

# Youth Work and the Policy Context in Wales

## Introduction

The intention of this resource is to provide a very broad overview of the policy context in which Youth Work and services for young people are developing in Wales. It also includes useful links to organisations working with young people in Wales and links to other publications and resources particularly relevant to practice in Wales.

It is hoped that this resource will be informative and act as a gateway to other sources of information relevant to practice and, where appropriate, students' studies. It is a paper that will be updated on a regular basis. If readers wish to contribute to its development or feel it contains inaccuracies or omissions please send comments to the e-library which can be accessed at [www.youthworkwales.org.uk](http://www.youthworkwales.org.uk) / [info@youthworkwales.org.uk](mailto:info@youthworkwales.org.uk)

## The Meaning of Policy

**Policy** can be described as a plan or course of action of an organisation (this could be national or local government or a political party, or a company or voluntary organisation) intended to influence and determine decisions, actions, and other matters. As a consequence, policy is developed in accordance with the priorities of particular organisations or political parties. In the context of this paper it is about elected politicians at national and local level determining how Youth Work and closely linked activities involving young people, such as education, social welfare, leisure and crime reduction will be delivered, measured and financed. This short paper does not intend to examine government policy in any depth. Rather, it intends to provide a broad overview as a means of providing a foundation for further investigation. This could require a more in-depth examination of political party priorities as a means of interpreting how these have affected young people and the importance given by government to the Youth Service. The critical link between policy development and policy implementation is of course the issue of government-allocated finance. Becoming a core policy priority would for many be the ultimate goal for the Youth Service.

Since 1945 there have been 18 elected governments. Nine of these have been Labour Party led and 8 Conservative Party led. Since 2010 there is a coalition government in power, involving the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats. However, the influence of central government on the Youth Service could be seen as minimal with little deliberate mention being made of it in national policy documents. The Youth Service is devolved to local authorities who rely on limited policy direction. In addition it is not a hypothecated provision. This allows each local authority to determine the levels of spending for the Youth Service regardless of the funding made available to it from central government or, in the case of Wales, the Welsh Assembly.

Since the end of the Second World War there have been two powerful political dynasties. Margaret Thatcher was elected as the Leader of the Conservative Party in 1979 and remained in power until she was replaced by John Major in 1990. The Conservative Party remained in power until 1997. This meant the Conservative Party had been in power for 18 years. They were replaced in 1997 by Tony Blair Leader of the Labour Party. He remained as Prime Minister until 2007 when he was replaced by Gordon Brown who went on to lose the 2010 General Election. Both Thatcher and Blair had, for most of their time in power, significant majorities which resulted in a weak opposition. This allowed both leaders to develop policy in an often radical and unopposed way. Local Management of Schools (LMS) under the Thatcher government was a far-reaching move with significant and probably unintentional implications for the Youth Service, as was the development of the Social Inclusion initiative of Tony Blair which led to the Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) agenda and the broadening of the Youth Service into more generic 'services for young people'. After three years in power, the policy approach of the coalition government has been focused on reducing public expenditure, particularly that related to the welfare budget. Their priorities have also seen a continuing emphasis on formal education results measured against the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) which indicate poor ratings for the UK. The implications for the Youth Service is a further drawing in of its activities to school-based learning measured through externally verified exams. It is an approach that too often misses the non-formal education and informal-learning opportunities provided by an effective Youth Service.

## **The History of the Youth Service in Wales**

The Youth Service has been evolving for more than 170 years during which it has developed a specific set of interrelated principles, values and ethics which directs its work. It is important to understand this evolution as a means of ensuring that the historical development of the Youth Service does not slip away unnoticed and undervalued. History is important, without it the Youth Service can become an organisation without an identity or a recognised position in the lives of young people. This deprivation of insights into why things are as they are, these gaps in historical awareness, also cut off practitioners and policy-makers from crucial analytical tools for current planning and action (Davies 1999).

Youth Service history can be divided into three broad areas;

1. Its voluntary beginnings (1844-1939)
2. The introduction and development of the local authority Youth Service from 1939
3. The development of a specific Youth Service in Wales from 1996

## **Voluntary Beginnings**

The origins of youth work in Wales follow a process developed in England during the early Victorian era where it has been identified by a culture of philanthropic activity underpinned by a middle class perception of moral order. This early history has been seen as a time when work with young people was characterised by both appalling social and employment conditions and by rapid social change caused by the development of an industrialised urban society. The period was a time of growing awareness by government of the need to introduce policy that would lead to a more clearly defined state directed formal education service, both as a means of social control and to provide an educated workforce, more able to contribute to the rapidly developing industrial environment.

