

Young People, Resilience and Well-being: Issues for youth and community practice

Policy Implications - well-being and young people in the community

Darrel Williams

A Holistic View

As Youth and Community Workers we are in a unique position within the whole range of organisations seeking to work with young people. We must seek to understand the young person in the context of their groups, their family, their community and wider society. This has implications for our work with them.



Commentary on well-being

- The well-being of young people is important not only for their own sake, but also for the future health of society. The debate around patterns and trends in young people's well-being and their causes is marked by uncertainty and contradiction.
- Social changes in the last half century have harmed successive generations of young people because of their developmental vulnerability and these young people are carrying their burdens into later life.

Eckersley, 2010.

Well-being, what is it?

- Well-being has been defined as a dynamic process that gives people a sense of how their lives are going, through the interaction between their circumstances, activities and psychological resources or 'mental capital'

New Economics Foundation (no date)

Well-being and Ill-being

- Material well-being: having enough
- Bodily well-being: being and appearing well
- Social well-being
- Mental well-being
- Subjective well-being: life satisfaction and happiness
- Physical ill-being: hunger, pain, discomfort
- Social exclusion: inability to benefit from social goods
- Insecurity, vulnerability, worry and fear
- Feelings of powerlessness
- Mental ill-being

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

- Core requirements of the Act
 - Building happier young people will contribute to:
 - A resilient Wales
 - A healthier Wales
 - A more equal Wales
 - A Wales of cohesive communities

Neoliberal Policy Agenda

There is no such thing as society.
There are individual men and
women, and there are families,
and no Government can do
anything except through the
people, and people must look to
themselves. It is our duty to
look after ourselves and then to
look after our neighbour
(Thatcher, 1987)



Results of Neoliberalism

Resulting from the work of von Mises and Hayek, the effects of which have been summed up as ‘massive tax cuts for the rich, the crushing of trade unions, deregulation, privatisation, outsourcing and competition in public services’

(Monbiot, 2016, np).



Impacts

Influences, stemming from the free market are having an undue impact upon society and therefore, young people growing up in this context.

Between 2012 and 2016 a 100% increase in demand for CAMHS services in Wales

Young people awaiting outpatient's treatment has the highest numbers (2,410) compared to adults (1,291) and those in later life (682)

Welsh Government statistics on spend per person in 2012-13 showed spending to be £200.87 per person on mental health problems. Of this £13.94 was spent on child and adolescent mental health

Between 2013 and 2014 more than 1,500 patients aged 10-19 were treated at Welsh hospitals with 1,223 girls being treated for self-harm compared with 319 boys.



Impact

	Maths	Reading	Science
Wales	478 (30+)	477 (30+)	485 (30+)
Norway	502 (19th)	513 (9th)	498 (24th)

OECD (2018) Pisa Results (Programme for International Student Assessment).

- Critique – too much focus on attainment. This is a considerable source of anxiety for children and young people in Wales.
- *Why do we put our children and young people through this?*
- *Where and when are they supported to be happy?*

No longer a data free zone

Welsh Government Youth Service
Annual Audit

Review of Extending Entitlement

Review of the Impact of the National
Youth Work Strategy for Wales 2014-18

Review of the Youth Work Strategy
Support Grant

Recommendation on how the
maintained and voluntary sector can
work together more effectively

Contribution of local authorities youth
work provision to the Welsh Language
Strategy

Evaluation of Youth Work in Schools

- Engagement with policy and strategy, however:
- The Review of Extending Entitlement study found that 77% of practitioners surveyed acknowledge not having a good understanding of the contents of the national youth work strategy
- Despite this, 62% of respondents from the maintained sector acknowledged that the national strategy had a negative impact on the strategic development of their service

