

A Position Paper

FURTHER EDUCATION AND YOUTH SERVICE ASSOCIATION OF W&LES

POSITION PAPER ON THE YOUTH AND ADULT AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION SERVICE IN WALES

INTRODUCTION

The Further Education and Youth Service Association of Wales believes that a firm basis of officer administration and support is essential to the health and well being of a Youth, Adult and Community Service.

Over the twelve years since Local Government Re-organisation this basis has been eroded by a succession of cuts and re-organisations. The Association is convinced that this erosion can only weaken the delivery of the service at the face to face level, whether it be in the direct provision of statutory youth or adult centres, or in the indirect provision made possible through the professional support for the voluntary sector.

There is a background of misunderstanding of the nature of the Youth Service, and an undervaluing of current achievements within the community when set against the limited resources now available.

There are many statistics which will chart the progressive decline of the service, but the following four examples, from industrial South Wales, depopulated Mid Wales and rural North Wales, together with the review of the voluntary sector, will demonstrate effectively the nature of these reductions.

E X A M P L E S

EXAMPLE I

Prior to Local Government Re-organisation in 1974, there were five counties in North Wales, three of which (Anglesey, Caernarfon and Meirionydd) united to become Gwynedd, and two of which (Denbigh and Flint) became Clwyd.

The pattern of Youth and Community Officer cover in the old counties varied, as the provision differed within the counties but each had a County Officer, and in some cases, an Assistant Officer or Deputy. In Meirionydd one of the two officers shared duties between the statutory sector and the Young Farmers. The total personnel was therefore - 5 County Youth Officers, 5 Assistant Youth Officers or Deputies and one Youth Officer also undertaking duties with the Young Farmers.

This situation remained more or less the same on re-organisation, but subsequent cuts have resulted in the loss of an officer - now titled Youth and Community Officer-in Gwynedd and in Clwyd the posts were down-graded although responsibilities have increased, and the post of Deputy was eliminated. Subsequently, the posts in Clwyd were re-titled as Youth Officers although community responsibilities were still included.

All Youth/Community Officers in Gwynedd and Clwyd have responsibility for Village Hall and Community policies in addition to the day to day Youth Service.

Areas have been expanded and officers asked to undertake supervision of a larger number of units. In a large sparsely populated rural area, this means that the number of annual visits to Youth Centres has been seriously eroded with many centres only receiving one visit annually from their District Officer. On the Youth Leader side, however, the number of full-time centres has increased in North Wales since re-organisation. Gwynedd has increased from 3 to 7 but in all instances, new centres have been developed initially with the aid of Urban Aid Grants. Having established more full-time centres Gwynedd is faced with the problem of finding sufficient revenue expenditure to meet the demands of part-time centres. As a result of this policy many centres are only open on 1 evening per week and the opening season is reduced to 30 weeks.

EXAMPLE II

Powys was created in 1974 out of the three existing Mid-Wales counties of Breconshire, Montgomeryshire and Radnorshire, although some small parts of Breconshire were transferred to South Wales counties. Before the 1st April, 1974 each county had a Youth Service which fell within the field of responsibility of a County Further Education Officer. In practise however the detailed arrangements varied quite widely from county to county. The Breconshire Further Education Officer's field of work covered non-vocational Further Education only, although he also acted as Senior Adviser. Both the Further Education Officers for Montgomeryshire and Radnorshire were responsible for vocational and non-vocational Further Education. In Breconshire the Youth Service had been built around a series of full-time clubs, while the other two counties' clubs were all part-time staffed. In Montgomeryshire the Further Education Officer was assisted by a Youth officer while in Radnorshire until a few months before re-organisation a somewhat similar role was performed by the County Full-time Youth Leader.

The number of officers in post on the 1st April, 1974 substantially determined the structure which was set up by the new county. Powys was divided into two districts, north and south and the officers were appointed to work in each. The Senior Officer, entitled the Community Development Officer, as well as being in overall charge, took particular responsibility for the Adult Education Service and other adult and general

community provision. The Assistant Community Development Officers had particular charge of the Youth Service. Effectively, the equivalent of at least two officers were employed on Youth Service management, organisation and supervision in the County.

