addysg Oedolion Cymru/Adult Learning Wales
Cardiff Met	Cardiff Metropolitan University
CPD	Continuous professional development
CWVYS	Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services funded by the Welsh Government to represent and support voluntary youth organisations at a national level
ETS	Education Training Standards Wales
EWC	Education Work Force Council
Formal, Informal and non-formal	These terms, widely used in youth work policy and practice, arise from moves in UNESCO toward lifelong learning in the late 1960s and 1970s.
Education	Formal education: The hierarchically structured, chronologically graded 'education system', running from primary school through to university and including, in addition to general academic studies, a variety of specialised programmes and institutions for full-time technical and professional training Informal education: The truly lifelong process whereby every individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experience and the educative influences and resources in his or her environment – from family, neighbours, from work and play, from the market place, the library and the mass media Non-formal education: Any organised educational activity outside the established formal system – whether operating separately or as an important feature of some broader activity – that is intended to serve identifiable learning clienteles and learning objectives The distinction made is largely about setting and its impact on pedagogy and outcomes. Formal education is linked with schools and training institutions; non-formal with community groups and other organisations; and informal covers what is left, e.g. interactions with friends, family and work colleagues.

HE	Higher education
HEI	Higher education institution
Interim youth work board	This board was established in October 2018 following a commitment from the Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning. The board represents young people, the youth work sector and provides advice to Welsh Government ministers.
Mentrau iaith	Welsh language initiatives
NEET	Not in education, employment or training
Urdd Gobaith Cymru	Established in 1922 to give children and young people in Wales opportunities to learn and socialise in Welsh
UWTSD	University of Wales Trinity Saint David
Youth	In Wales defined as young people between the ages of 11 to 25
Youth Cymru	An organisation that aims to bring about positive change for young people through grass roots values and strategic influence
Youth services	Youth services are generally defined as services, which support the personal and social development of young people through informal and non-formal education provision. Local authorities are the primary provider, although the voluntary sector has been providing these services for much longer. Local authorities have broadly provided two types of service: The first can be defined as 'open-access' (or 'universal') services, which include a range of leisure, cultural, sporting, and enrichment activities often based around youth centres, and generally provided in partnership with local communities. The second is more targeted provision for vulnerable young people, including neighbourhood and street work outreach teams, youth advice and guidance services, youth justice teams, drug and alcohol misuse services, sexual health services and homelessness support. Local authority youth service provision is overseen by local authority officers, but service delivery may also be contracted out to local voluntary or community groups and, occasionally, private contractors. This local authority provision is often referred to as “the Youth Service”.
Youth support services	Under section 123 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000, the National Assembly may direct local authorities to provide, secure the provision of or participate in the provision of

youth support services. "Youth support services" means "services which in the opinion of the Assembly will encourage, enable or assist young persons (directly or indirectly) –

- (a) to participate effectively in education and training,
- (b) to take advantage of opportunities for employment, or
- (c) to participate effectively and responsibly in the life of their communities" (Great Britain, 2000).

Directions may require local authorities and others involved in the provision of youth support services to have regard to guidance issued by the National Assembly.

A Direction entitled the Youth Support Services Directions (Wales) 2002 has been given to all the local authorities in Wales.

A wide range of organisations provides youth support services. These include local authority provision, local voluntary sector providers, and national voluntary / third sector providers.

Youth work

Youth work is a way of working with young people that is educative, expressive, participative, and empowering.

It is a recognised methodology, which is underpinned by National Occupational Standards, regulated professional qualifications, and a defined ethical base. The 2016 National Occupational Standards for Youth Work state that:

"The key focus 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 is marked by key characteristics such as:

- the voluntary engagement with young people in the work/ service provided
- work that is focused upon either the individual young person or groups of young people, and their needs, and that starts from where the young people 'is/are at'
- subject from 2017 to regulation by the Education Workforce Council (EWC) Wales

Numbers – quantities and proportions

nearly all =	with very few exceptions
most =	90% or more
many =	70% or more
a majority =	over 60%
half =	50%
around half =	close to 50%
a minority =	below 40%
few =	below 20%
very few =	less than 10%

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Youth Work Practice Qualifications at Level 2 & Level 3
<https://etswales.org.uk/resource/YWP-2020-Briefing-paper-YWP-quals-levels-23-En.pdf>

Wales update on current Youth Work Practice qualifications at Levels 2 & 3 (JNC Youth Support Worker) 2020

This paper covers all JNC youth work qualifications with particular focus on the qualifications for Youth Support Workers.

The new suite of youth work qualifications at Level 2 and Level 3, first developed in 2015, have been updated and are available from 1 April 2020. As before, those at Certificate level provide JNC Youth Support Worker and JNC Assistant Youth Support Worker recognition to those who complete them.