Youth Work

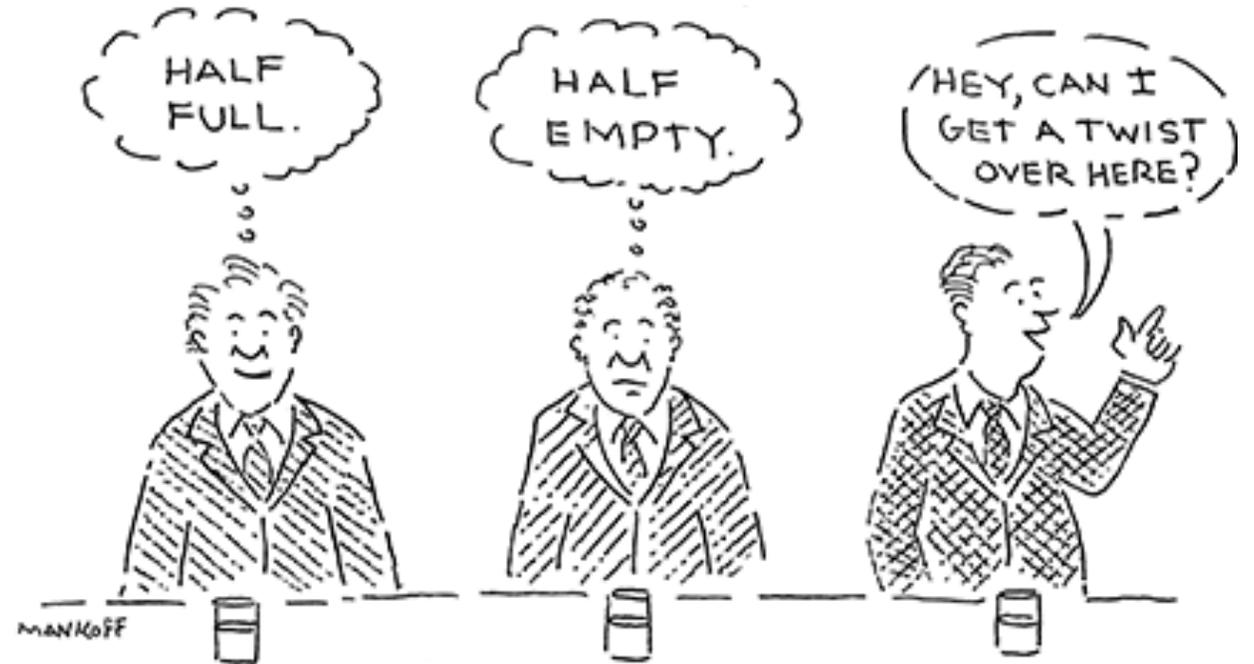
Rationale for having a youth service:

Technocentrism

Principled Pragmatism

Romanticism

(Wylie, 2010, pg 3)



-  OPTIMIST
-  PESSIMIST
-  PRAGMATIST

Impact conundrum

Evidence of impact is both unavoidable and necessary (Maitland Hudson, 2017), the debate we are all involved in can be summarised by an 'impact movement' and 'the resistance', think the Empire (the New Order) and the Resistance (Jedi et. al.) where one party rejects the existence of the efficacy of something that can't be seen or counted (the Force), while the other party holds a spiritual connection and commitment to its effectiveness.



