

ASSOCIATION OF DIRECTORS OF EDUCATION IN WALES PRINCIPAL YOUTH OFFICER GROUP

DRAFT DIRECTION AND GUIDANCE FOR EXTENDING ENTITLEMENT

Introduction

The Principal Youth Officers group welcome the opportunity of responding to the Extending Entitlement Draft Direction and Guidance (November 2001). The response will cover the following areas.

- 1 The planning and management structures proposed for the youth support service;
- 2 The role of a statutory Youth Service within the Youth Support Service;
- 3 The issues associated with working in multi-agency partnerships;
- 4 The relationship between the Extending Entitlement and the Framework Partnership
- 5 The implications for induction, initial and in-service service training in the sector;
- 6 The methods of securing effective consultation with young people.

Section One Planning And Management Structures Proposed For Securing A Statutory Youth Service

There is an appreciation of the challenge that the National Assembly has undertaken in adopting a strategy of initiating 'cross cutting' collaboration amongst agencies dealing with young people based upon local authority areas. That this initiative is located in a wider 'joined up government' strategy is acknowledged as having great potential for improving the lives of local communities. One of the areas of concern is that there should be resources to ensure sufficient strategic capacity in all organisations, particularly in the voluntary sector, to participate in planning and managing multi-agency partnerships.

The relationship between the Children and Young People's Framework document and Extending Entitlement lacks clarity and is hindering the development of Young People's Partnerships. This lack of clarity includes :-

- Inconsistency in the age ranges
- The legal framework
- The membership
- Accountability
- Terminology

The proposed membership of the Young People's Partnership (YPP) (page 22) lists a corporate manager of the Youth Service as one of four options for the three local authority representatives. This has the potential of allowing YPPs to operate without the benefit of a youth service specialist at that level. In view of the unique role the Youth Service has as advocates for young people and the requirement for youth service specialists to provide an interface between young people and service providers it is suggested that this important role is allocated to the Principal Youth Service Officer in each Authority. This is consistent with allocating an automatic place on the partnership to the YOT Manager, who would also be represented corporately by the Chief Executive.

There is a need to recognise and reinforce the fact that the Youth Support service is a concept (virtual service), whose main function is not the employment of operational staff, but the co-ordination of services. To respond to the challenge of reducing duplication, eradicating nugatory competition and widening participation, the key functions of contributory partner organisations must be clearly defined by the National Assembly for Wales.

Whilst the drive towards more synchronised planning is laudable there remains some disquiet that strategic and operational planning requirements indicated in annex 1 (page 21) may prove counter productive. There is a danger that the intended impact upon the deliverers of services may not be achieved because of the sheer complexity of the process and the range and scale of the documentation required.

The picture is even more complex than indicated in the diagram as there are additional strategic and thematic plans missing. The ELWa Strategic Plan, for example, impacts heavily upon the age range proposed for YPPPs and planning associated with local CCETs will also be of vital importance in the sector. Additionally, the cultural and recreational strategies of local authorities have an important role to play in the lives of young people. The NafW has indicated in 'The Learning Country' that schools have a major role to play as a community resource and it may be appropriate to synchronise planning procedures so that school strategic and development plans impact more directly upon other local authority and partnership thematic and strategic plans.

Strategic planning documentation needs to be multi-purpose and linked to the requirements of a range of 'quality management agents' which include Estyn, District Audit, Best Value, ELWa, elected members, strategic managers, operational managers, service users and the general public. There is concern that the production of strategic plans, to conform to external demands, leads to a culture where they are not an integral part of the management process and are not used appropriately in performance management, appraisal and evaluation procedures.

The templates for a five year rolling strategy plan and the annual delivery plan (annex 7 page 29) are helpful and the implication that sustained development will occur in services to young people is welcomed. Historically, the over reliance on short term funding, the lack of an adequate capital programme, a skills shortage in the sector and conflicting planning cycles amongst potential partners have inhibited the ability to plan for the long term. A five year planning cycle is therefore welcomed and it is suggested that Nafw funded programmes be harmonised to ensure there is sufficient security to facilitate continuity and development of services.

The guidance on baseline information for development of future national priorities (annex 6 page 28) requires further development in consultation with the field. The Principal Youth Officer group would be pleased to assist in this process.

The Principal Officer group acknowledges the value the multi agency partnership working implicit in the Welsh approach. Whilst this has the potential to harness available resources more effectively through the 'multiplier' effect, development to match the 'Connexions' service in England will not be achieved without a proportionate level of finance being allocated. There is potential for the Welsh approach to provide a more comprehensive support system at a lower cost but not within the restrictions of current budgets.

