



Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru
The National Assembly for Wales

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The cover design is made up of 10 panels produced by young people for Canllaw Online (see paragraph 5.26 of the report). Each panel depicts a subject area about which young people need information.

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INTRODUCTION

This reports fulfils the commitment given to the Assembly in January 2000 that the Policy Unit would produce a study to inform the development of the Assembly's policies for young people, based on discussions with young people themselves and people who work with them, and guided by an Advisory Group, chaired by Margaret Jervis of Valleys Kids, Penygraig, Rhondda.

The study was needed to assist the Assembly in implementing the new powers to support young people, which are unique to Wales, contained in the Learning and Skills Bill which received Royal Assent on 28 July. The then First Secretary's statement, including the membership of the Advisory group, is set out in Annex 1. The relevant provisions of the bill are at Annex 2.

Process

In preparing this report the aim has been to involve from the start people who have extensive experience of working with young people and to include a process of discussions with groups of young people across Wales. This has been attempted in four ways:

1. the steering role of the Advisory Group whose role was to ensure that the Policy Unit's work took a broad view of the needs of young people in Wales today
2. a general invitation to contribute to the study was sent directly to over 400 organisations and was publicised on the NAW consultation website. Articles inviting contributions were also placed in (i) the Wales Youth Agency's publication "Pigion" (with a distribution of 1,150), and (ii) the Wales Council for Voluntary Action's magazine "Network Wales" (which is distributed to 1,200 organisations, mainly in the voluntary sector). These general invitations produced some 30 written responses
3. convening focus groups of young people across Wales - a report on these is at Annex 3
4. discussions and visits by the Policy Unit listed at Annex 4.

This process enabled the Group to draw on a wide range of views and evidence in preparing this report. In the time available, it has not been possible to go the step further and engage in consultation on the recommendations contained in the report. The Group suggests that this next stage should happen when the Assembly has produced its detailed proposals for implementing the new powers to support young people contained in the Learning and Skills Bill. This should include consultation directly with young people, which is required by the UN

Convention on the Rights of the Child and is essential if services are to be effective. Achieving this requires a lot of thought and effort as discussed in Chapter 3.

Scope and structure of the report

In the time available (the Advisory Group first met in January 2000 with a remit to finalise its report by the end of July 2000) it has not been possible to consider in detail the very broad range of issues affecting young people, and for some issues the report does no more than register their importance in the wider picture. The aim has been to

- a. suggest the principles which should underpin the Assembly's future policies towards young people
- b. draw out the links between a number of policies affecting young people, and explain why it is important to improve the connections between them
- c. suggest the priority actions for implementing the youth support provisions of the Learning and Skills Bill
- d. begin a process of policy development which will enable the Assembly to work with local authorities and other agencies to promote a more holistic and responsive approach to young people in Wales.

The focus of the project was to consider how a comprehensive system of advice and support, available to all young people in Wales, could be developed. In that context the report includes a review of the actual and potential contribution of schools, colleges and training schemes, and the careers and youth services. With this remit, and in the time available for the project, it has not been possible to address in detail the specialist support required by the most vulnerable young people, including those in public care, which is provided or commissioned by local authorities. Chapter 7 suggests some of the connections which need to be made, recognising that a comprehensive support service must be capable of responding to the most needy young people.

Many issues and services of importance to young people fall outside the powers delegated to the Assembly (for example the level and procedures for benefits, the New Deal and Home Office services), but there are mechanisms for the Assembly to influence these (for example through the Wales New Deal Task Force, appointed by the Assembly to review the progress and development of the Welfare to Work programme in Wales, and the role of the new Crime Reduction Director for Wales, a Home Office funded post located within the National Assembly).

The structure of the report is as follows :

Chapter 1 summarises the messages and recommendations

Chapter 2 explains the policy focus on young people, summarises the most relevant policy developments in Wales and identifies the key issues relevant to all the services discussed later in the report

Chapter 3 considers the views of young people, including the focus groups convened to inform this report and other evidence, and discusses how young people can be enabled to contribute effectively to future policy development and local delivery

Chapter 4 places support for young people in the context of lifelong learning, recognising that supporting and developing young people is integral to the work of schools, colleges and training providers

Chapter 5 examines the role of information, advice and guidance services for young people

Chapter 6 considers the role of youth services, both statutory and voluntary

Chapter 7 discusses how a broad, non-stigmatising network of services for young people in Wales could contribute to promoting equal opportunities, inclusion and access

Chapter 8 sets out the contribution of advice and support services to promoting the health of young people in Wales

Chapter 9 discusses the funding of improved services

Chapter 10 sets out the priorities for action to move closer to the vision of a universal network capable of responding to the needs of all young people in Wales.

Acknowledgments

The Policy Unit and the Advisory Group would like to thank all the individuals and groups who have contributed to the report; these include those we met, listed in Annex 4, and those who sent in submissions which have informed the report.

July 2000



CHAPTER 1 : SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 This chapter summarises the recommendations in this report in two sections

- the main recommendations - proposals for how these should be implemented are mainly set out in Chapter 10
- more detailed recommendations contained in the body of the report.

Vision

1.2 Young people in Wales want to contribute and achieve – they want jobs and a chance to be independent like everyone else (see Chapter 3). Our future prosperity depends on them - each decade a quarter of the workforce retires and is replaced by our young people.

1.3 The key tasks are

- to enthuse young people to seize opportunities for learning - by demonstrating that this will help them get jobs and progress in employment
- ensuring that all the services on offer to young people are of high quality, matched to their interests and aptitudes, and
- promoting equal opportunities in order to ensure that all young people are able to take advantage of all that is on offer.

1.4 There are strong links between the health and social welfare of young people and their capacity to achieve, develop skills and contribute through work and as citizens and parents. To achieve the vision of a more prosperous and fairer Wales we need to do a better job in ensuring that all young people have access to the support they need to make a success of their lives.

1.5 For most young people this support is provided mainly by home, family, friends and school. But where this support is lacking society has a responsibility to fill the gap - if it does not it will both fail the young person and lead to much higher costs on public services later. The model suggested by many who work with young people is that we should do more to strengthen the fences that prevent people from falling over the cliff - rather than providing more ambulances and police vans when they do. Young people who need extra support should not be stigmatised - many young people from stable families encounter problems and all young people need access to challenges and opportunities beyond their home and community.

1.6 As discussed later in the report, support for young people does not mean counselling and guidance services alone. Support is closely linked with providing opportunities for achievement

and is offered through a very wide range of services including education and training, local authority youth work, the very diverse voluntary youth sector, arts, sports and leisure opportunities, and specialist provision for, for example, homeless young people or young offenders.

1.7 The contribution of the voluntary sector is recognised as a key partner in the network which already exists and which needs to be developed. The voluntary youth work sector in Wales, through both national organisations and local groups, has a long tradition of work with young people, based on strong commitment and values, together with great diversity and flexibility. It has often provided essential support to young people where no statutory services have been available. It is crucial to build on and support this tradition in developing and strengthening the wider response to the needs of young people in Wales.