This pattern of staffing continued until the early 1980's when as a result of financial pressure changes were made. In 1981 one of the two Community Development Officers was redeployed to fill another senior county post vacant because of early retirement. This required the making of new arrangements, the county was divided into three districts instead of two, each of which was served by a single Community Development Officer, one of whom was appointed Senior Officer.

This reduction by twenty-five per cent in staffing, has been accompanied by other subsequent changes which have reflected on the role of the Community Development Officers and their workload. There has, since 1974, been a steady growth in the provision made through community centres, community halls, village halls, sports centres etc., reaching a point where this now represents a major commitment for the Authority and its officers.

There has also been a reduction in the clerical support provided and changes at Assistant Director level which have proved significant. Originally four Assistant Education Officers were appointed, one of whom was responsible for Further Education. In 198 these four were replaced by three Assistant Directors with a consequent increase in workload and the disappearance of the concept of a Senior Officer exclusively concerned with Further Education. This meant inevitably a further re-allocation of work and functions.

Effectively, all these changes have cumulatively resulted in the amount of staff deployed in the Youth Officer role being reduced to the equivalent of one full-time appointee, a more than 50% reduction. In practise, this represents the pre-1962 level of staffing.

EXAMPLE III

Prior to Local Government Re-organisation, Glamorgan was the largest and most populous county in Wales. In addition to the county, the geographic area contained the County Boroughs of Newport, Cardiff and Swansea, the Borough of Merthyr Tydfil and the Excepted District of Rhondda.

The Youth and Adult Service in the county was administered by a staff of eleven officers; under the umbrella title of Further Education Service, from a separate county office with a staff of eight clerical and administrative officers. In addition, in Youth and Adult work there were four officers in Cardiff, two in Swansea, one in Merthyr Tydfil and one in Rhondda, each with support staff making a total of 18.

Local Government Re-organisation transferred these areas into the three Glamorgans - South, West and Mid (with some Boundary adjustments which do not affect the current discussion). Over the period between 1974 and the time of writing (1986), the counties have undergone several re-organisations, individually, and a succession of cuts in the Youth and Adult services. The officer staffing in the area is now:-

South Glamorgan, 3 - Mid Glamorgan, 10
West Glamorgan, 2 - a total of 14

This is a cut of 4 - a reduction of over 18%. In addition the support staff has been cut - for example, the special Mid Glamorgan office in Bridgend was closed with the loss of all eight jobs, officers working from County Hall instead. Six of the Mid Glamorgan staff are designated Field Officers and paid at a lower rate.

At the same time, additional responsibilities have increased the workload of the officers. The Adult Basic Education Service was introduced and developed. The Manpower Services Agency was created, and with it a multiplicity of schemes for unemployed people which the officers are expected to service. Replan, the Community Programme, Urban Aid and rural development programmes were invented, and although all of these brought in welcome resources to the service, they all required officer time. The Glamorgan Youth Centres were staffed by a Warden and a Deputy. In the three new counties there are no longer Deputy posts. Such changes also require additional support from officer staff, and demand new roles of all workers, which require different kinds of support. Officers are expected to be able to deliver such support, and to cope with all the many demands on them. It is pointed out that voluntary work cannot survive effectively unless it too is professionally supported and this role too falls to the officers.

EXAMPLE IV

Dyfed inherited three different systems of continuing education from the three former authorities.

Ceredigion promoted its adult education at the colleges of F.E.; at one full-time community education centre and at part-time centres in secondary schools. Youth service provision was made principally by the voluntary youth organisations supported by part-time L.E.A. youth centres based in areas of greatest population.

Carmarthen adopted a policy of creating full-time community education centres by converting schools and village halls. Each of these centres (five in all) promoted adult education classes on three evenings per week and youth service on two evenings per week. Secondary schools were not used by a number of adult education classes but these were held at the F.E. college.

Pembrokeshire initiated a 10 year building programme immediately after "Albemarle" which resulted in a sophisticated service based on eight strategically placed full-time F.E. centres. These centres accommodated adult education, youth service, community education and the arts and promoted additional adult education classes at secondary schools.

