

*THE COLLECTIVE TRAINING NEEDS  
OF  
THE VOLUNTARY YOUTH WORK SECTOR  
IN WALES*

**Prepared for the Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services**

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## **1. Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 To report the results of the analysis of the collective training needs of the voluntary youth work sector in Wales. The report goes beyond training needs into 'sector'<sup>1</sup> development needs that are necessary to meet the challenges of Extending Entitlement and, in particular, engaging with those not currently reached by youth work.
- 1.2 The project was commissioned by the Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services and funded by the Wales Youth Agency.

## **2. Introduction**

- 2.1 The project entailed considerable consultation and research with voluntary youth organisations in Wales including a range of national voluntary youth organisations and more localised projects. A full list of those who contributed directly to the project is attached at Appendix One. Quite a number of other organisations were invited to participate. The range of participating organisations was wide, knowledgeable, willing, co-operative and enthusiastic.
- 2.2 In addition to the listed voluntary organisations The Wales Youth Agency participated, particularly in relation to the development of the Coherent Route to Qualification. The Youth Policy Unit of the Welsh Assembly participated in relation to their perception of the future development needs of the voluntary youth sector resulting from Extending Entitlement.
- 2.3 The project took place between 21 May and 3 July 2001
- 2.4 The methods used for data collection during the project included lengthy telephone interviews against a planned schedule, e-mail contributions and face-to-face meetings and interviews.
- 2.5 The project took into account the proposed strategy for the development of CWVYS as 'the' voice of the voluntary youth work sector in Wales.

## **3. The Training and Development Needs of the Voluntary Youth Sector**

- 3.1 Three important common core skills for staff and volunteers emerging from the project are:
- the ability to build and sustain relationships with young people
  - the ability to work with all young people recognising one's own prejudices and values and their impact on the work
  - the ability to reach and work with those most on the margins of society
- 3.2 These three skills are inter-related and many of the organisations recognise the limitations of some of their personnel. They also recognise the limitations of their own organisation's ability to deliver the appropriate training.
- 3.3 The response to disruption or apparently unacceptable behaviour by young people is often exclusion, yet many projects set up primarily to target the most disadvantaged. Managers of these projects recognise that the prejudices of their staff and volunteers need to be confronted if they are to be completely open to, and capable of, working with those most at risk. Training in this area should deal with aspects of power and disadvantage.
- 3.4 In providing for this need it should be recognised that the vast majority of voluntary sector workers will not progress to any kind of professional qualification beyond Foundation level. The whole area outlined in 3.3 must be addressed universally, however, if the vision of Extending Entitlement is to become a reality. Certainly this should be an integral part of the Coherent Route to Qualification and the 'module'<sup>1</sup> should be open to those who may not wish to proceed to the full professional qualification.
- 3.5 Within relationship skills as a whole further specific aspects were identified as key for voluntary sector personnel:

interpersonal skills  
counselling skills  
managing boundaries  
giving guidance  
giving information  
mentoring

- 3.6 Extending Entitlement calls for information and guidance to be more widely available to young people in Wales. Information giving is a specialised area of work recognising that when a young person requests information it often veils the real need. Many voluntary youth projects want to make information available to young people but setting up a leaflet stand in a centre is not necessarily the best way to satisfy this need and there are problems in simply providing unmediated packages of information to young people en masse (as found in England). The leadership of Canllaw in this area of work is crucial for the sector and should have significant impact on the level and quality of the work. The proposed regional network in particular, will be helpful to national and one-off projects wishing to engage in offering good quality information and guidance services to young people. The training, support packages and quality standards currently under development should go a long way to ensuring appropriate delivery in a range of settings.
- 3.7 Whilst there is an emphasis in voluntary youth organisations on the preparation of their workers to work within that specific organisation, it should not be forgotten that to be too inward looking can be detrimental to the development of an organisation. The opportunity to meet with and interact with other organisations is extremely important for the development of the sector and the individuals. This was an important element of the previous initial training course and should continue as part of the new Foundation level training.
- 3.8 Many voluntary youth organisations recognise the multitude of roles that many staff have to undertake in addition to their face-to-face work. They also recognise the limitations of their own ability to meet all of these needs. They currently look to other providers such as the WCVA or CWVYS to provide for these needs.
- 3.9 The 'other' roles most commonly identified are:
- fundraising
  - community work
  - marketing and public relations
  - recruiting
  - effective trusteeship/management committees
  - managing –
    - money
    - meetings
    - people
    - property
- 3.10 An audit of who provides what training in Wales would be useful so that duplication, going forward, is kept to a minimum and to ensure a comprehensive training provision.
- 3.11 A major concern for voluntary organisations looking to the future relates to partnerships and participation in both local and national political arenas. Many identified the need to have greater influencing skills, public speaking skills and greater knowledge of how local communities and politics work. The ability to profile communities and involve them in meeting the needs of its young people are seen as fundamental skill requirements. There are widely varying interpretations in the voluntary youth sector of what community work means in the context of youth work and consideration should be given to the most appropriate definition for Wales and the appropriate training to support it.
- 3.12 There is growing concern in many voluntary youth organisations at what is perceived to be increasing aggression and out-of-control behaviour displayed by young people. There are fears for personal safety among volunteers and staff and there is a great need to develop skills for Diffusing potentially difficult situations, dealing with aggression and handling conflict. Whilst valiant efforts are being made by individual organisations to skill up their people in this

area they really would benefit from focused training and greater support. CVWYS should investigate how best to support the voluntary sector in this important aspect of work.