Recommendations

1.8 Support for young people is likely to be most effective where it is part of a broad network, open to all young people, with opportunities to respond to problems as early as possible and tackle them intelligently and flexibly in the context of the individual's wider needs and those of the group and the community. Against this background the twelve key recommendations of this report are as follows :

- support for young people in Wales should be structured around an **entitlement for all young people** to a range of services in the language of their choice, designed to promote their attainment and development as individuals

extending an entitlement for all young people in Wales to:

education, training and work experience - tailored to their needs

opportunities for achievement in all its forms, with accreditation and celebration of success

independent, specialist careers advice and guidance and student support and counselling services

personal support and advice - where and when they need it - with clear ground rules on confidentiality

advice on health, housing, benefits and other issues provided in accessible and welcoming settings

recreation and social opportunities in a safe and accessible environment

sport, arts and outdoor experiences to develop talents and broaden horizons, including an international perspective

(Paragraphs 7.2 and 10.2-3)

- the ethos should be one of **guiding and encouraging all young people to take up their entitlement** - not on policing their participation

(Paragraphs 10.3 and 10.11)

- in every Welsh local authority area there should be a **young people's strategy**, agreed and delivered jointly by a partnership of statutory and voluntary agencies, to create a **network of support and opportunity** open to all young people in the area

(Paragraphs 7.4, 7.10, 7.29 and 10.7-8)

- the aims of the strategy should be to help every young person in Wales to realise their full potential by **participating successfully** in education, training and work and by **contributing as citizens** within their communities and beyond

(Paragraphs 10.2, 10.4 and 10.7, with paragraphs 3.8, 4.11, 4.15, 4.18 and 7.28)

- young people should **contribute to the design of the strategy** and to monitoring its effectiveness

(Paragraphs 3.10 and 10.8.1)

- the aim should be both to **improve the quality** and **extend the reach of services** for young people to fill gaps and remove duplication in order to create a **comprehensive support network**

(Paragraphs 2.39, 4.4, 5.18, 6.15, 7.10 and 9.20)

- across this network there should be a **shared responsibility** to support young people and meet their needs, and **clarity about the specialist contribution** of each agency to the agreed strategy

(Paragraphs 2.33-34, 10.5 and 10.8-10)

- the **local authority corporately**, through the Chief Executive, should be responsible for leading and supporting this network and pulling together data on outcomes for **the cohort of all young people in their area** (including their health, housing needs, attainment, participation, offending, substance misuse). It should also be responsible for ensuring the contribution to the network of all local authority services. The local authority youth service should have a strong role in the delivery of this corporate responsibility

(Paragraphs 10.7-8 and 10.12)

- the National Assembly for Wales needs to create **the capacity to ensure full implementation** and delivery of this support strategy and to contribute to wider UK policy development, including discussions of a post 16 youth allowance. It should also consider the creation of a **multidisciplinary implementation monitoring group** to advise it on monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of what is being delivered locally for young people

(Paragraph 10.6, with paragraphs 9.24 and 10.13)

- the strategy should be responsible for **identifying young people vulnerable to experiencing or causing problems** and identifying where they can get help. The building blocks for this strategy are already in place across Wales so **new structures are not needed** - rather a local network of quality services guided by a clear vision of how young people's needs will be met and how local delivery, **across all the relevant agencies**, will be monitored and improved

(Paragraphs 2.29, 10.8.3 and 10.10)

- the remit of the **Wales Youth Agency** should be broadened to enable it to support effectively this wider youth agenda

(Paragraph 6.30)

- **additional resources** are needed to make improvements in the services currently provided to young people in Wales in order to move towards making a reality of the entitlement proposed above. The priorities for additional investment are :
 - a. to strengthen the capacity in local authorities to support the broad partnership for young people in their area, with short-term earmarked start-up funds for local partnerships
 - b. to strengthen the quality and reach of youth work in the statutory and voluntary sectors, to support quality, open access, generic youth work, to provide effective support and training for volunteers, and to develop information services
 - c. to strengthen the contribution of Careers Service companies
 - d. to increase core funding for the all-Wales voluntary youth sector.

(Chapter 9; specifically paragraphs 9.16 and 9.20)

1.9 The analysis behind these recommendations and the steps needed to achieve them are discussed in the following chapters. Other detailed recommendations contained in the body of the report are as follows:

- Policy towards young people in Wales needs to be strengthened in five ways
- more positive focus on achievement
- stronger focus on capacity building
- better services for young people
- involving young people
- more effective co-ordination and partnership

(Paragraph 2.29)

- need for stronger emphasis in the professional training of all those working with young people on helping them to respond effectively in different settings, as part of a common professional duty to explain options and the consequences of choices

(Paragraph 2.34)

- need to develop expertise in engaging with young people as on-going process

(Paragraphs 3.10-11)

- need to develop mechanisms for review of policies in an integrated way

(Paragraph 3.11)

- provide teachers with support and continued training to enable them to work effectively with all young people

(Paragraph 4.11)

- look at ways of making the curriculum more flexible

(Paragraph 4.11)

- support teachers in working with least motivated and disruptive pupils

(Paragraph 4.11)

- teacher training to have more emphasis on removing barriers to learning and forging relationships with parents

(Paragraph 4.11)

- look at schools as organisations, create opportunities for young people to practise citizenship roles

(Paragraph 4.11)

- develop role of school as centre of learning for community

(Paragraph 4.11)

- offer Youth Gateway assessment to wider group of young people, earlier

(Paragraph 5.15)

- careers service needs to look at the balance between supporting schools and colleges in the design and delivery of work-related education - and the direct delivery of services to young people

(Paragraph 5.17)

- work of Careers Service companies needs to be set in broader local framework

(Paragraph 5.19)

- urgent need for network of information provision for young people, both virtual and physical - consequent resource issue for Canllaw Online

(Paragraphs 5.20-26)

- need to enhance youth work training, including for management and policy roles

(Paragraphs 6.17-18)

- training issues for other professionals working with young people including partnership role

(Paragraph 6.19)

- need for strong links between National Assembly, Youth Justice Board and Home Office to ensure suitable provision for young prisoners from Wales

(Paragraph 7.23)

- need for links between local authorities and Prison Governors

(Paragraph 7.23)

- need for safety net for vulnerable young people to be rooted in community-based support strategy

(Paragraph 7.29)

- strengthening access to professional health advice eg through the school nurse and health visiting services

(Paragraph 8.5)

- need to identify ways of improving access to health services for older young people who may not be in contact with other agencies

(Paragraph 8.6)

- addressing existing data problems

(Paragraphs 9.8 and 10.12)

- need for dialogue on how extraneously-funded projects will fit with existing and planned provision and how longer-term funding issues will be addressed

(Paragraph 9.14)

- Assembly to consider financial support for young people in full-time learning

(Paragraph 9.17)

- need to discuss new burden costs with Welsh Local Government Association

(Paragraph 9.20)

- need for further consideration of how to integrate entitlement for young people with Communities First programme

(Paragraph 9.22)

- need to monitor effectiveness of partnership working, including proportion of funding going to voluntary sector

(Paragraph 9.24)

- a specialist group needed to look into confidentiality and information-sharing issues

(Paragraph 10.14).

CHAPTER 2 : THE YOUTH POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 Young people are the subject of a great deal of policy debate in Wales, the UK and internationally, and have been the subject of extensive research. Definitions of young people vary depending on the particular focus of attention but the remit of this report is the age group 11-25 in order to allow a very broad focus on supporting young people.