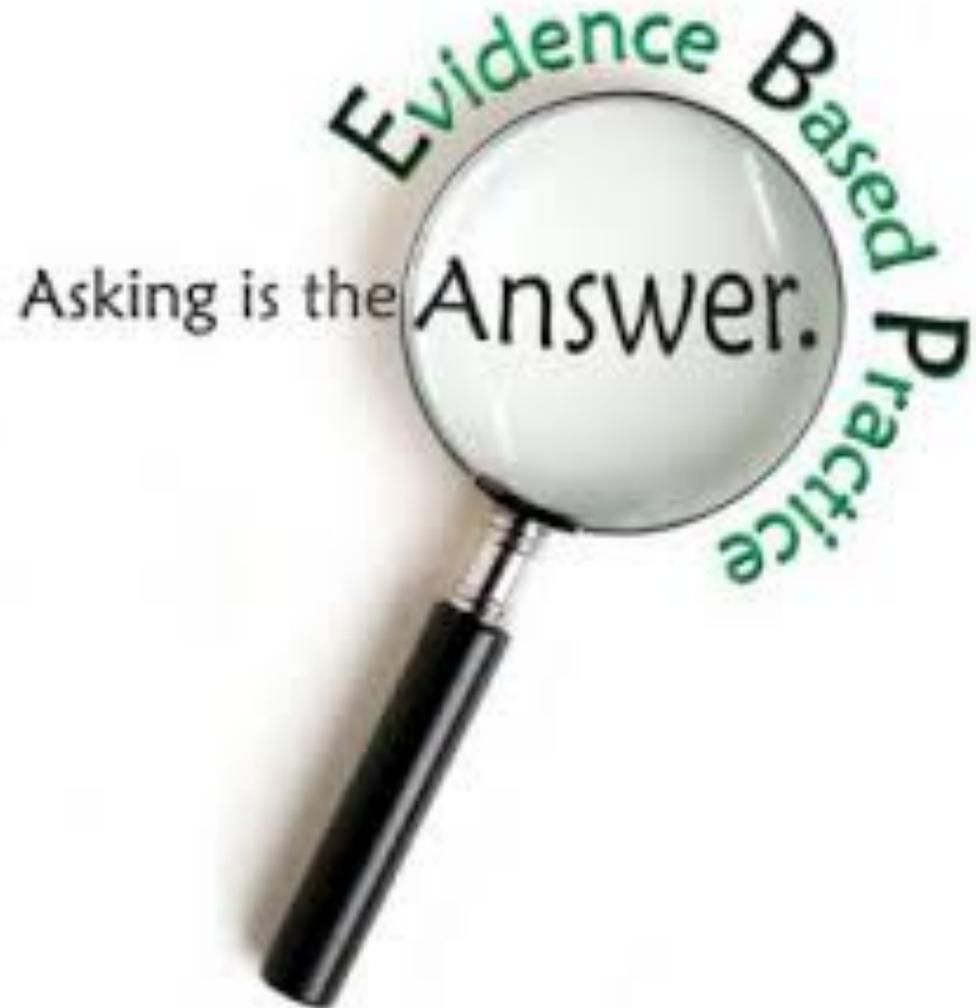
The Eternal Struggle

- The impact movement, perhaps not directly involved in face to face work with young people say the value of youth work must be measurable for it to be counted. *Can the impact of youth work be measured?*
- For the resistance, generally providers and practitioners, youth work is felt by them and by the young people they work with. *(Maitland Hudson, 2017) In this day and age is this belief adequate grounds for the allocation of public funds?*
- Result - a number of research studies in recent years. *We now know more than ever about the youth service in Wales!*



What evidence is there?

- Time-trend analysis, malaise, youth suicide rates, referrals to mental health services and general psychological distress.
- Cross sectional studies, self harm; mental health problems; mental disorders which are the main burden of disease among young people.