Examples of the youth organisations developed during this time are the YMCA (1844) whose purpose was 'concern for the spiritual welfare of young men in drapery and other trades by the introduction of religious services among them.' The Boys' Brigade formed in 1883 emphasised 'good character through drills and discipline' and the Boy Scout Movement in 1907 being concerned to encourage young men to 'work for the good of their country or for the business in which they were employed'. The Girl Guides Movement began in 1910 and the Urdd Gobaith Cymru (Welsh League of Youth) was introduced in 1922 to protect and promote the Welsh Language. In 1928 the South Wales Federation of Boys' Clubs started, funded by the welfare section of the Ocean Coal Company into which individual miners made weekly contributions.

## **The Local Authority Youth Service**

Central government recognised the need for a more comprehensive youth work framework involving both the voluntary sector and local authorities when they produced circular 1486 'The Service of Youth' (HMSO 1939). This resulted in the Education Board, the forerunner of the ministry of Education, assuming responsibility for youth welfare as part of the national system of education. This was followed by the 1944 Education Act which required every local authority to provide '*adequate facilities for recreation and social and physical training*'. During the period from 1944 up to 1996 a number of key documents and reports were published that helped shape the Youth Service in Wales including;

- Albemarle Report - England and Wales (HMSO 1960)
- Milson and Fairbairn Report - England and Wales (HMSO 1969)
- Thompson Report – England only (HMSO 1982)
- Survey 13 – Wales only (Welsh Office 1984)
- Ministerial Conferences - England and Wales (Wales Youth Agency 1989-1992)
- Curriculum Statement - Wales only (Wales Youth Agency 1992)
- Management Issues for the 90s - Wales only (Coopers Lybrand Deloitte 1991)

## **The Development of a specific Youth Service in Wales**

The present-day Youth Service in Wales has, since the mid 1990's been shaped and directed by a small number of significant political changes. These changes have included local government reorganization in 1996, which resulted in the amalgamation of the existing eight county councils and 37 district councils into 22 single-tier unitary authorities. This had a fundamental effect on how the Youth Service in Wales has been structured, delivered and managed from that time to this. There was also a growing awareness of the need to become independent from the Youth Service in England as a new-found confidence was discovered following the setting up of the Wales Youth Work Partnership which became the Wales Youth Agency in 1992. These strategic initiatives led in 1992 to the development of a Wales specific Curriculum Statement for Youth Work in Wales and the setting up of an Education and Training Standards Committee for Wales in 1994 which allowed for innovative training programmes to be delivered and endorsed in Wales.

In 1997 New Labour won the General Election replacing the Conservative Party which had dominated UK politics since 1979. This new political era led in 1999 to a new devolved administration for Wales – set up initially as a National Assembly - with responsibility for a number of key functions, including education, within which the Youth Service in Wales has been mostly located. The Welsh Assembly Government from its earliest beginnings emphasized the importance of partnership between organizations working with young people, with the retention of professional and occupational boundaries being important. This is in a number of ways different from the approach that underpinned the children and young people's agenda in England as this was identified within the Connexions framework and an emphasis on integrated services. From its inauguration, the new devolved administration wanted to promote a new way of operating, described as 'Team Wales'. This was an approach designed to maximize the relationship between the private, public, and voluntary sectors as a means of delivering its three major themes of sustainable development, social inclusion, and equal opportunities. These themes would be linked to new education and training initiatives with their ability, in the opinion of Davidson, the then Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning, to liberate talent, extend opportunity, empower communities, and help create wealth. To achieve this 'Team Wales' approach it was recognized that Wales would need, at times, to develop its own strategic direction away from England through developing its own policy direction. This position was further reinforced when it was claimed "*we aim to do things differently in Wales – through our 'Made in Wales' approach...as a means to create unique Welsh solutions to Welsh problems*" (Davidson 2001).

This new era of increasing independence from England to which the Youth Service had always been linked (Ministry of Education 1960; Welsh Office 1984; NAW 2000) allowed for amendments described within Section 123 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000. This enabled the National Assembly to direct Welsh local authorities to provide, secure or participate in the provision

of youth support services which would encourage, enable or assist young people to:

- participate effectively in education and training;
- take advantage of opportunities for employment;
- participate effectively and responsibly in the life of their communities.