2.2 This policy debate is concerned with young people as a group for a number of reasons :

- because, like others, they have rights and entitlements including those specified in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (ratified by the UK Government in 1991) and including three main rights that must be considered whenever action affecting children is considered : non-discrimination (the Convention applies to all children equally), best interests (of the child must be paramount when decisions are made), the child's view (children have the right to say what they think about any matter that affects them)
- childhood and adolescence are formative years which have a huge influence on people's later prospects in life, including their chances of becoming financially independent and secure, of living healthy and fulfilled lives and becoming good parents
- during adolescence young people become gradually more independent of their families and more subject to outside influences (although, as discussed in Chapter 3, home and family remain the most important sources of advice and support for the majority of young people) – wrong decisions and mistakes during this period can set young people on a detrimental path, limiting their options and impeding their capacity to realise their potential
- government policies and programmes are attempting to influence particular aspects of young people's behaviour from a problem- orientated perspective, by eg reducing truancy, addressing antisocial behaviour, tackling the skills deficit, reducing offending, tackling substance misuse and other risk taking behaviour, and so on
- there is a recognition that growing up is becoming more complex and difficult - for a number of reasons:

why growing up is getting harder

- young people face greater risk and uncertainty about their role in the world
- adolescence has become longer and more complex
- the gap between physical and emotional maturity is widening
- economic independence is delayed by prolonged education and training
- opportunities for unskilled young people are reducing
- young people are subject to huge cultural pressures - to acquire possessions and conform to media generated expectations of body image and behaviour

Youth policy in Europe and the UK

2.3 Against this background a number of European countries are developing responses within a 'youth policy' framework. The report of the Social Exclusion Unit, "National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, Policy Action Team 12 - Young People" published in March 2000 (PAT 12) draws on research which demonstrated that, of the countries which were party to the Cultural Convention of the Council of Europe, over a third had an identified Minister for Youth and a half had a single department, ministry or committee with an overarching responsibility for young people. In the countries identified as having youth policies, the common elements were seen to be :

- social cohesion between Government, young people and society through consultation and involvement
- advice and information on young people's rights and the opportunities available to them
- freedom of cultural, creative and political expression
- a culture of continuous education and training
- support for young families
- appropriate specialised assistance for young people at risk such as those with disabilities or young offenders
- support for and promotion of leisure activities
- the right training for those working with young people
- research on the difficulties facing young people and
- fostering international relations between young people.

2.4 In the UK, a number of recent reports have attempted to develop a more coherent approach to young people. Last year a Strategy Action Team, established by the Scottish Social Inclusion Network, produced a report entitled "Excluded Young People". The report recommended that the Chief Executives of local authorities in Scotland should be charged with joining up services for young people across the local authority area.

2.5 In England the Social Exclusion Unit report "Bridging the Gap" published in July 1999 highlighted the numbers of young people (estimated at the end of 1997 as around 9% of 16-18 year olds) not taking part in education, training or work, and linked this non-participation with an increased risk of involvement in crime and other problem behaviour.

2.6 In response to this report the Department for Education and Employment is establishing in England the Connexions strategy, which includes personal advisers for all 13-19 year olds whose role will be to ensure that all young people overcome barriers to fulfilling their potential and access specialist support where needed.

2.7 The subsequent PAT 12 report highlighted the combination of problems faced by many young people, including poor family relationships, and called for a more co-ordinated effort from all the agencies involved to respond more effectively to problems and prevent them where possible. The report points out that for young people living in poor neighbourhoods growing up is harder for a combination of reasons, but also estimates that around half of young people who need extra support do not live in such neighbourhoods. This underlines the need for services to support young people to have a wider reach than strategies focused on deprived areas.

The Welsh context

2.8 These issues have been identified in Wales for a number of years. In the mid - 1990s the South and Mid Glamorgan Training Enterprise Councils commissioned research which suggested that at any one time between 16% and 23% of 16 and 17 year olds in their areas were not in education, training or work, and that many had been in that position for more than 6 months. This and other evidence led to a number of initiatives by the Training Enterprise Councils (TECs) and Further Education colleges to increase participation including through outreach and more flexible delivery, and to the introduction of all-Wales initiatives such as the Youth Access Initiative and the Youth Gateway. Increasing participation was part of the agenda of the Education and Training Action Plan published in March 1999.

2.9 Interpreting the available data on the participation of 16-18 year olds is complex but, based on the information available, the Statistical Directorate of the National Assembly estimates the position as follows :

- in 1998-99, there were 113,100 young people in Wales aged from 16 to 18
- of this number, three-quarters were engaged in education or training; 55% in full-time education and 19% in part-time education or training. Of the quarter not in education or training, almost 60% were in employment
- the remaining 12,000, some 11% of all 16 to 18 year olds in Wales, were not participating in education, training or employment.

2.10 In many areas and for some groups the proportion outside education, training and employment will have been much higher.

2.11 Trends in recent years suggest

- the proportion of 16 to 18 year olds in **full-time education** was lower in 1998-99 than in any year since 1994-95
- the proportion in **employment**, but not in education or training, was higher than in any year since 1994-95
- the proportion in **part-time education or training** was higher in both 1997-98 and 1998-99 than in the previous three years
- the proportion **outside of education, training and employment** in 1998-99 (11%) was lower than the average comparable figure for the three years 1994-95 to 1996-97 (14%)

2.12 Key issues for the future, as discussed in Chapter 10, include investigating the factors underlying these trends to improve our understanding of :

- whether overall rates of participation - in education, training and work - are continuing to increase
- why participation in full-time education appears to be falling - apparent inconsistencies with the trends suggested by the Careers' companies destination surveys need further investigation
- how increased participation is spread across Wales
- the nature of increasing employment amongst young people
- the impact of government action on these trends.

Policy strands relating to young people in Wales

2.13 In recent years the policy debate about young people in Wales has developed through a number of strands :

- regeneration and tackling social inclusion
- the economy and business
- attendance and behaviour at school
- education and training post 16
- Better Wales
- children in need
- strategy for children and young people
- problem behaviour.

2.14 The following paragraphs review these policy strands in broad terms as they impact on young people in Wales.

Regeneration and tackling social exclusion

2.15 As PAT 12 explained, many young people living in poor communities experience the combined effects of poverty, family breakdown, absence of people in work, poor transport and other facilities, poor housing and public services.

2.16 These inter-related problems have led to a number of area-based regeneration initiatives which often addressed the needs of young people mainly through training or community safety measures. The recent shift in focus of regeneration policy from infrastructure and capital investment into investment in people and participation by communities has led to a greater emphasis on young people, for example in the Assembly's proposals for the Communities First programme which are being developed in relation to the most deprived parts of Wales, and in the European funding programmes.

2.17 In parallel, many parts of Wales, particularly in the Valleys and the cities, have seen the growth of local voluntary sector projects motivated by concern about the vulnerability of their young people and the lack of opportunities for them. These added to the long established work of organisations such as the YMCA and other national charities in the most deprived parts of Wales.