Following the establishment of Dyfed, the Pembrokeshire system of non vocational F.E. was adopted but was never realised due to lack of finance. Consequently the service continued to develop as three independent entities.

The non vocational service in the former counties was administered by a staff of three but on entry into Dyfed that increased to four.

There were 50 full-time staff employed in the service during the early years of Dyfed; that has been reduced to 15 and the officer in charge of the service reduced from 5 to 3.

Basic provision is still being made in all areas of the service with the Authority still maintaining 13 full-time F.E. centres and four full-time community education centres but these are staffed by only 12 full-time wardens with limited part-time assistance. In most cases the Warden is required to administer a major F.E. Centre, Community Centre and Adult Education at secondary schools, as well as other services.

The role of the two remaining Area Further Education Officers has also become more demanding as additional responsibilities are allocated to them.

The voluntary organisations have also suffered from financial cutbacks of late with many of the main organisations having to find funds to support their administrative costs.

Little or no in-service training is arranged by the Authority and without such provision the inevitable result is a reduction in the quality and availability of the field work.

EXAMPLE V

Voluntary Organisations

As far as Voluntary Organisations are concerned there appears to have been little movement within the structure of officer staffing since 1973. The structure of most organisations has remained the same but the staff situation has not been increased to keep pace with the development expected and demanded by today's economic and social climates.

In order to cope with the increasing facets of development more and more voluntary organisations are using M.S.C. or other grant aiding bodies to obtain officers for specific areas of training or development, mainly in the brackets of "community service". With one exception, where the organisation concerned has steadfastly refused to accept this form of staffing, most organisations are now employing Project Officers for a specified time on a specified youth and community project. There is concern that this could be developed into an alternative system of employing staff for all levels of youth work.

According to the Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth, services in 1978, there were 386 full-time leaders and organisers in the voluntary youth service in Wales. These were assisted by 27,666 voluntary helpers and Leaders of single units or clubs. The membership they covered was 255,649.

By 1984, this membership had increased to 278,223, but the staffing level has not increased. A number of part-time or Project Officers included in this original number have now left, and have not been replaced.

At the time of the H.M.I. Survey of 1984, fourteen organisations were reported upon out of the forty-four registered in Wales.

In these fourteen organisations, there were 76 paid leaders but these included nine Directors or General Secretaries, four field officers, three full-time project officers, two part-time officers, and three training officers. The rest were made up of County or Regional Officers and in one organisation, Wardens of each club or unit.

All other clubs were staffed by voluntary members of the public who acted as unpaid leaders. This voluntary help was extended to all events, competitions and fund-raising projects initiated by these organisations.

The cutback in staff has really been felt in the administrative back-up of the voluntary youth service. Besides their development and field work, most staffs are more and more involved in administration and particularly in the administration of finance. In some instances, they are aware that they are responsible for finding the funding for their own salaries plus the actual financial support needed for the total administration of the organisations. Officers have not been trained to cope with these demands, which are not in keeping with the delivery of youth work.

The amount of time and effort involved in fund-raising and organising it at a local level frustrates development work. Without financial backing many projects within youth work cannot take place, and the amount of field work undertaken is inhibited by the amount of work taken up by finances. It should be obvious that sources of money are no longer so readily available, and there is increased pressure on those remaining. For example, because of the unemployment situation, flag days no longer raise as much as they once did.

The increased pressure on voluntary organisations causes them to look for more support from their colleagues in the Statutory Service. As the other examples show, these officers are now undertaking such diverse roles that it is increasingly difficult for them to respond. Consequently, many voluntary organisation officers and youth workers feel confused and undervalued and in need of support.

Neither sector fully understands the problems and roles of the other, and this further supports the argument for more training in both sectors of officers who are having to undertake new tasks.

Voluntary Sector officers feel very vulnerable to cuts, and need reassurance that they will continue to have the resources they need. Organisations face closure of a number of their smaller clubs and the weakening of the whole foundation of their organisations if they are to be forced to take more cutbacks.

Many officers felt that some of the developments being considered for the Youth Service as a whole could endanger their identity and they are highly concerned to maintain the traditions upon which their work is based.