DRAFT

The Principal Officer group is of the opinion that the absence of young people's direct involvement in the YPP is contradictory to the notion of entitlement. There should also be a distinction drawn between the process of consulting with young people and engaging them in decision making. Further consideration needs to be given to the role young people can play in the above.

Section Two The role of a statutory Youth Service within the Youth Support Service;

NAfW recognises that the Youth Service is an integral and key partner in the development of a Youth Support service. It is equally important to acknowledge that the terms are not interchangeable and that the success of a Youth Support service will be dependent upon a robust, clearly identifiable Youth Service. The role the Youth Service is able to play in the development of a Youth Support service was outlined in the response from the PYOs to the original consultation on Extending Entitlement but the following abstract is helpful in clarifying the position.

Young people have to negotiate how best to move from the home of their childhood to independent living. They have to choose how they want to deal with personal relationships and life and navigate their own individual paths through school, college and training and into the labour market. Moreover, these processes no longer "naturally" take a linear form [through economic independence and family formation]; they are combined in different ways and they can be reversed -if young people experience difficulties in sustaining employment, living independently or maintaining relationships.

The relationship between the youth service and young people is special and unique and is crucially defined by its voluntary nature. The processes through which young people acquire skills and qualities are complex and subtle. They stem from the trust, values and attitudes which youth workers display and the quality of their relationships with young people. Through creative use of activities and opportunities youth workers enhance social skills and capitalise the life experiences of young people. This is underpinned by the principles of participation and empowerment.

Youth work responds to the contemporary agenda for young people in four ways.

- > *It assists their personal and social development through informal education and engages them in lifelong learning.*
- > *It supports other agencies in developing styles of work which are effective with young people.*
- ~> *It enables young people to have a voice and influence in wider policy developments.*
- *> *It operates at the interface between the private worlds of young people and the aspirations of public policy.*

Section Three The Issues Associated With Working In Multi-Agency Partnerships

The attempt to move agencies away from working in isolation and into partnership arrangements is a welcome initiative and the management of the process is critical to the achievement of the aims of NAfW. The strategic role indicated for local government through Chief Executives is welcomed and reflects other new partnership arrangements such as the establishment of local CCETs.

YPPs need to be fit for purpose rather than a 'representative' body. The proposed membership of the YPP has been undermined by the parallel developments of the C&YPPF that will inevitably attract the highest tier of officers from all organisations. This is as a result of the hierarchy of the partnership. It is recommended that the membership of both be revisited to provide a cohesive membership and clarity and

DRAFT

accountability of the partnership. There is a need to differentiate between the strategic and operational roles of the partnership groups.

Section Four The relationship between the Extending Entitlement and the Framework Partnership

The interface between the Children and Young People's Partnership, the local Framework it develops and the proposed Young People's Partnership requires further examination and clarification. Alternative models may be more appropriate to meet NAFW's objectives and prove to be a more effective use of valuable human resources. Many authorities are already proposing to implement one body dealing with young people from age nought to age 25 years. This has more potential for engendering closer collaboration between caring and educational partners and may prove more effective in directing and tracking children through all the crucial stages of their development.

Section Five The Implications For Induction, Initial And In-Service Service Training In The Sector

Local authorities are developing further routes to education and training in collaboration with the Wales Youth Agency Staff College initiative and the skill level in the sector continues to improve year on year. There remains a skill shortage in the sector and NAFW interest in this area is welcomed as timely.

There is potential for more effective Inter-agency collaboration on promoting the skills of working effectively with young people and a range of agencies should consider accessing the Staff College's expertise in the area.

There is a recognition that partnership working, to be successful, has to be undertaken by professional staff possessing generic skills, not specific to their sector operation. It is recommended that further consideration be given to the acquisition of skills associated with partnership working within the initial and in-service training programmes of agencies operating within the partnership.

In the longer term the implementation of more effective, cross sector working and the corresponding development of multi-agency management systems will be challenging and will require a suitable staff development response.

Section Six The Methods Of Securing Effective Consultation With Young People

The Principal Officers' groups welcomed the emphasis on consultation with young people. However, the danger of over simplifying the complexity of the task needs to be flagged. The sheer talent available amongst the young people of Wales should not be under estimated but neither should the difficulty of allowing them to make their contribution positively and in a manner that is truly representative of all young people.

Focus groups for young people, that seek to give them knowledge and skills to comment upon issues that affect them, require a labour intensive process to operate successfully. There is a requirement for additional human and other resources to proceed effectively with this area of work.

The Principal Officers group recommend that less high profile initiatives be undertaken at the point of delivery of services to young people. Young people are

considered powerless recipients and are not considered to be customers by many service providers. An example of this is the secondary school sector where, traditionally, parents are considered to be the customers of schools and little attempt is made to secure data that expresses how young people perceive the quality of the service to be. Increasingly schools are recognising that young people can contribute effectively to quality management.