The economy and business

2.18 Young people are of great importance to business and economic prosperity: 25% of the workforce retires every 10 years and needs to be replaced by young people. The links between the skills and aptitudes of young people joining the labour market and economic prosperity have long been recognised. In the 1980s the focus was on tackling youth unemployment, with the introduction of the Youth Guarantee (of training for all non-employed 16-17 year olds who had left full-time education); by the 1990s the emphasis was increasingly on skill shortages and meeting the needs of business more effectively. The key issues are :

- the high priority placed by employers on the personal capacities of individuals, not just soft skills - communication, teamwork etc - but also self-discipline, self-motivation and the ability to take responsibility for one's own learning, as set out in the Future Skills Wales report published in February 1999
- the shortage of young people with suitable qualifications, skills and aptitudes is a real constraint on the growth of the Welsh economy (exacerbated by the fall in numbers of young people)
- employers have a key role to play in helping to motivate young people through mentoring and work experience - this is important within the New Deal if it is to succeed in meeting the needs of the most disadvantaged on young people
- employers recognise the range of domains of achievement - academic and vocational, key skills, collective and community and personal development - but these need to be accredited with qualifications having real currency
- some employers argue that too many young people are being encouraged to go down the academic route to higher qualifications when vocational training and education would be better for their earning and employment prospects.

Attendance and behaviour at school

2.19 This policy strand includes the increased focus on attendance and behaviour at school in the context of the range of measures of school performance set out in the Assembly policy document Building Excellent Schools Together (BEST) published in July 1997. It has been further defined in National Assembly Circular 3/99 'Pupil Support and Social Exclusion' which brings together advice relating to pupil behaviour and discipline, improving attendance, the use of exclusion and re-integration.

Education and training post 16

2.20 The impetus behind the reforms of post 16 education being implemented through the Learning and Skills Bill has been the concern to

- raise the quality of what is on offer to young people across the education and training sectors in Wales and
- to improve the fit between the courses and programmes available and the aptitudes of young people and the needs of employers.

2.21 This has been driven both by

- value for money concerns about high drop-out rates from further education and training and duplication of courses and competition between schools, colleges and training providers
- concerns about the gap between the skills and aptitudes of young people leaving schools, college and university and the requirements of the labour market.

Better Wales

2.22 In addition to the list of better opportunities for learning included in Better Wales there are specific objectives related to youth support and participation :

- more of our young people to be engaged in the life of our communities
- a new framework to be developed to tackle youth exclusion on the basis of an integrated approach to supporting young people and engaging them as citizens

2.23 The 2010 benchmarks include :

- there must be a strong extra-curricular prospectus for every child covering cultural, volunteering and enterprise activity
- local authorities and the voluntary sector will have integrated and well developed youth services
- access to and participation in education and training should have increased markedly
- there should be better leisure facilities for children and young people, particularly in our most deprived communities

- spreading prosperity throughout our country should make it possible for more young people to secure a reasonable choice of rewarding work within reasonable reach of their communities
- people should accept even greater responsibility for their own health and our lifestyles must be healthier, particularly in the poorest communities.

Children in Need

2.24 The Better Wales objective is :

‘to improve the well-being and educational attainment of all children in need, including those looked after by local authorities, by implementing our Children First programme, which will also protect children in care from abuse and neglect’

2.25 Children First aims to improve the life chances of children in need and to ensure that young people leaving care, as they enter adulthood, are not isolated and are able to participate socially and economically as citizens. More preventative approaches - supported through Sure Start and the Children and Youth Partnership Fund - aim to break the cycle of need and exclusion.

Strategy for Children and Young People

2.26 The needs of young people and their families are being addressed from a broad social perspective by the current work on the Assembly’s strategy for children and young people from 0 to 18 years old. This includes 3 main strands :

- to establish a strategic framework that will improve the coherence and focus of legislation, policy and services delivered, working within the model set out in the framework document and taking account of new proposals such as the office of the Children’s Commissioner
- to improve Children’s Services planning as the means of implementing the strategic approach, promoting integration among corporate local authorities, health services and the voluntary sector, and including relevant factors such as Best Value and the community planning approach proposed in the Local Government Bill
- to promote the participation of children and young people in the planning and delivery of services, informed by principles of Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

2.27 This is a key development because it focuses on the needs of the individual child and extends children's services planning to include prevention and making it easier for people to get help and advice without stigma. This reflects a consensus that

- many of the problems which become serious in adolescence could have been mitigated by better, more responsive services for younger children, including at school (although for some young people problems do not appear until adolescence)
- greater attention needs to be placed on the contribution of play, the arts and other enriching opportunities, to individual health, wellbeing and attainment.

Problem behaviour

2.28 This policy strand has developed because of concern about the behaviour of young people in the following areas

- **offending** - the principal aim of the youth justice reforms contained within the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 is the prevention of offending by children and young people. The new Youth Offending Teams (16 Yots cover Wales) and the local crime and disorder reduction strategies (22 based on unitary authority boundaries) should have a considerable impact on Welsh communities, both directly in reducing levels of crime and disorder but also in terms of the contribution they can make to reducing social exclusion and promoting economic regeneration. The National Assembly has been designated under the Crime and Disorder Act as a body with which local crime and disorder partnerships must co-operate. The designation will assist in defining a role for the Assembly that can help to support partnership and integration of crime prevention across the range of social policy developments concerning children and young people.
- there has been a major focus on **substance misuse**, mainly but not exclusively by young people, culminating in the Re-focused Substance Misuse Strategy launched in June 2000 and intended to dovetail with the UK anti-drugs strategy (Tackling Drugs to Build a Better Britain) in which young people are the first of four strategic priorities. There are strong links with offending, and considerable unmet demand for specialist treatment services (Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, treatment for addiction, smoking cessation clinics, etc) and for supported accommodation and rehabilitation programmes
- **sexual health** - this has focused on the very high rates, in some parts of Wales, of teenage and underage conceptions, and sexually transmitted diseases, as well as the

potential damage to individuals' physical and emotional health of too early sexual activity. The Assembly's Sexual Health Strategy sets the response to these problems in the context of better personal and social education and more accessible advice and information services for young people.

Pulling together these policy strands

2.29 To support these Assembly strategies, the Group suggests that policy towards young people needs to be strengthened in five ways:

- a more positive focus on achievement and what young people have to contribute
- a stronger focus on building the young person's capacity to become independent, make choices and participate in the democratic process
- improvements in the quality and responsiveness of the services available to young people
- involving young people, which is key to achieving the above
- more effective co-ordination and partnership at local level as set out in Chapter 10.

Stronger focus on the young person

2.30 Young people are the subject of many different policies, programmes and initiatives whether as children, pupils (or truants) in school, students in college or training, customers of careers services, clients of social services, patients of the health service, victims or offenders in the criminal justice system, young people in the youth services, claimants in the benefit system.