Finally, it is pointed out that salary scales have failed to keep pace with those of the Statutory Sector and thus recruitment of qualified and experienced staff has suffered.

CONCLUSIONS

It is not the purpose of the present discussion to enlarge upon the social changes which have affected the needs of the young people and adults who are the clients of the service. Suffice it to draw attention to these all too well known problems created by unemployment and financial recession, and to instance the sweeping changes in the role of the officers which have resulted, bringing with them greatly increased workload and need for skills. Skills which were not expected to be in the repertoire of the officers when their posts were created.

The decrease in financial resources available has meant greater attention to the detail how they will be deployed, more care for cost effective management, and many hard new decisions about priorities. Often this results in long hours of discussion, fact gathering and difficult consultations with those who are losing out.

Establishments provided by both Voluntary and Statutory Sectors are being more widely used. Inevitably this creates more administrative work, if only in programming, and in authorising and arranging maintenance and cleaning. Ideally it should result in additional time spent in visiting and monitoring work, particularly where voluntary groups are using buildings, as such groups work more effectively when well supported.

The community needs and demands of the clients have changed radically and become much more diverse. For example, the attitude to women's role has changed, and there are demands for greater educational opportunities; unemployed adults come for education at times which are outside the old standards, young people have personal crises to cope with. Many adults who formerly worked voluntarily for long hours are no longer prepared to do so.

Because of the greater administrative load created by these and other factors, officers are being diverted away from face to face work.

They are being required to become financial experts in a hitherto unprecedented way. They need to be aware of all the varied sources of additional finance they or their clients and colleagues can apply to. They need to have the skills and the time to present such applications or to advise on their presentation. They need to be able to operate budgetary control systems, and to plan and control financial matters very closely.

The present pattern of facilitating development is through specific grants allocated by Government established bodies (e.g. M.S.C.) which set their own terms of reference. These do not always easily tie in with local needs. Adjusting programmes and provision to meet these terms of reference creates additional problems and workloads and can distort provision unacceptably. Short term projects and appointments result in lack of continuity and additional work in order to ensure that provision is maintained.

In some cases attempts have been made to compensate for the deficiencies in provision at officer level resulting from the factors discussed in this paper, by using full-time centre heads to undertake tasks formerly considered to be the province of officers. As a result the face to face delivery of youth work at centre level is weakened.

In many cases when vacancies occur posts are frozen for a time before new appointments are made in order to save money. This means a temporary, but nonetheless burdensome, distribution of additional work, or a total loss of functions.

Officers have also to add to their responsibilities servicing of or liaison, or response to, bodies such as:~

Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit
Manpower Services
Re-plan
Leisure Services, Sports Council Initiatives
International Youth Year
National Institute of Adult Continuing Education
National Youth Bureau
Council for Education and Training for Youth and Community Work
Welsh Office
Welsh Joint Education Committee
Urban Aid
Development Board for Rural Wales
European Economic Community
Assorted Charitable Trusts

All these bodies bring benefits to the clients - but all demand time and skill in servicing their concerns. All this has taken place against a background of restricted resources, often restricted mobility, and restricted secretarial support, whether in closure of offices or reduction in hours of clerical time.

Salaries have failed to keep pace with those in other sectors of education - which themselves compare unfavourably with those elsewhere - and recruitment suffers accordingly.

One response to the above demands is through improved training for officers.

The implications can be defined as:-

- a) Initial training; Full-time Youth Service personnel are now expected to undertake a variety of managerial tasks. Therefore, the Association recommends that the Training Agencies be required to include a sound basis of Management Training in their Initial Training Courses, and be encouraged to provide short refresher courses in management for promotion/induction purposes.
- b) Recruitment; The Association affirms that proper provision is only possible when officers are appointed with a sound basis of training for and experience of the service. Salaries should be commensurate with the nature of the duties required.
- c) Training agencies; The Association recommends that Training Agencies in Wales be requested to make strong links with the field; to identify and keep abreast of current training needs and to be aware of the nature of posts for which training is provided.

d) Training; It is the responsibility of employers to provide, and the duty of officers to take advantage of, opportunities for in-service training. The Association recommends that all full-time personnel be provided with detailed job descriptions which are periodically reviewed.