Arising from the Welsh amendments to the Learning and Skills Act 2000 came the development of the Wales-specific Extending Entitlement strategy which required the 22 local authorities to set up Young People's Partnerships (YPP's) as the primary vehicle for maximizing multi-agency activity to deliver 10 stated entitlements to 11-25 year olds. These were coordinated through Chief Executives for the purpose of reviewing and developing services for the entire cohort of young people in their local authority area. The outcomes of the Extending Entitlement strategy were planned to;

- better equip young people to make an effective transition into independent adulthood;
- ensure young people can access their full entitlement and contribute to the social and economic prosperity of Wales; and
- enhance cultural life.

To identify how they would achieve these outcomes, local authorities had to write a strategic 5-year Young People's Plan. In addition, each local authority was required to provide a Youth Service and to have in place arrangements for the sharing of information and for keeping in touch with young people. During this time the Curriculum Statement for Youth Work in Wales was revised in 2002 by the Wales Youth agency and in 2007 by the Standing Conference for Youth Work.

As a response to the requirement to have a Youth Service in each local authority a National Youth Service Strategy (WAG 2007) was produced with the Youth Service being described as the structure within which a form of work with young people is undertaken in both the maintained and voluntary sectors. Youth work within this framework was described as being underpinned by a number of clearly defined characteristics:

1. The voluntary involvement by young people who have chosen to engage in the process;
2. being age specific, focused on 11-25 year olds with 13-19 year olds being the priority;
3. having a predominantly non-formal education approach;
4. being driven by a young-people-first approach;
5. having open access, it is available to all young people who want to make use of it.

The strategy also described the Youth Service as an organisation with a positive view of young people. It was also described as an organisation capable of providing a unique learning environment that would be built on the quality of the relationship developed with the trained and skilled adult worker and the voluntary attendance of the young people it came into contact with.

The outcomes for young people from this learning environment were identified as: active participation; wider skills development; and enhanced emotional competence. Supporting the development of the strategy were the UK wide National Occupational Standards (LLUK 2008 / LSIS 2012) which identified the purpose, principles and values underpinning the Youth Service approach to working with young people.

The need for a specific Young People's Partnerships and Plans were quickly superseded by the production of the Children Act 2004 whose guidance required local authorities to co-ordinate - from 2008 - collaborative working arrangements identified in an overarching Children and Young People's Plan for all children and young people aged 0-25. Incorporated within the Children and Young People's Plan would be the collaboration and planning requirements for 11-25 year olds that had been set out in *Extending Entitlement*. The Children and Young People's Plans would be driven by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which since 1999 had become the basis of all work for children and young people in Wales. The 'Rights of Children and Young Persons Measure (2011) confirmed the commitment of the Welsh Assembly to a rights-based approach by requiring Welsh Ministers to have due regard to Convention on the Rights of the Child when making decisions about proposed new policies or legislation or about reviewing or changing existing policies. From 2014 this approach will be further strengthened when Welsh Ministers must have due regard to the rights in the UNCRC whenever they use any of their legal powers or duties.

The Welsh Assembly Government has translated the UN Convention into "7 Core Aims" which state that young people should:

1. Have a flying start in life;
2. Have a comprehensive range of educational and learning opportunities;
3. Enjoy the best possible health free from abuse, victimisation and exploitation;
4. Have access to play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities;
5. Be listened to, treated with respect, and have their race and cultural identity recognised;
6. Enjoy the benefit of a safe home and a community that supports physical and emotional well-being;
7. Not be disadvantaged by poverty.

The main principles underlying co-operation were also identified in documents such as;

- *Stronger Partnership for Better Outcomes (2006)*
- *Shared Planning for Better Outcomes (2007)*
- *Children and Young People Planning Guidance 2011-14 (2011)*
- *Our Healthy Future (2009)*
- *National Child Poverty Strategy (2011)*
- *Shared Purpose: Shared Delivery (2012)*

The Children and Young People's Partnerships were also required to take into account the Welsh Language Act 1993, Welsh Language (Wales) Measure,

Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 which makes legislative provision in respect of four key areas;

1. Child poverty
2. Integrated Family Support Services
3. Play, with particular reference to the needs of children who are disabled; and
4. Participation

In December 2012 planning requirements were again amended when the Welsh Government produced 'Shared Delivery-Shared Purpose Guidance on integrating Partnerships and Plans'. This requires local authorities to have in place Single Integrated Plans from April 2013. These plans represent a significant simplification of policy development because a single integrated plan is now required that would replace at least four of the existing statutory plans and strategies (the Community Strategy, the Children and Young People's Plan, the Health, Social Care and Well-being Strategy and the Community Safety Partnership Plan (which incorporates the 3 crime and disorder strategies). This it is claimed reduces complexity and duplication, and frees up resources. It is proposed that the single integrated plan will be developed, delivered and evaluated through Local Service Boards (LSBs). There are two key issues for the Youth Service in the document. First, the integrated plan is not about an integrated approach but one that celebrates diverse approaches through a multi agency approach. This places pressure on the Youth Service to be able to clearly articulate its complementary education approach that is so important in meeting the government's agenda for reducing the numbers of young people not in education, employment or training. Second, the LSBs are described as a partnership of equals and not local authority dominated. This provides a significant opportunity for both the maintained and voluntary sectors of the Youth Service to act in a strategic way to influence the priorities contained within the integrated plan.