2.31 There needs to be a stronger focus on the individual young person at the centre of these policies, because their ability to take advantage of opportunities available depends critically on good health, self confidence and the ambition to be independent, together with the encouragement and practical support of family and community. Where these are lacking, the obstacles to success combine to create almost insuperable barriers and the young person can be caught in a spider's web of linked problems.

linked problems: why policies for young people must cross-service boundaries

- young people's mental health affects learning - a pupil may be in school but not in learning
- health problems in the family force young people to become carers, interrupting their education and social life
- home and school problems contribute to truancy which creates opportunities for offending
- difficulties in providing for basic needs on benefit prevent participation in education and training and lead to offending in order to survive
- family instability leads to homelessness and the desire to escape from problems through substance misuse
- homeless young people are vulnerable to abuse, health-damaging behaviour and face huge barriers to successful participation in learning

2.32 But government policies have tended to focus on only one manifestation - the offender, the homeless young person, the school refuser and so on, and that particular policy context defines the problem rather than listening to the young person to see things more in the round and address the underlying causes. Effective responses depend critically on understanding the different priorities which young people may attach to problems in their lives. Thus a drug user may well not see drug dependency as the central problem - the problem is destitution, unemployment, family rejection or lack of future prospects - for them drug or alcohol use is the solution or means of escape. So without attending to these issues intervention around drug use is unlikely to help. Changing this compartmentalised response to young people is not easy to achieve but it would help if all agencies locally were working to an overarching agreed strategy for supporting the cohort of young people in their areas.

2.33 This would recognise that, for the young person, success or failure in one area of life can lead to achievement or problems in others. When a young person drops out from a course of education and training that is not only an ineffective use of resources - it is also likely to be a major setback for the young person and, on top of earlier failures, can contribute to a feeling of hopelessness and lack of self worth. All the agencies concerned contribute to building up or knocking down the young person and this needs to be recognised explicitly as a common thread in performance management and inspection systems, through a shared responsibility to contribute to individual capacity building:

the common thread of economic and social policy: building the individual's capacity:

- to make personal decisions
- to evaluate information and weigh up options, advice and pressure
- to make constructive use of time and talents
- to take responsibility for one's own learning, health and well being
- to participate in wider decision making

Duplication

2.34 The fact that this capacity building responsibility is central to the remit of so many agencies can create problems of territoriality, duplication and uncertainty about role boundaries. This is an important issue which can only be resolved by a joined up local process that begins with the young person. It may matter less who delivers than that someone responds effectively to the young person at the right time. The important points are not to overload young people (several mentors chasing the same person), not to duplicate their experiences (playing the same trust games a dozen times) and not to project apparently conflicting messages ('get your hair cut/conform' says the careers adviser, 'express yourself/be different' says the youth worker). These issues need to be resolved through

- a local strategy which maps out how the entitlement proposed in Chapter 1 will be delivered for young people in each locality, by a partnership including schools, colleges and training providers, youth services (both statutory and voluntary sectors) and the Careers Service companies
- a stronger emphasis in the professional training of all those working with young people on helping the young person to respond and communicate effectively in different settings, recognising that different behaviour, dress and attitude is appropriate at different times in order to be able to participate and be heard. This should be part of a common professional duty to explain to young people the options available to them and the consequences of different choices, in the context of helping young people to identify what is in their long term interests. Wider issues in relation to the training of those who work with young people in Wales are discussed in Chapter 6.

Principles

2.35 The rationale for investing in capacity building and support should not be presented as responding to deficits in young people themselves, or driven by the desire to prevent eg crime or teenage pregnancy. That is how many young people see policies aimed at them :

‘no-one pays any attention to us until we cause trouble’ (young woman from Carmarthen).

2.36 The underlying ethos should be based on a recognition that to become active citizens all young people need support from their families and communities. Many young people are withdrawn, lack confidence or have very narrow horizons and need the opportunity to develop socially and broaden their horizons, both in school and in other ways.

Improving what is on offer

2.37 Although young people are often seen as the problem by adults, from the perspective of the young person many services seem unresponsive or deliberately obstructive. For example many young people feel excluded from community facilities and services such as health care. Others feel that the education and training opportunities offered to them are unsuitable, irrelevant and unlikely to improve their job prospects.

2.38 Many of these barriers to effective access are complex and, in many cases the problems are not faced only by young people. For example, where a young person presenting with self inflicted injuries in an Accident and Emergency department is treated unsympathetically or discharged with no follow up - this may reflect a range of problems facing staff including overwork, lack of knowledge and lack of avenues for referral for specialist follow up support. In this and many other examples raised with the Policy Unit young people in Wales seemed to be at the sharp end of wider problems with quality and access, for example:

all-age service issues raised by young people:

discrimination faced by ethnic minority young people is part of the common experience of their communities in accessing jobs and services

problems faced by some young people in accessing health services are shared by all ages in their community

the shortage of training options is part of the wider problem of ensuring quality and choice in the Valleys and rural Wales

the level of prescribing of anti depressants to young people is partly due to the very limited alternatives available to GPs.

2.39 These issues need to be addressed in the context of wider strategies eg to raise quality and improve access and fill recognised gaps in services such as treatment for substance misuse and specialist mental health services. The contribution of services whose principal role is to work with young people is discussed in Chapters 4 - 7 below

- Chapter 4 is about schools - which provide for all young people - and college and training which follow school for many young people
- Chapter 5 deals with careers advice and guidance for all young people - and with broader information and advice services
- Chapter 6 discusses the role of youth services - both statutory and voluntary - which reach many young people
- Chapter 7 discusses services for disadvantaged young people and their link with the wider network.

2.40 The commentary on the broad policy framework outlined above has been informed by discussions with a number of groups, including young people. Why consultation with young people matters and how it can improve policy and delivery is discussed in the next Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3 : ENGAGING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

3.1 The right to be consulted is one of the three main strands of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as summarised in Chapter 2. It is a very high priority for young people in Wales: 'wanting to be asked' was the top of a list of priorities produced by the support for young people workshop during the Young Voice Conference at the National Assembly on 7 July 2000.

3.2 Attempting to find out the views of young people has become a high priority in recent years both because of the importance of the youth policy agenda set out in Chapter 2 and because of a growing recognition of the wider implications for the democratic process of the low levels of participation by young people in elections at national and local level.

3.3 During 2000 the National Assembly has initiated two distinct exercises involving young people at an all Wales level - a series of consultative conferences to inform the development of the Children and Young People's strategy discussed in Chapter 2 and the Young Voice conference held on 7 July which was designed to begin a process of engagement with young people across the range of Assembly responsibilities.

3.4 As part of its research for this report the Advisory Group decided to convene a series of focus groups designed to seek the views of young people from a range of backgrounds across Wales. The report of this exercise is attached at Annex 3. This recognises that there was confusion about the limited aims of the exercise which was not to consult about the Group's recommendations but to find a way of identifying the issues of concern to the young people in order to inform this report. It also recognises that the limited number of reports received and the variations in procedure point to caution in drawing conclusions about young people in Wales generally.

3.5 In spite of this, the Group feels that the outcome of the focus group process did bring out some unambiguous messages and there is no reason to believe that these are not typical of the views of many young people in Wales, including :

- dissatisfaction with mainstream services - school, careers, training, youth services, police and health services
- the unmet needs of young people in some parts of Wales and their very limited aspirations and depressed expectations
- the lack of facilities for young people or their exclusion from facilities which do exist

- financial pressures as a barrier to continuing in education
- divisions between young people seen as ‘achievers’ and those with no expectation of success
- calls for local authority and Assembly members to meet people and understand their needs more fully
- the lack of respect given to young people by adults, young people being viewed with suspicion in many social settings and generally not belonging.

3.6 The rest of this chapter draws on the evidence from the focus groups and other consultation including recent UK wide research, for example, that quoted in Bridging the Gap (see Chapter 2) and the Real Deal¹.

