

Wales Youth Work Partnership

Historical Background

The origin of the Wales Youth Work Partnership can be traced to a number of initiatives which took place between 1977 and 1986. In addition to HMI short courses, these initiatives included a day conference at Llandrindod Wells in November 1978 entitled "The National Youth Bureau - Links and Services in Wales." This led to a second conference in September 1980 which considered a report "Young People in Wales - A New Perspective," and which made a proposal for the establishment of a Welsh Youth Affairs Unit/Secretariat.

Following these developments the Welsh Office invited the Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC), the Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services (CWVYS), the Council for Education and Training in Youth and Community Work (CETYCW), and the National Youth Bureau (NYB), to put forward a submission suggesting ways in which a national initiative might be structured. At a Welsh Office Invitation Conference in May 1985 the then Minister of State, Mr. John Stradling Thomas MP, announced that funding constraints had prevented all of the proposals being accepted but that sufficient funds had been set aside to allow the appointment of two professional officers to cover training and staff development and to promote the dissemination of information and good practice, with administrative support.

Structure

The Partnership was established in 1986 as an independent organisation funded by the Welsh Office for a three year rolling period reviewed annually by the Secretary of State for Wales. The conditions governing the conduct of the Partnership being set out in a Memorandum of Administrative and Financial Arrangements agreed between the Secretary of State and the Management Committee.

At the time of its establishment, the Management Committee consisted of:

- the Chair**, appointed by the Secretary of State for Wales;
- two persons** nominated by the Council for Education and Training in youth and Community Work (CETYCW);
- two persons** nominated by the Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services (CWVYS);
- two persons** nominated by the National Youth Bureau (NYB);

- **two persons** nominated by the Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC);
- **additional co-opted members;**
- **two persons** nominated by the Secretary of State who act as assessors of the work of the Partnership, including on member of HM Inspectorate.

The Management Committee also proposed to invite co-options which would provide the Partnership with views from the main interest groups involved in youth work. These included young people, youth officers, youth workers and training agencies.

Initial funding enabled the Partnership to appoint three staff members, a Training and Development Adviser, a Field Information Officer and a Clerical and Administrative Assistant.

Aims and Purposes

The 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.

The PURPOSES were:

- to promote and provide support for social education and youth work responses to the needs and aspirations of young people throughout Wales;
- to establish effective co-operation between statutory, non-statutory and voluntary organisations seeking to meet those needs;
- to create increased opportunities for effective participation by young people building on initiatives started in International youth Year (1985).
- to provide servicing and support for local networks through information, training and development;
- to facilitate the development of in-service training and staff development for full-time youth service staff, and part-time and voluntary youth workers throughout Wales;
- to publish accounts of useful and innovatory practice in addition to making available other information relevant to those working with young people;

- to provide a forum for discussion, decision and joint action on youth issues in Wales; to arrange, or co-operate in the arrangement of conferences, seminars and study groups on priority issues and on specialist areas;
- to work with the staff of the Council for Education and Training in Youth and Community Work, the Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services, the Welsh Joint Education Committee and the National Youth Bureau, in order to improve youth work practice, policy and provision and to seek to promote the availability of their services, publications and expertise.

In translating its purposes into methods of work, forms of delivery and criteria for evaluation, the Partnership, in consultation with youth service providers, prioritised within these eight purposes.

Reports of Significance to the Work of the Partnership

Youth Service Provision in Wales, Education Survey 13, HMSO 1984

Survey 13 provided extensive information and analysis about the state of youth work in Wales. Of particular relevance to the Partnership were comments concerning staff development and training which were summarised in paragraph 7.2.18:

"Information obtained on training opportunities and staff development arrangements raises questions about objectives and their relationship to the roles performed, about how content, emphases and sequences are determined, and how methodology is decided; about appropriate levels, frequency and progression; about recruitment and selection procedures; about the transfer of learning from courses to practice, and about tutor selection, preparation and support."

A Strategy for the In-service Training of those who work full-time in the youth service in Wales, WJEC/CETYCW. 1986.

The final report of the WJEC/CETYCW working group on the above subject was considered at a day conference in March 1986. The working group made recommendations to youth service employers and to the Partnership. The recommendations to the Partnership were as follows:

- A priority should be to establish a national programme for the training of officers

- To establish a group charged with the development of training
- To promote a learning network of those responsible for implementing the recommendations in the report.....
- To promote a wider awareness of the modes of training which can be utilised in staff development and the materials that would assist (this)
- It should consider how best to produce a scheme whereby modules of accredited training could lead to a national award

Starting from Strengths - The report of the panel to promote the continuing development of training for part-time and voluntary youth and community workers, NYB 1984.

The significance of this report is that it argues for a move away from basic training courses for part-time youth workers of the 'Bessey' type towards a credit accumulation system through the construction of a 'portfolio' of training and experience. It provides an agenda for action at unit level, at authority or organisation level, at regional level and at national level, with the greatest emphasis on unit level:

"It will be clear that we place great emphasis on support and training at unit level. No amount of courses can substitute for sustained support of the kind described. It is this that should form the bedrock of the youth service's response to the learning and support needs of the part-time and voluntary worker."

Report of the feasibility study on a regional resource and development unit for North West England, NYB, 1985.

This study was conducted by NYB in conjunction with Manchester Polytechnic and involved extensive consultation with youth and community interests throughout the North West. Many of its findings are of relevance to the work of the Partnership in Wales. A central principle to emerge was that such a unit should be **enabling** and its work should be based on needs as identified by its clients.