## **Supporting the Youth Service in Wales**

There have been three significant organisations established to support the strategic development of the Youth Service in Wales as a provision capable of contributing in an effective way to the policy priorities coming out of the government. The first, which was focused on supporting voluntary sector organisations, was formed in 1947 as the 'Standing Conference of National Voluntary Youth Organisations'. In 1952 it changed its name to the 'Standing Conference for Wales of Voluntary Youth Organisations' (SCWVYO). In 1974 SCWVYO changed its name once again to the Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services (CWVYS), as it remains today. The second strategic organisation was the Wales Youth Work Partnership (WYWP) which was set up in 1985 to be responsible for staff development and training and the dissemination of information and good practice. The general aim of the Partnership was to provide an infrastructure for the co-ordination and development of youth work practice throughout the voluntary and statutory youth service in Wales. One of the key partners was CWVYS. The Partnership remained until 1992 when it became the third strategic support

organisation - the Wales Youth Agency - which included CWVYS within it for much of its existence. The Agency was responsible for;

1. developing the youth work curriculum
2. promoting staff development and the accreditation of training
3. facilitating communication systems, marketing and information services
4. encouraging and developing partnership working
5. supporting collaborative responses to identified priorities

The Wales Youth Agency remained in existence until 2006 when its responsibilities were taken into the Welsh Assembly Government as part of the 'bonfire of the quangos' because it was claimed it was too concerned with the Youth Service rather than the wider services for young people policy agenda. Since 2006 the strategic responsibility for the Youth Service has been located in the Welsh Assembly Government although the Welsh Local Government Association also has an officer dedicated to the support of the Youth Service. This Welsh Government responsibility has been located administratively within the Education and Skills portfolio. In 2010 the section responsible for the Youth Service was relocated from Cardiff to north Wales.

Since before the closure of the Wales Youth Agency there have been some attempts to maintain a strategic voice for the Youth Service outside of the control of the Welsh Government through the setting up of a broad based Standing Conference for Youth Work. This involved such organisation as The Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services (CWVYS) Principal Youth Officers Group, Education and Training Standards Group (ETS) and the Youth and Community Work Training Agencies. It was this group who undertook the review of the Curriculum Statement for Youth Work in Wales in 2007. This group continued to operate without a great deal of strategic success for a few years before coming to an end.

In 2013 strategic responsibility for Youth Work within the Welsh Government is located in the Youth Employment and Engagement Division which has a particular interest in the Not in Employment, Education or Training agenda. In addition there is a loose amalgamation of organisations who identify themselves as the Youth Work in Wales Review Group who produced in 2013 the 'Youth Work in Wales: Principles and Purposes document. This is the 4<sup>th</sup> update of what had previously been described as the Youth Work Curriculum Statement for Wales. It would appear that this group was part of an alliance between the Council for Wales for Voluntary Youth Service (CWVYS), Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), and the Principal Youth Officers Group (PYOG). These have more recently been joined by the Education and Training Standards Committee (ETS Wales) and established a new forum on behalf of youth work delivery in Wales, this group was to be called the *Youth Work Alliance Wales*. Obvious omissions to this group are the Welsh Training Agencies Group (TAG) and any representation from practitioners.

## **The Future**

Since 2008 there have been a number of significant challenges facing the Youth Service in Wales. The economy in Wales has been faced with a deep



recession, a consequence of which is continuing public spending cuts of an unprecedented level. These have resulted in additional consideration being given to the regionalization of public services across local authority boundaries. Within this environment the value of the Youth Service as a specialist education organization is being questioned and arguments are being made for the further development of a focused approach to its work within which quantifiable outcomes related to young people Not in Education, Employment and Training or other targeted groups are prioritized. As a means of achieving this priority, central strategic support for the Youth Service has been located in the Education, Employment and Skills portfolio of the Welsh Assembly. Early in 2013 the Youth work in Wales Review Group produced 'Youth Work in Wales: Principles and Purposes' as a revised edition of the Curriculum statement for youth work in Wales. In June 2013 a consultation document on the vision for a new national youth work strategy for Wales was produced and at the time of writing is out for consultation.