What young people want

3.7 It is worth stating the obvious that young people in Wales are a very diverse group, with a wide range of backgrounds, opinions and needs. Not all young people are dissatisfied with the services and opportunities on offer to them - the majority proceed successfully through school and subsequent education and training and are supported by family and friends in becoming independent adults. There is no such thing as a definitive statement of young people’s views and the processes for consulting them need to reflect different policy contexts and opportunities to influence decisions. However research and consultation suggests some common themes :

- young people want respect and understanding - and many feel stereotyped and demonised by adults
- young people want to be consulted and taken seriously - and often feel patronised or ignored by politicians and others in authority
- young people greatly value accessible and affordable places to meet each other - and often feel unwelcome in commercial or community venues
- young people share the same aspirations as other people: to have a job, a home, a relationship and security
- young people share many of the same concerns as others in their community - eg for the viability of rural communities and for the safety and future prosperity of deprived urban areas.

1 ‘The Real Deal’ report on a consultation project with disadvantaged young people across the UK including young people from Wales (St Mellons and Ely), Demos 1999.

Why engaging with young people is important

3.8 Engaging with young people has many dimensions including consultation and participation at Assembly level, local authority or health authority level or at the level of detailed service delivery eg in school or through local youth, transport or leisure strategies. The benefits of such engagement include

- recognising young people's rights as citizens and giving them the opportunity to exercise responsibility eg through contributing to the management of youth centres, setting and negotiating boundaries, recognising the views of others etc
- improving the quality and relevance of service delivery eg young people have strong views on the ways in which advice is offered to them on work, careers, health, relationships, sex, drugs and alcohol - which should inform the design of more effective strategies at local level
- increasing young people's confidence in speaking up for themselves, being heard and thus promoting greater interest in, and commitment to, the democratic process.

Challenges of engaging with young people effectively

3.9 Some of the challenges of consulting young people effectively are similar to those which arise in consulting adults eg how to ensure consultation is representative, how to involve hard to reach groups and how to ensure that participants are given accessible and relevant information to enable them to contribute effectively to decision making. These issues are particularly acute with disengaged young people who may well regard bodies such as school or youth councils as pointless or hostile to them. Those who work with such young people point to the need for careful preparation and support to help them develop the skills to articulate their views and present them effectively to others.

3.10 Engaging with young people is not a one-off event - it means looking for opportunities to involve them in a range of local strategies, not just those aimed at them. A number of local authorities in Wales have established local youth fora which are identifying a number of specific areas for action including transport and community safety, anti bullying strategies in schools and improving facilities for young people. In taking forward the approach to youth support advocated in this report, consultation with young people and others needs to be tackled on a number of levels eg

all Wales level

are the underlying principles - the entitlement model (Chapter 1) and the incremental approach (Chapter 10) - the right ones?

local authority level

how do the services currently provided match up to the entitlement (if agreed as the basis for national policy)? - what refinements to the entitlement are needed to meet the needs of young people in this local authority area and what are the delivery priorities locally?

community/service/project level

how effectively are we meeting the needs of young people? how effective are our links with other providers? who is not being reached and what needs to be done to reach them?

3.11 Much of this appraisal will dovetail with local authority strategies for local consultation as part of Best Value and the modernising agenda. To be effective in relation to young people there is a need to :

- develop expertise in engaging with young people effectively - particularly those who are unlikely to turn up to public meetings unsupported
- develop mechanisms for inspection and review which scrutinise policies in an integrated way, as part of a network for young people, not as isolated interventions.

CHAPTER 4 : LEARNING FOR LIFE: SCHOOL, COLLEGE AND TRAINING

4.1 This chapter discusses the role of schools, colleges and training providers in a wider network of support and opportunity for young people. The role of schools is crucial because, up to age 16, all children are, or should be, part of a school community and their experience of school colours their view of learning and their own worth, which largely determines their own prospects and those of their children. Most young people experience success at school - those who do not are much less likely to strive to achieve in other contexts.

4.2 Young people's experience of the more adult environment of college is different from that of school but many still need support to cope with greater choice and freedom and to develop self discipline and motivation.

4.3 Motivation is a key issue across learning sectors. Research² suggests that the vast majority of young people want to be in quality employment, mainly for pragmatic reasons. They want to earn money to support themselves and their dependants. Therefore strategies to increase successful participation in learning at school and beyond need to encourage young people to feel that there is an end purpose to learning. The Future Skills Wales survey underlines the importance of this link, demonstrating that the capacity to organise one's own learning and development came very near the top of the rankings of employers' assessment of the skills that will be important in the future.

4.4 Across sectors, action to motivate and support young people needs to be seen in the context of action to raise the quality of what is offered and making it relevant to their interests and aptitudes as well as to the needs of the economy. Such action is part of a broad programme to

- promote individual responsibility for learning
- improve understanding of enterprise, business and employment
- promote citizenship and personal and social education in the broadest sense.

4.5 These policy aspirations need to be pursued through work experience, individual mentoring and involving employers in the design and delivery of the curriculum to promote higher attainment and to enrich young people's learning experiences.

2 Marian Morris et al 'A literature review of young people's attitudes' NFER 1999

4.6 These are integral to the improving schools agenda and to the major reforms of the post 16 sector currently underway through the Education and Training Action Plan process to implement the Learning and Skills Bill. The imperative is to develop a student-centred approach building on the interests and talents of the young person. When young people disengage from learning they are often defined as problems when they may be responding to inappropriate or poor quality provision, or rules and procedures which create confrontation and alienate them.

Schools

4.7 The Group discussed with the Chief Inspector, Estyn (Her Majesty's Inspectorate in Wales whose remit extends to schools, colleges and training providers, Careers Service companies and the youth work sector) and with a local authority Director of Education and a head of a large inner city comprehensive in Wales how they saw the way ahead in terms of improving the capacity of schools to engage all children and enable them to fulfil their potential.

4.8 This discussion identified a large number of factors relevant to the performance of schools in engaging all their pupils and drawing out their full potential. It identified schools as the centre of a strategy of achievement for all, working in partnership with the community, with an ethos of inclusion and pastoral care for all pupils, driven by an expectation of progress, not reinforcing low expectations. Underlying this is a recognition that schools are unable to put everything right and that even the best schools cannot change the economic and social environment which has a huge influence on the aspirations of pupils and parents. Positive factors included :

- the values set out in policy documents including the Assembly's Building Excellent Schools Together (BEST) document, guidance for Education Strategic Plans and Estyn reports, which argue for excellence in teaching and learning as the standard for all children in Wales, based on the highest possible expectations and including support for individual needs, delivered without condescension or discrimination
- the introduction of the National Curriculum in 1989 has raised standards and challenged expectations of what children can and should learn. Previously in some schools approximately 40% of children were not entered for any examinations at all, giving them no qualifications base with which to leave school
- far more children are now getting qualifications and schools are working hard to improve and to measure improvement.

the most successful schools in Wales include all their pupils in success by

- developing both personal and academic attributes
- tackling poor behaviour without alienating the individual and offering the disengaged the chance to change and be accepted
- focusing on improvement
- recognising and celebrating the distance travelled by every pupil
- mentoring all pupils
- monitoring the quality of teaching and learning
- evaluating their own performance and progress
- planning well and developing leadership in both staff and pupils.