- 3.13 Specialisms are increasingly used by the voluntary youth organisations in Wales to engage young people and there is considerable 'single interest' work going on. The sector needs to ensure that the single interest work on offer does not become the end, but remains the means of engaging with different young people for the purposes of their personal and social development. The opportunity to specialise, for example, in the use of performing arts or sports in youth work should be considered as options in the Coherent Route. Currently, consideration is being given to a module on Information Services which may become mandatory for those wishing to undertake this kind of work. Such developments are to be welcomed in the interests of consistency and good quality provision. The availability of such modular options to wider voluntary sector personnel who perhaps do not wish to complete a professional qualification would greatly enhance the work in the sector and would meet a growing need.
- 3.14 Some voluntary youth organisations are developing non-traditional, less centre-based provision but there is a lack of opportunity for part-time paid staff and volunteers to be trained in this kind of work. A coherent framework for training must include the opportunity to improve the skills and confidence of those undertaking this work. The Coherent Route to qualification can offer the opportunity for a youth worker to specialise and to develop abilities in outreach and detached work as well as project work.
- 3.15 Voluntary youth organisations are unanimous in their view that they each have a role to play in helping the Welsh Assembly to achieve its vision for young people in Wales. They are optimistic and expectant about future funding for the sector. The recent plethora of developments and consultations, although welcomed, has placed a heavy burden on the managers of voluntary organisations, particularly in terms of the time required to brief oneself and respond as appropriate. Many say that they would welcome succinct briefings on developments affecting the sector as a whole rather than have to find out about each one in depth by themselves. There is an important role that CWVYS could play here but CWVYS would need to have the infrastructure to deliver it.
- 3.16 Voluntary youth organisations currently spend a lot of time on ensuring that they have adequate funding to carry out their activities, including training. Some spend a lot of effort on finding and applying to different sources of funding. They would welcome information on the various sources and the requirements associated with application. This is a possible role for CWVYS but it would require more resources than currently available.
- 3.17 Many organisations expressed concern about their ability to compete with other attractions for young people, some of which are in the private sector. The quality of web-site design and the lack of resources for Information and Communications Technology were identified as areas for development.
- 3.18 Quality Assurance is a big issue for the voluntary youth sector in Wales. A lot of concern was being expressed about new start-ups funded by the National Lottery and other funders. Some new projects do not give sufficient thought to sustainability or exit strategies if the work is short term. Many of the established organisations judge that some new projects do not implement what they would consider to be minimum standards in start-up including the training of staff and the establishment of appropriate policies. Consideration should be given to developing a start-up support package which could be negotiated as essential by those likely to fund new projects. Those national organisations with large networks of groups would benefit also from training on quality assurance.

#### **4. Induction/Introductory Training in the Sector**

- 4.1 Many voluntary youth organisations have developed their own responses to training needs beginning with induction and introductory training.
- 4.2 There is rigorous induction within the vast majority of the larger voluntary youth organisations. Induction usually covers the important aspects of:
- the specific ethos of the organisation that a volunteer/member of staff is joining

- child protection
- health and safety
- administration
- equal opportunities

4.3 Many aspects that could be regarded as 'training' in the broadest sense are dealt with through policy statements/guidelines or guidance documents.

4.4 There is a strong feeling that volunteers and staff need to 'buy in'<sup>1</sup> to ethos of the particular organisation rather than into generic youth work. Considerable emphasis is put on this at the initial stages of involvement. All of the organisations have common elements in this such as working in partnership with young people, young people's involvement in planning, delivery and review and so on. However, an important aspect for each voluntary youth organisation is that which makes it different from the others, their 'unique selling point'.

4.5 Induction is carried out using a variety of methods ranging from residential weekends to six week courses to courses undertaken over more extended periods. Some organisations require mandatory completion of their own qualification course within 2 or 3 years of starting.

4.6 Over 75% of the organisations use some kind of assessment for their induction/introductory training whether it is peer, tutor, or external body. About the same percentage recognise successful completion by an award or certificate.

4.7 Induction is less rigorous in some smaller and more localised organisations that were set up by interested parties in local communities who saw and responded to a specific need. Such organisations say they would have benefited greatly from a set of guidelines or minimum standards for recruitment, selection and training, from guidance on start-up and from a network of experienced organisations that could act as mentors, advisers or sounding boards for these groups. It is likely that many more such groups will be established and CWVYS should consider developing a package to assist new projects. As outlined in 3.18 above it would be beneficial to the sector if CWVYSA/vYA could negotiate with potential funders, adherence to the minimum standards as part of any funding agreement for new voluntary youth projects.

