

The Context for the Papers ‘Extending Entitlement Revisited: The Maintained Youth Service 2002-2007’

Introduction

I have made available nine papers focused on data about the maintained Youth Service in Wales, collected and analysed from 2002 to 2007 when the Youth Service was first being directed by the Welsh Government policy ‘Extending Entitlement’. I am publishing these papers now as there are issues which need to be considered due to the reinvigorated political interest in Extending Entitlement (the context of which is described below). These papers are intended to be a reminder that the translation of Extending Entitlement policy into practice was not a positive experience for the Youth Service in Wales and that there are inherent dangers that a refreshed Extending Entitlement will have just as many negative connotations unless we learn from, and respond to, the lessons from the past.

Context

In July 2016, The Children, Young People and Education (CYPE) Committee of the National Assembly for Wales agreed to undertake a “snapshot” inquiry into Youth Work in Wales, the aim of which was to review the effectiveness of Welsh Government’s strategy and policies in respect of youth work.

Terms of reference for the Inquiry were to identify:

1. Young people’s access to youth work services;
2. The effectiveness of Welsh Government strategy and policy on youth work;
3. Funding for youth work (Local Authority, Welsh Government, European, Third Sector); and
4. Any other issues considered to be relevant to the Inquiry.

The CYPE Committee published their report in December 2016 and made 10 recommendations to the Minister responsible for Youth Work. The first recommendation stated that:

“The Minister should review the National Strategy and refresh the statutory guidance in consultation with stakeholders and young people. A detailed action plan for implementation, including timescales, must be developed alongside a new strategy”.

An electronic copy of the report can be found on the National Assembly’s website: www.assembly.wales/SeneddCYPE

Following the publication of the report, a meeting of the Youth Work Reference Group was held on 9th December, which was attended by Alun Davies AM, the Minister responsible for Youth Work within his Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language portfolio. In relation to the Inquiry into Youth Work, the Minister stated that he was committed to a **‘re fresh’ of Extending Entitlement** and made a commitment to give an Oral Statement on the future of Youth Work to the National Assembly in the spring of 2017.

Extending Entitlement – described by politicians as a flagship document (a popular term for many documents published by the Welsh Government) for work with young people – was

launched in 2000 (Welsh Assembly Government 2000). This was followed in 2002 by Extending Entitlement Direction and Guidance (Welsh Assembly Government 2002) which described the procedures for providing support to 11-25 year olds across Wales. The main objectives of Extending Entitlement were described as being to unify and strengthen policy and practice for young people in Wales in five ways:

1. A more positive focus on achievement and what young people have to contribute.
2. A stronger focus on building the young person's capacity to become independent, make choices and participate in the democratic process.
3. Improvements in the quality and responsiveness of the services available to young people.
4. Involving young people, which is key to achieving the above.
5. More effective co-ordination and partnership at local level

(Welsh Assembly Government 2000: 22)

Extending Entitlement claimed it was not a **short-term project**, but a **comprehensive long-term strategic policy**. A core element of this strategy was changing the way service providers in Wales think about their work and to promote the delivery of services to young people in a manner which is co-ordinated and which maximises the ability of young people to access and benefit from their full range of Entitlements. The key features of Extending Entitlement are, therefore:

- It is targeted at **all** young people aged 11-25 living in Wales.
- It is about maximising the opportunities and choices for all young people such that their access to enhancing activities is promoted. Extending Entitlement is not about minimum standards, it is about aspirations and achievement for all young people.
- It is comprehensive in the sense that it embraces all national and local agencies and organisations whose work has an impact on the opportunities and choices of young people in Wales.
- It is comprehensive in the sense that it is concerned with all aspects of the lives of young people.
- It is a long-term strategy involving structural, cultural and attitudinal changes in the way services and support are provided

(Haines et al 2004)

As a consequence of the re-emergence of interest in Extending Entitlement, including the recent decision by the Minister of 'refreshing' it, I believe it is important to make available a series of previously unpublished papers, which collected and analysed data shortly after the publication of Extending Entitlement Direction and Guidance. These papers, as part of my PhD research, provide an externally validated evaluation of the Youth Service at that time. I believe this action is important because the Extending Entitlement document, and the process that led to its writing, has become either generally ignored or romanticised.

There are a number of examples about how Extending Entitlement is ignored.

At the strategic management end, little attention is paid to it by local authority officers who have a strategic responsibility for the Youth Service within their portfolio of responsibilities. Many are working in relatively new structures and some are neither qualified or experienced Youth Workers or have any expertise in the profession. This lack of qualification, experience and relevant expertise is also found in many of the Civil Servants who provide advice to the Minister on matters related to Youth Work. This situation would be less important if these were only concerned with monitoring and evaluating performance of Youth Work priorities and the outcomes of the Youth Work process as these are identified in government policy rather than attempting to direct Youth Work practice away from what is described in such documents as the 'National Youth Work Strategy' (Welsh Government 2014) and the Purpose and Principles of Youth Work (Youth Work in Wales Review Group 2013).