John Rose September 2013  
©youthworkwales

## Selected Reading list

**1. Welsh Government** – Information on policies, programmes and publications, including those listed below can be found at;

### **Education and Skills:**

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/?jsessionid=1HYSQDqHPcVvPkqKQvKL6zxMvhyzpDVGXJLQBDTts9Yp3qq3JJBq!545803488?lang=en>

### **Children and Young People:**

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/childrenyoungpeople/?jsessionid=1HYSQDqHPcVvPkqKQvKL6zxMvhyzpDVGXJLQBDTts9Yp3qq3JJBq!545803488?lang=en>

- *Learning and Skills Act (2000)*
- *Children Act (2004)*
- *Extending Entitlement: Support for 11 to 25 year olds in Wales Directions and Guidance (2002)*
- *Stronger Partnerships for Better Outcomes (2006)*
- *Shared Planning for Better Outcomes (2007)*
- *Children and Young People Planning Guidance 2011-14 (2011)*
- *Shared Purpose: Shared Delivery – Guidance on integrating partnerships and plans*  
<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/improvingservices/publicationevents/publications/sharedpurpdel/?lang=en>
- *14-19 Learning Pathways*
- *The Learning Country: Vision into Action (2006)*
- *Making the Connections – Delivering Beyond the Boundaries: Transforming public services in Wales (2006)*
- *Young People, Youth Work, Youth Service: National Youth Service Strategy for Wales (2007)*  
<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/childrenyoungpeople/publications/youthservice/?lang=en>
- *A vision for a new national youth work strategy for Wales 2013-2018*  
<http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/education/new-vision-for-national-youth-work-strategy/?jsessionid=EB26C03127CEFEB898DD57F52EF86662?lang=en>

## **2. Other key publications:**

### **National Occupational Standards**

<http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/node/20933>

### **National Participation Standards for Children and Young People in Wales**

[www.participationworkerswales.org.uk/standards/resources.aspx](http://www.participationworkerswales.org.uk/standards/resources.aspx)

### **Occupational Code of Ethics for Youth Work in Wales**

<http://www.etswales.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=5151>

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

[www.childrensrightswales.org.uk/uncrc.aspx](http://www.childrensrightswales.org.uk/uncrc.aspx)

[www.uncrcletsgetitright.co.uk](http://www.uncrcletsgetitright.co.uk)

**Youth Work in Wales: Principles and Purposes**

[http://www.youthworkwales.org.uk/creo\\_files/upload/files/ywcsv\\_pp\\_2013\\_engcym.pdf](http://www.youthworkwales.org.uk/creo_files/upload/files/ywcsv_pp_2013_engcym.pdf)

## **Youth Service Contacts in Wales**

**Children's Commissioner for Wales**

[www.childcomwales.org.uk](http://www.childcomwales.org.uk)

**The Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services (CWVYS)**

[www.cwvys.org.uk](http://www.cwvys.org.uk)

**Education Training Standards Wales**

[www.etswales.org.uk](http://www.etswales.org.uk)

**E-library**

[www.youthworkwales.org.uk](http://www.youthworkwales.org.uk)

**Estyn Framework**

(for inspections of youth support services in Wales)

[www.estyn.gov.uk](http://www.estyn.gov.uk)

**Funky Dragon – the Children and Young People's Assembly for Wales**

[www.funkydragon.org](http://www.funkydragon.org)

**National Information and Advice Service for Young People 11-25**

[www.cliconline.co.uk](http://www.cliconline.co.uk)

**The Principal Youth Officers' Group (PYOG)**

[www.wlga.gov.uk/english/youth-service](http://www.wlga.gov.uk/english/youth-service)

**Youth Work Strategy Branch**

[www.wales.gov.uk](http://www.wales.gov.uk)

**The Welsh Local Government Association**

[www.wlga.gov.uk](http://www.wlga.gov.uk)

**CRB Criminal Records Bureau**

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/agencies-public-bodies/crb/>

**ISA Independent Safeguarding Authority**

[www.isa.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.isa.homeoffice.gov.uk)

## **E-library**

An e-library website [www.youthworkwales.org.uk](http://www.youthworkwales.org.uk) is attempting to become a central resource for policy makers, managers, practitioners, students and academics on all things linked to the Youth Service in Wales. It continues to be developed as a partnership agreement between University of Wales Trinity Saint David and the YMCA Wales Community College. It is the intention of this website to become the definitive reference point for the Youth Service in Wales.