4.9 Negative factors which get in the way of delivering this vision of excellence for all young people in Wales include

- some schools are conservative organisations, slow to respond to the needs of pupils, parents and the outside world - some parents feel they are simply not heard when raising concerns with the school - this is a particular problem for ethnic minorities
- a tendency in the press and amongst parents to focus only on the achievement of GCSEs at A*-C level, ignoring school performance on the wider range of measures set out in BEST, including attainment of GCSE A*-G, attendance and behaviour
- social and economic decline, relative poverty and family circumstances including caring responsibilities or parents whose own negative experience of school is passed on to their children - for some children there is great tension between the ethos and values of the school and those of their home and community
- in some schools the ethos and rules are too authoritarian and do not focus young people who want to test boundaries into having to take more responsibility for themselves in constructive ways
- some lessons are dull and offer little excitement in learning
- in too many schools the poor physical environment contributes to an atmosphere of low expectations or detracts from efforts made to promote high expectations.

4.10 Where some or all of these problems are present there is a greater need for mechanisms such as Pupil Referral Units and programmes for those disengaged from learning such as those funded by the Youth Access Initiative and the Youth Work and Schools Partnership programme.

The way ahead

4.11 This analysis suggests that the priorities for the future should include

- continuing the present focus on the quality of teaching and learning - making interesting and enjoyable lessons central to strategies for increasing engagement. The challenge of delivering this underlines the importance of attracting and retaining high quality recruits into teaching and providing teachers with the support and continued training to help them work effectively with all young people
- looking at ways of making the curriculum more flexible, including a review of the core curriculum at age 14-16 and developing a vocational approach to making all subjects relevant and connected to pupils' experience and future work - without sacrificing the gains made from the introduction of the National Curriculum
- giving greater emphasis and recognition to the work of local authorities and schools in responding to the needs of all pupils and bringing them on
- supporting teachers in working with the least motivated and disruptive pupils. Targeted programmes for disengaged, or potentially disengaged pupils, demonstrate that relationships with staff are critically important, but in the normal classroom environment it is difficult for teachers to provide the additional individual attention needed by some pupils
- teacher training, initial and on-going, should include more emphasis on removing barriers to learning - but not in ways that reduce expectations of achievement - and on forging constructive relationships with parents
- looking at the nature of schools as organisations and how they need to change to create more opportunities for young people to participate and practise citizenship roles - the modernising government approach with its focus on responsiveness and leadership, offers a useful agenda here
- developing a much broader role for schools as centres of learning in their communities - creating a real partnership with parents and encouraging schools to be much more open organisations with strong links to all parts of the community and offering all kinds of services needed by pupils on site, including health and careers advice, discussed below.

Community schools

4.12 Positioning schools at the centre of wider community strategies is seen by a number of local authorities as the way forward in order to address the serious problems with children's speech and language development in some parts of Wales. These early problems often

continue through school and become evident in the basic skills deficits identified in 16 year olds. This wider role should not be seen simply as a response to deprivation but can contribute to raising attainment across the board. However it is important to recognise that the role of the school within the community has a simpler logic in some parts of Wales than others eg where the geographical catchment area of the school is reasonably discrete. In many urban areas the complexity of catchment areas makes this more difficult to achieve. The greatly increased security of school buildings post Dunblane is also a constraint on community access.

Targeted programmes to re-engage young people

4.13 The Assembly, and previously the Welsh Office, has supported a number of programmes to assist schools and local authorities in developing an effective response to disengaged pupils pre and post 16, including funds earmarked in the GEST (Grants for Education Support and Training) budget for behaviour support, the Youth Access Initiative and the Youth Work and Schools Partnership programme administered by the Wales Youth Agency.

4.14 The National Foundation for Educational Research evaluation of the Youth Access Initiative demonstrates that it has produced a more effective response to individual needs, including encouraging agencies to re-think their attitudes to young people and identifies the need now to extend and integrate partnerships and team work to create a more comprehensive strategy across the local authority, focusing in particular on the transition at 16 and the needs of young people in the 16-18 age group, and to fill important gaps in provision including for ethnic minorities and Welsh speakers . The evaluation supports strengthening the strategic role of the local authority as suggested in this report, to lead strong partnership between schools, Careers Service companies, the youth service and the post 16 providers.

Post 16 provision

4.15 Creating a better fit between the needs of ‘customers’ - young people and employers - and the education and training provision on offer is central to the agenda of the new Council for Education and Training Wales. This report highlights the importance of support, advice and guidance to help young people to take advantage of what is on offer and develop the motivation to sustain participation and achieve a successful outcome.

4.16 There is a danger of regarding entry into post 16 education and training as an end in itself, without recognising that for some young people sustaining a commitment to, for example, a two year course is a major challenge. A current retention project by Coleg Gwent, for example, is seeking reasons why so many students withdraw from college - initial findings suggest that financial problems, the need to get work while studying and personal problems are major factors. The recent increase in Access funds may alleviate some of these problems, and

colleges are increasingly employing counsellors to work across campuses. A joint project with the local authority enabled Coleg Gwent to work successfully with a youth worker to support students and link with young mothers and other community groups.

4.17 Giving higher priority to individual needs and aptitudes would also reinforce the potential benefit to many young people of the vocational route to higher level qualifications. There is now a coherent route to higher qualifications via both academic and vocational providers but the role of information, advice and guidance (delivered in a range of different ways as discussed in Chapter 5) is crucial to connect young people with this.

Summary

4.18 A strategy to improve support for young people needs to be integrated with the ethos and actions of schools and post 16 providers of education and training - in particular to :

- motivate young people by offering quality learning opportunities and demonstrating the practical relevance to their job prospects of lifelong learning and the skills to take responsibility for one's own learning
- support young people to participate successfully through mentoring and counselling in a non-stigmatising and non-patronising way.

CHAPTER 5 : INFORMATION, ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

5.1 This chapter discusses advice, information and guidance services for young people, under two headings

- a. the implications of the new strategy for Careers Wales as proposed by ETAG
- b. wider information and advice services for young people.

5.2 Offering objective, impartial, reliable and accessible information to young people, in the right place at the right time, is of great importance and forms part of the remit of all the agencies discussed in this report. This chapter looks both at vocational advice and guidance and at the wider strategies for young people's advice and information services being developed by the Wales Youth Agency and local authorities.

5.3 This role includes helping young people to develop the skills to access information, evaluate its quality and provenance, and use it sensibly to inform their decisions. The Prague Students Forum 2000 developed the notion of FREUD in a human envelope - learning supported by individuals who could enable young people to Find, Retrieve, Evaluate, Use and Defend information. This has very wide implications, including developing the capacity to distil the worthwhile from junk and the reliable from the marketed, and is central to lifelong learning.

The role of Careers Wales

5.4 The Careers Service in Wales is undergoing major change to implement the recommendation of the Education and Training Action Group that the National Assembly should establish a national all-age information, advice and guidance service - Careers Wales - by April 2001. The service will be delivered by the present eight Careers Service companies who will take over responsibility for adult advice and guidance including the national telephone helpline 'learndirect', elements of education business links currently promoted by the Training and Enterprise Councils, and provision of the Youth Gateway.