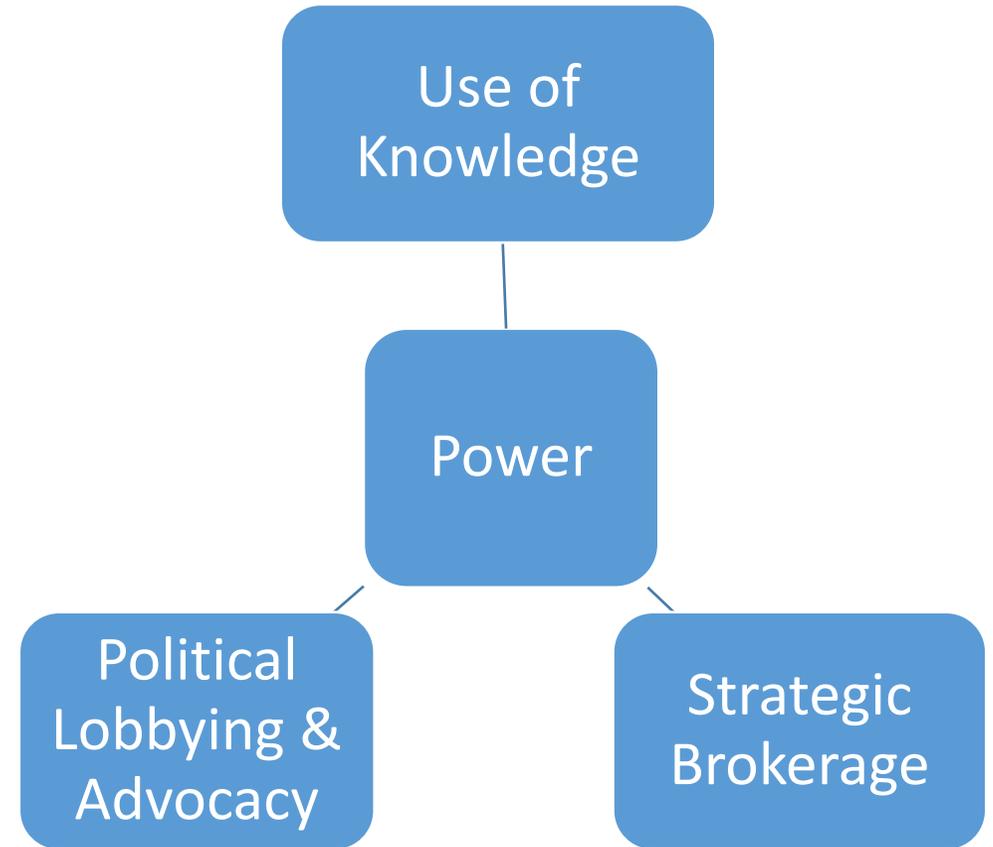
Data dilemma

- The search for data and evidence drives an approach to what might be regarded as a passive youth work which perpetuates the discourse where young people and their communities are deficient, needing a job, needing intervention, needing broader horizons.
- This has become the predominant youth work discourse over the last 20 years.
- What is needed is a radical, pragmatic transformational approach to youth and community work where the sector stands up for young people who are getting a raw deal from the status quo.



Who is asking questions? Where does the power lie?

Something is happening in society, on our watch, which is impacting on the lives of many young people and, that all this despite apparent material progress 'real GDP in the UK has typically increased every year.. the UK economy experienced sixteen consecutive years of growth before output fell in 2008' (Office for National Statistics, 2015).



Adapted from: Stanton-Salazar, R.D. A Social Capital Framework for the Study of Institutional Agents and Their Role in the Empowerment of Low-Status Students and Youth. *Youth & Society*, 2011, 43(3) 1066–1109.

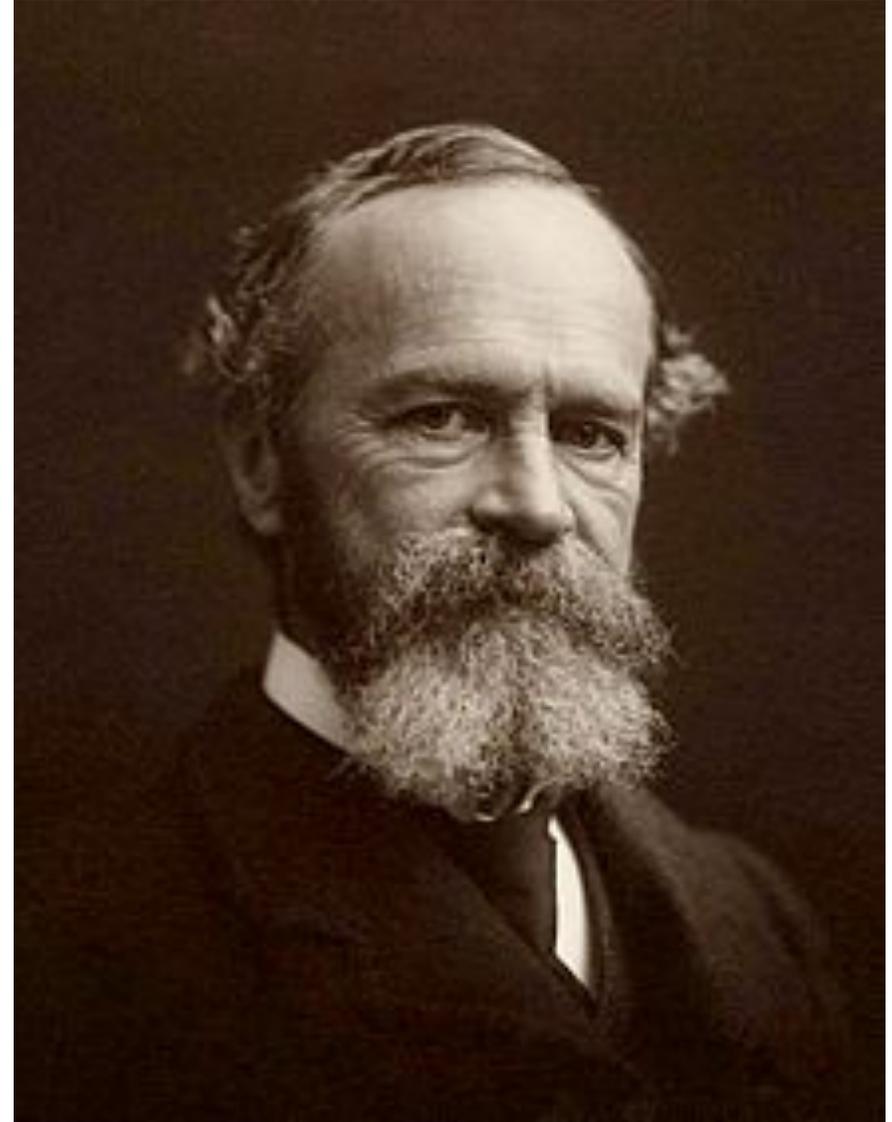
Who's steering the ship?