At the practice end, qualified and experienced Youth Workers have in recent years been conditioned to believe that Youth Service priorities are predominantly linked to providing support as a means of ensuring the employability of young people and to increase the number of them obtaining formal academic qualifications. While this has some resonance with the content and ethos of Extending Entitlement, the document has been overwhelmed by a surfeit of other related publications each in their own way branded as 'flagship documents' that would revolutionise education and the employability prospects of all young people.

Within the professional training of Youth Workers, limited attention is given to Extending Entitlement by students studying to become professionally qualified Youth Workers, many of whom are unaware of its existence.

However, a small number of individuals do remember Extending Entitlement and describe it as the best document ever written for young people in Europe. It is a publication, the romanticists would say, that made us the envy of other aspiring countries and national young people's organisations, who described Wales as being so fortunate to have such a creative and innovative government who were committed to the development of all young people. Some of these romantics were closely linked to the development of the document who fully understand both its potential and the highest political support given – at the time of its writing – to its production.

As the Assistant and then Acting Chief Executive of the Wales Youth Agency (an organisation which lasted 3 years after the publication of Extending Entitlement Direction and Guidance) and as a PhD researcher at the time of Extending Entitlement, my lived experience was very different to both of these positions. For me it is a document that prioritised the short-lived Young People's Partnerships over Youth Work. It was a document that confused many Youth Workers into believing that Youth Work had a statutory base and as a consequence was secure. It was a document that promulgated, even today, the term 'services for young people' which means nothing because of its vagueness, at the expense of what was the positive well-recognised Youth Service brand. It was a document that led to the development as such initiatives as 'Demonstrating Success' which wasted an excessive amount of public money in an attempt to measure the 'distance travelled by young people' through their voluntary involvement in creative, innovative and well-tried activities

delivered by the Youth Service. The only outcome of this approach was the redefining of Youth Work outcomes to ensure they fitted into increasingly mechanistic methods of evaluation. These actions have ensured that Youth Work has been driven into the margins to be criticised or ignored by politicians because it is unable to articulate a useful contribution to the priorities of the current flagship document.

Therefore, my aim is to make available research conducted at that time which will hopefully be read by some and which might motivate them to ensure the refresh of Extending Entitlement does not become quickly ignored or continues to be romanticised. Rather, the refreshed Extending Entitlement becomes a relevant and useful document that re-energises the Youth Service to be the force for good for individual young people, the communities within which they live and society in general. This is critical because the Youth Service in Wales is in serious danger of losing its institutional identity as its history is both ignored and romanticised. As Bernard Davies said in his history of the Youth Service in England, *“I have become highly sensitive to (even impatient with) how easily even its immediate past slips away, unnoticed and undervalued. This is a service, I am tempted to conclude, without a history – and therefore, if it is not very careful, without an identity.”* The Youth Service in Wales is very close to this point.

Extending Entitlement Revisited Papers:

The focus of the investigation which relied on data collected and analysed between early 2002 and 2007 was to establish if the maintained Youth Service in Wales was concurrently able to meet the needs of young people and the requirements of relevant Government Policy while maintaining its discrete identity as described within its purposes¹ and values² statements.

Paper 1: [Setting the scene](#)

Paper 2: [How was the evidence found and analysed?](#)

Paper 3: [The needs of young people and the Maintained Youth Service response](#)

Paper 4: [What did politicians want from the Maintained Youth Service?](#)

Paper 5: [How Knowledgeable were those working in the Maintained Youth Service of its discrete identity during the time of the Extending Entitlement launch?](#)

Paper 6: [Did the Maintained Youth Service have the tools to meet the priorities of Extending Entitlement?](#)

Paper 7: [What was happening in the Maintained Youth Service at the time of Extending Entitlement?](#)

Paper 8: [What did the Maintained Youth Service do after Extending Entitlement and how was this measured?](#)

Paper 9: [Findings and recommendations](#)

¹ To provide equality of opportunity for all young people in order that they may fulfil their potential as empowered individuals and as members of groups and communities - To support young people in the transition to adulthood - To assist young people to develop attitudes and skills which enable them to make purposeful use of their personal resources and time

² Which recognize: social education as the core process in youth and community work; the ability and inability of people to resolve problems and change themselves; the tension and distinction between empowering and controlling people; the rights to self determination; the importance of collective action and collaborative working relationships; and the value of co-operation and conflict

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