1. Induction

The Association stresses the need for adequate arrangements for induction to be made at local level.

2. In-service training

In order to facilitate the cross fertilisation of ideas the Association stresses the need for the creation of opportunities for officers to receive training at Welsh level, supplemented by co-operative arrangements with colleagues from elsewhere in the U.K., and indeed, in Europe.

3. Training content will vary from time to time, but it must

- a) be directly relevant
- b) cater for diverse needs
- c) cater for the specific Welsh cultural dimensions

4. Current concerns which the Association feels should be addressed as soon as possible are:-

- a) analysis of effective professional visits and relationships
- b) up-dating on new technologies and their implications for use of resources and management
- c) information base about how national and local financial administration works
- d) up-dating on management skills with special reference to appropriate techniques used in industry

5. The Association is conscious of the need for training for officers to be presented in such a way as to make it possible for them to undertake it on a part-time or distance learning basis, since in a period of financial constraint secondment or long term release is unlikely.

6. It is suggested that eventually a system of training is evolved which will be cohesive and co-ordinated, and could eventually lead in a modular way, to a certificate of competence which might be considered for exemption from part of a higher academic qualification.

THE NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN WALES

Over the years the question of the needs of young people in their leisure time has often been debated. Various theories have been advanced and discussed involving physical needs, social needs, intellectual needs, moral needs etc. In many ways this is fertile territory for academic debate and the exposition of ideas about how they can be helped. Such debate has its attractions, but can lack positive outcomes.

Perhaps it may be more satisfactory to look at these issues at a rather more mundane level and against the actual context of the communities in which the young people live in Wales.

1. Rurality

Much of Wales is by current standards very rural. Most kinds of recreational and leisure facilities are scarce or non-existent; employment opportunities are limited in range and income levels are low. Youth Service organisations therefore have to provide for the social contact and companionship with people, to provide opportunities for taking part in a whole range of sporting and cultural activities and of learning how to take responsibility for an office in a democratic organisation. The latter is of particular importance in rural areas since so much of the quality of life depends on the ability of people to run their own affairs and organise their own activities.

If most of these rural communities are to survive the young people who live in them have to be made to feel they are worthwhile places in which to be and not the dead end back of beyond. i

2. Welsh Culture

Many young people - particularly those for whom Welsh is a first language but also others - evince a strong need to protect their sense of identity and culture. Economic decline has been a constant problem in both the rural areas and urban areas of much of Wales. Such decline undermines and threatens the language and the traditional communities and values. At time of rapid change in so many areas the young as well as the old need a secure sense of identity.

3. Urban Wales

Outside of the two or three large towns of the South Wales coastal belt much of rural Wales, whether the Valley communities, the N.E. Wales industrial area or the holiday towns and market towns, suffers from problems and deficiencies similar in many ways to those of the rural areas. The young people who live in such places need the opportunities for social contact and to participate in activities, skills and interests. Such opportunities will often not be available to them except through the Youth Service.

In addition, the level of unemployment for young people in such communities is high.

4. Unemployment

This is a problem throughout the Principality. Possibly, however, its impact is greatest in the larger communities. It is now quite clear that although only some of the young have suffered the full effect of the depression, all have to some extent suffered. The status of the young has declined and the disposable income grown proportionately less. Above all their sense of security has been undermined and with it their range of leisure time activities and pursuits. Many of these are now effectively closed to the young.

5. Conurbations

Although Wales has no urban conurbations to compare to those of England and Scotland there are three large towns located on the South Wales coast. In these communities young people are faced with many of the problems and demands which have become associated with the inner urban areas including mixed race communities, drug abuse, homelessness, sexual difficulties, poverty, crime etc. Although these are to be found in varying degrees in all sizes of community they are most clearly visible and have most impact in such cities. This creates particular needs and requires particular effort to be made to meet them.

6. Rate of Change

Change has happened and is happening with increasing rapidity. These are many examples of specific needs arising to which a response must be made. It is outside the scope of this document to address them, but attention is drawn to the tensions arising from such things as the change in attitudes to and of women, race, age, class