- Seminar is timely – lots of mention of the well-being of young people in policy discourse.
- Backdrop, reduction in spending on the youth service of 30% between 2010 and 2017 at the same time as a reduction in young people in contact with the service of 23% (Welsh Government, 2018)



Being Pragmatic

The pragmatist turns away from abstraction and insufficiency, from verbal solutions, from bad *a priori* reasons, from fixed principles, closed systems, and pretended absolutes and origins. He turns towards concreteness and adequacy, towards facts, towards action and towards power (James, 1904).



Who has the vision?

- Often, in relation to policy making and subsequent resource allocation for children and young people the dominant paradigm which guides investment is one of risk assessment, where investment is put in place if results are judged to be potentially worth that investment (Piper, 2008).



Case study of impact – young pregnancy

- Generally regarded that some young people make a conscious choice to become pregnant, however teenage pregnancy has been linked with poor outcomes for the mother and child.
- Policy response?
- There are a number of partners working in close collaboration and providing support in delivery of the schemes such as; youth services, outreach services, youth offending teams, general practitioners, schools nurses and within colleges (Şimşek, 2014, pg. 8).
- Evidence of impact:
 - In 1997, the UK was the highest ranked among European Union countries for teenage pregnancy.
 - Pregnancy among girls aged under 16 in Wales fell by 50% from around 11 per thousand girls aged 13-15 in the late 1990's to 5.5 in 2013.
 - Among girls aged under 18, levels fell by nearly 27%, from nearly 37 per thousand aged 15-17 in 2010, to 27.3 in 2013.

Paradox

So, we have evidence of the impacts of the efficacy of recent social change, policy and practice. As a nation we now know what we spend on our children and young people.

We increasingly *know* what impact this is having on our children and young people.

There is a gap between our *investment* in children and young people and the return on that investment (PISA, ONS, Young Minds).

In relation to both the well-being of our children and young people and also their educational attainment, evidence shows how Wales' PISA scores have failed to improve in Maths and Reading for 10 years, while falling back significantly in Science.(OECD, 2011; OECD, 2016).

UK Public Investment in Children and Young People

- A UNICEF report in 2007 placed the UK at the bottom of the league table for child well-being across 21 industrialised nations and that whilst economic output has nearly doubled in the last 30 years, life satisfaction levels in the UK have remained steady (UNICEF, 2007). 'High public spending on child welfare and education in the UK is failing to produce results in many key areas' (OECD, 2009, p1), specifically that:
 - OECD Doing better for families study found that:
 - The UK spends more on each child than most other OECD countries, more than £138,000 from birth up to the age of 18, compared to an OECD average of £95,000 (OECD, 2011).
 - The spending though is skewed, in terms of ranking, the UK is 4th on public spending in relation to 0-5 year olds, 7th in spending on 6-11 year olds and slips to 10th position for spending on 12-17 year olds (OECD, 2011).

