

Starting from Strengths

In mid-December the Wales Youth Work Partnership and the Council for the Training of Youth and Community Workers (CETYCW) organised a one-day seminar to look at new approaches to part-time youth worker training. What follows is a brief summary of that day and a few reflections on how developments in part-time youth worker training would affect those who have a duty to deliver or provide such training in Wales.

The aim of the seminar was to explore the central ideas which are contained in the report "Starting from Strengths" and how they can be put into practice **.



Over thirty people attended - representing each local authority and the main voluntary youth organisations in Wales. Most of these people had some responsibility for managing or delivering training of part-time youth and community workers. The day was led by CETYCW staff, Steve Bolger and Miriam Jackson.

With such a lot to cram into one day, it was inevitable that presentation input would be rather short and that small-group sessions were the best method of exploring ideas and teasing out participants' experiences, thoughts and fears. The day was therefore structured as follows:

- Introduction by Jim Rooney, and, in Welsh, by Alwyn Williams
- Presentation by Steve Bolger on the six central ideas in "Starting from Strengths"

... followed by group sessions to explore these 6 ideas in detail, and their relevance to participant's experience in Wales.

** "Starting from Strengths" is the report of the panel to promote the continuing development of training for part-time and voluntary youth and community workers, and is published by the National Youth Bureau, 17-23 Albion Street, Leicester LE1 6GD, price £2.55.

- Presentation by Steve Bolger on introducing **"portfolio based training"** - training which builds upon the existing competences of the learner.
- A choice of small group sessions, which focused on:
 - identification of the core competences of part-time workers
 - examination of portfolios and how they may be developed
 - examination of the role of the personal training adviser-tutor-supervisor
- the plenary session

the following points were amongst those raised at the plenary session:

There was a common concern about moving into this new area of work which participants hadn't experienced in their own work. The proposal to hold a pilot project in Wales was suggested.

A development of this kind highlighted further the need for a programme of training the trainers in Wales.

if a portfolio method of training is to be introduced in Wales, the commitment of authorities and organisations would be crucial.

Sixteen authorities in England were already, or were in the process of introducing the portfolio approach to training. Motivation for doing so seemed to depend upon the level of dissatisfaction with current performance and having enough energy and enthusiasm to be able to make changes.

PAVET (Part-time and Volunteer Education and Training) is a new unit at CETYCW. The Welsh Office has indicated its willingness to make a financial contribution to the Unit thereby opening the door to training delivery by PAVET in Wales. Steve Bolger invited youth service providers to make an approach to the new unit if they wish to have initial discussions about this.

The Welsh Office contribution to PAVET was on a similar basis to its contribution to other parts of CETYCW's work. The Partnership's role would be negotiated between youth service providers in Wales and PAVET. *

Those organisations or authorities interested in moving towards portfolio-based training would not be committed to a total "package". PAVET and providers in Wales would work together in a developmental process which would meet identified needs.