Whilst many youth organisations operate rigorous induction there are still those who do not and there is a lack of consistency across the voluntary youth sector about common standards > required in induction/introductory training. CWVYS could perform a useful role by proposing guidance on what such common elements and standards should be. This could then inform the work on the introductory stages of the Coherent Route and the Wales Youth Agency would welcome such assistance.

4.9 Many of the voluntary youth organisations, old and new, are very demanding of their workers and the introductory training offered in-house reflects this. Such rigorous training with its emphasis on 'doing the specific job' should receive more credibility, particularly since much of it is designed and communicated in what could be described as well thought out syllabuses. Many organisations feel that they know best what is required of their youth workers and the training they offer reflects this. Many feel that the training they offer is underestimated and under-valued by the statutory sector. With the development of the Coherent Route to Qualification voluntary youth organisations have the best opportunity to date to have their own programmes accredited and to benefit from the funding associated with it. Procedures for submission have been developed under the leadership of the Wales Youth Agency and it is in the best interests of the voluntary youth sector, the individual organisations and youth work in Wales, to take advantage of the opportunities now on offer.

## **5 Foundation Level Training**

5.1 Many voluntary youth organisations have participated in the initial qualification course organised by CWVYS through the YMCA College. There is general agreement that this course met the needs of the voluntary sector but also that a review was timely.

5.2 On the whole, voluntary youth organisations welcome the development of the Coherent Route to Qualification and their inclusion in it. Many have already identified people to undertake the

Foundation Course from September 2001. There is, however, concern about the content of the replacement course since this is still under development and, as yet, unknown to the sector. This is primarily a communication exercise and CWVYS and the Wales Youth Agency should work together to allay these fears and ensure that the new Route takes full account of the real needs of the voluntary sector whilst allowing for academic rigour.

- 5.3 To meet the needs of the voluntary youth sector the Coherent Route needs to remain flexible in location and format. This would assist maximum participation by voluntary sector personnel. Many reported Difficulties attending training venues and other events due to poor transport in rural areas. These needs should be taken into account if equal access to training is to be achieved in the sector.
- 5.4 All of those contacted said that their volunteers/staff would welcome their in-house training being counted as part of any professional qualification if they wanted to pursue this route. There is considerable concern that the qualification would become an academic one rather than a professional one. The source of this concern relates to the perception of youth work as fundamentally requiring the skill to relate to young people and particularly to those at risk of social exclusion. The proposed Staff College provides a good forum for CWVYS to represent this concern and ensure that it is addressed throughout the Coherent Route.
- 5.5 Those involved in this analysis project say that they would like CWVYS to be the voice of the voluntary youth sector playing an active role in many areas of development. To help achieve this in the area of training it is in the best interests of CVWYS, and those it represents, to become deeply involved in the Staff College that is proposed to oversee the Coherent Route. Ample provision has been made through the constitution of the Staff College for a strong voluntary sector voice to be heard in this new and independent forum.

## **8. Conclusion**

- 6.1 In many ways the training and development needs of the voluntary youth sector differ little from those of the statutory youth sector. What is extremely important though, is the context of the voluntary youth organisations, and the fact that volunteers undertake the vast majority of the work.
- 6.2 The sector is keen to convey that Voluntary' does not mean 'amateur<sup>1</sup> and training is taken extremely seriously as evidenced by the current efforts made. Recruitment and retention of volunteers is becoming increasingly more difficult and voluntary organisations fear that increasing the demands on volunteer time is a factor in poor retention. What needs to be reached is a balance between time demands and quality in practice.
- 6.3 Looking to the future CWVYS needs to take account of the fact that some voluntary organisations, and more particularly, the newer ones, are employing staff rather than recruiting volunteers. In fact, some voluntary youth organisations in Wales are wholly formed of full-time paid staff and many are a mixture of part-time paid and full-time staff. If CWVYS is to develop as 'the' voice of the voluntary youth sector then it needs also to meet the needs of the newer organisations not founded on the same principles as the long-standing national organisations. A close collaboration at this time between the Wales Youth Agency and CWVYS will help to develop the quality of voluntary youth service provision and promote the readiness of the sector for the challenges that lie ahead.
- 6.4 The training and development needs outlined in this report need to be considered by both CWVYS and the Wales Youth Agency to ensure that those identified are available either through current arrangements, proposed arrangements or new arrangements. In this way the collective and comprehensive development needs of the sector may be met.
- 6.5 Other areas have been identified in this report where CWVYS could make a significant and important contribution to supporting and developing further the voluntary youth sector in Wales. Serious consideration should be given to an action plan for addressing them if CWVYS is to achieve its own vision of being the<sup>1</sup> voice.

**Participating Groups**

Canllaw Online  
CWVYS Training Committee  
Guides Cymru  
Oasis Drop-in  
PHAB Wales  
Prince's Trust Action  
Scouts Cymru  
St John Ambulance  
South West Area Project  
Streets Youth Project  
UNA Exchange  
Valleys Kids  
Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA)  
Wales Young Farmers Clubs  
Wales Youth Agency  
Welsh Association of Youth clubs  
Welsh Federation of Boys and Girls Clubs  
Weston Spirit  
YMCA  
Youthlink Wales  
Youth Policy Unit of the Welsh Assembly

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