Happy Countries

<https://vimeo.com/202941838>

In the UK, 57% of the Generation Z young people surveyed rated themselves as 'Happy'.

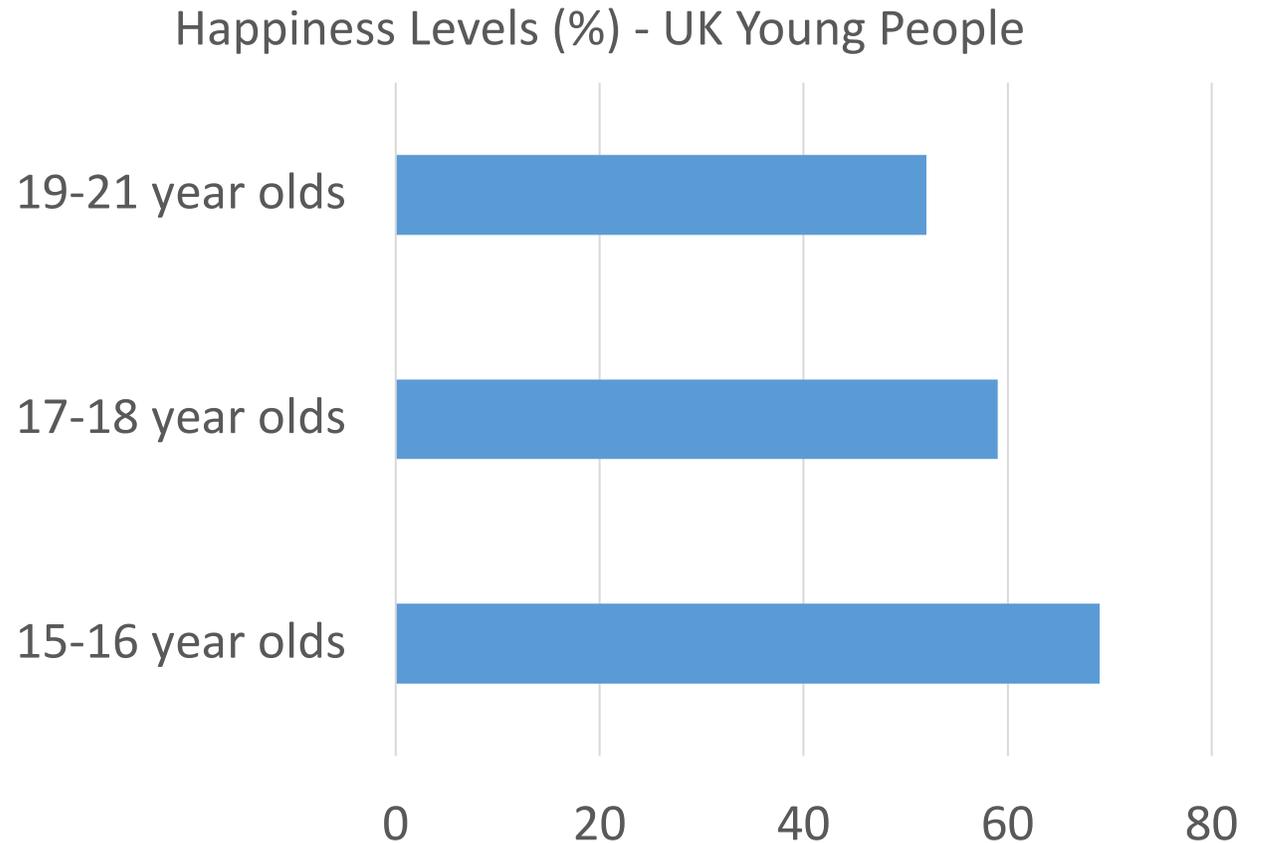
What of the other 43%



What makes young people feel unhappy?

More than half of young people in the UK (54%) said money worries were among their top three causes of anxiety. Next stressors were school, and health.

(Varkey Foundation, 2017)

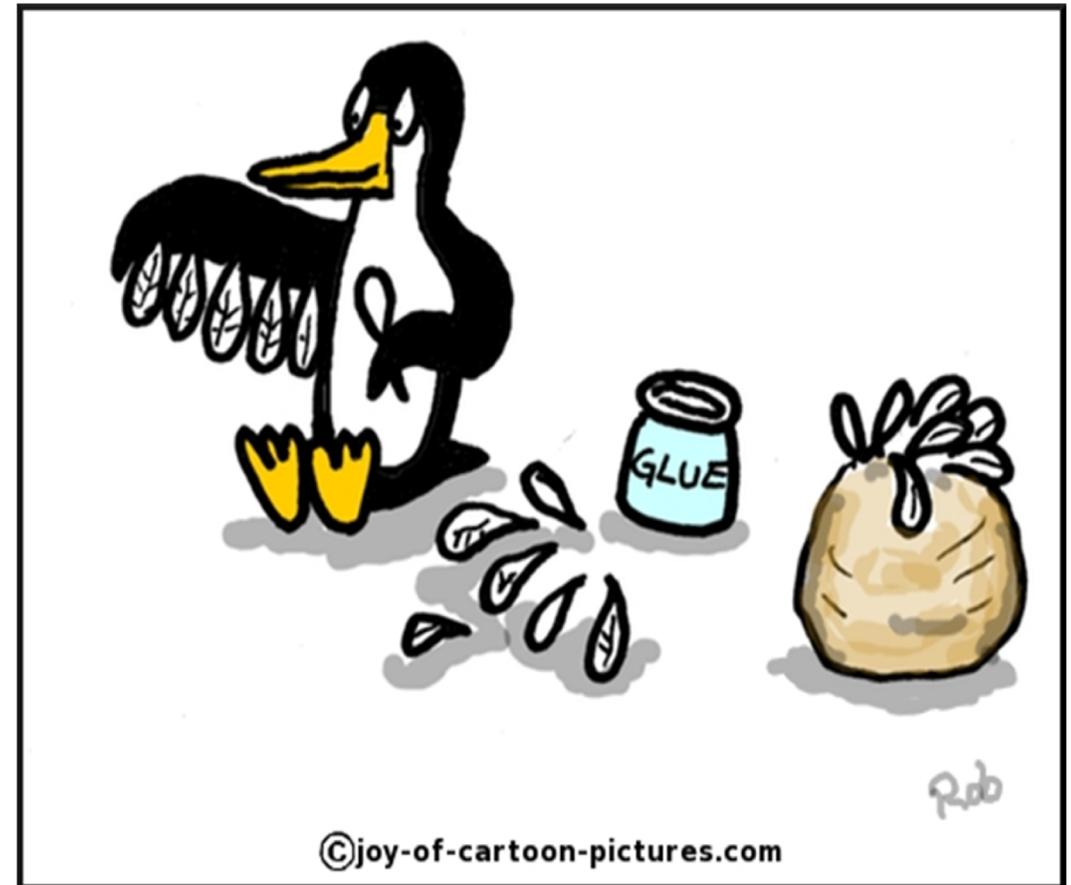


Subjective well-being

- What does the evidence say about improving young people's subjective well-being?
 - Key Theme 1. Consistency, reliability and caring
 - Key Theme 2. Youth workers and the unique relationship they offer young people
 - Key Theme 3. The places in which youth work takes place are special to young people
 - Key Theme 4. Youth Work offers young people experiences which impact positively on their well-being.

Summary

- Most young people in Wales are happy, have good levels of well-being
- Society is placing new demands and pressures on children and young people which are poorly understood
- Youth and Community Work is in a unique position to represent young people powerfully
- YCW has a unique selling point, we can offer young people accessible and affordable '*favourable adolescent experiences*'
- The sector needs to engage more effectively, adopting a radical pragmatic approach to broker more effectively for the young people of Wales



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