5.5 The proposals for Careers Wales recognise that work patterns are changing rapidly and that access to careers assessment, information and advice is crucial for people of all ages to make lifelong learning a reality. It also acknowledges the need for closer integration of the support provided in schools and colleges for career planning, work experience and learning about business and enterprise so that such experiences are no longer compartmentalised but part of an integrated programme available to all young people.

5.6 This process of change provides an opportunity both to develop a clear vision of the specialist role of Careers Wales within a broad based local network of support and opportunity, and to strengthen the Careers Service companies' existing partnership relationships. The specialist contribution of Careers stems from expertise in relation to business and employment which gives the service a key role in motivating young people by making the link between learning and career prospects and enthusing people of all ages about the relevance of lifelong learning. Careers share with schools, youth work and other services a core concern to develop individual capacity, with a view to maximising the young person's potential for employment.

Background

5.7 The statutory basis for Careers Service companies' work with young people, their parents and guardians, lies in the duty to provide careers services for all young people and students in secondary and further education set out in the Employment and Training Act 1973. The eight Careers Service companies in Wales were all formed in 1995 as partnerships developed by the local authorities and TECs and with company directors drawn from local employers, the local authorities and representatives from schools and further and higher education.

5.8 While TEC involvement with the companies will cease from April 2001, it is envisaged that new companies will continue to draw their membership from a cross section of local stakeholders. Funding for Careers Service companies through direct contract with the Assembly (budget details in Chapter 9) is designed to ensure that the advice they offer is genuinely independent of any provider interests.

5.9 The key purposes of Careers Service companies are to provide independent, and impartial advice, bilingually, to :

- enable individuals to make informed and realistic decisions about local and national learning and employment opportunities
- support individuals and ensure their effective transition into employment, training or further/higher education
- provide tailored support to those most in need, including those with special educational needs and provide preventative interventions with those who are disengaged
- encourage more people of every age to enhance their skills and knowledge.

5.10 In education the Careers Service operates through a mix of support for schools and colleges in the design and delivery of careers education and direct contact with young people. Support for schools includes provision of training and materials for careers teachers and help

in the development and maintenance of a careers library. Direct contact is usually from 12 years of age onwards through a mix of group sessions and individual interviews. Support is targeted at key decision points in particular subject options in Key Stage 4, and decision making at 16 and 18 years of age.

5.11 In recent years the companies have also worked with local partners to develop specialist provision to meet the needs of young people who need additional help in career planning. Initiatives such as Transition Teams, On Track and Compact Plus have provided avenues for young people to develop the skills and self confidence to manage their learning and career options.

5.12 The Careers Service also provides support for unemployed 16 and 17 year olds in finding suitable employment or learning. Through its network of local offices it looks to match young people with vacancies obtained from local employers and training providers. The support offered includes jobsearch, motivation, interview skills and employment and training interviews.

Youth Gateway

5.13 Integration of the Youth Gateway with other Careers Company responsibilities should strengthen the Careers response to young people who lack direction by improving individual assessment and providing a package of options to help young people move on. The Youth Gateway was established in 1999 in response to the recognition that many young people faced major barriers in identifying the best route for them after leaving school and, having made ill informed choices, were then dropping out of further education and/or training courses in significant numbers.

5.14 Youth Gateway is delivered by specially recruited and trained personal advisers who help young people referred to them by the Careers Service companies through a range of options with the aim of finding the course to employment or education or training at which they are most likely to succeed. The initiative was unusual in that its design and funding structures were designed to avoid any incentives - to fill courses or programme places - which might get in the way of helping the individual, and recognised that for some young people, considerable time might be needed before results were achieved.

5.15 Although the Youth Gateway is still in the early stages of implementation, it is becoming clear that for many young people this approach would be more effective if it were offered earlier than the summer when they are due to leave school. And there may be a case for offering the specialist assessment service to a wider group of young people, earlier in school, than the group currently being referred. This will need to be worked out in detail, as the Careers Service companies bring the new organisation together, and should form part of the

wider approach to setting a quality standard to ensure that all young people receive the right kind of careers advice in flexible and accessible ways.

Issues for the future

5.16 An evaluation of the Careers Service in Wales by the National Foundation for Educational Research concluded that 97% of 16 year olds surveyed had received an individual interview with a careers adviser. However, while 78% found the advice useful the Careers Service still fell some way behind family, subject teachers and friends as the key influence in subject choices and career planning. Although progress has been made, recent Estyn reports and consultation with young people confirm that the service needs to improve if it is to be seen by all young people as the natural source of advice and support in career planning.

5.17 In particular, the service needs to look carefully at the balance between supporting schools and colleges in the design and delivery of work-related education - and the direct delivery of services to young people. The drawing together of careers advice and support for elements of education business links - in particular work experience and employer mentoring - provides an opportunity for a reappraisal of both areas. There is an opportunity to work with schools to develop an integrated approach to careers and work related education that will make use of employer input to provide young people with better opportunities to develop an awareness of employment options and the skills to manage their learning throughout life.

5.18 There is still a role for one-to-one contact with young people. But lessons from the Youth Gateway suggest that young people would welcome more opportunities for assessment, such as aptitude testing, to provide a more informed and rounded discussion of their current position and options. This all demonstrates that, as with other services discussed in this report, there is a gap between the vision of the newly focused Careers Wales and the reality in some parts of Wales, which will need to be addressed by tackling the quality and reach of the core service.

5.19 Beyond this the Careers Service companies have played a key role in the development of tailored provision for young people who need additional and specialist support - including assessment and support for young people in securing work experience as part of the alternative curriculum. This work should continue and be made more widely available but it needs to be set in a broader local framework to avoid duplication and ensure that best use is made of existing local expertise.

Wider information issues

5.20 Young people's need for reliable information, beyond vocational guidance, is widely recognised. The better informed that young people are, the better the life-choices they are able to make. There is an urgent need for a network of provision (both virtual and physical) across Wales of which young people are aware and in which they have confidence. Experience has shown that information services meet young people's needs most effectively when young people are themselves involved in both the design and the delivery of the services.

5.21 In all cases, the information provided to young people needs to be accessible (to all), accurate, up-to-date, comprehensive, relevant, concise, user-friendly, bilingual and capable of dealing with multiple problems and issues. It is important that there is consistent, 100% coverage across Wales and that ways are found of making this information accessible to the most marginalised.

Virtual

5.22 High quality information on a wide range of issues should be available through the internet. This will enable young people to obtain answers to their questions as and when they wish, and by means of a medium with which most are familiar and feel at home. The website should perform two functions; it should itself be a bank of information (covering all sectors - public, voluntary and business) and a single portal to other more specialist websites.

5.23 Separately, the internet should provide a Wales-wide network for those who work with young people to enable the exchange of information and best practice. It should also enable appropriate distance learning for workers.

Physical

5.24 There is also an acute need for "information outlets" appropriate to community needs, for example mobile units, information shops and information points. All outlets need to be well publicised, accessible and non-intimidating, offering unbiased advice, guidance and information. Staff need to have appropriate training, a genuine interest in young people and a knowledge of all relevant agencies, both local and national. The outlets should form part of the support services provided by local authorities.

5.25 The Assembly should give higher priority to an all-Wales approach to core information for all young people. For example information packs could go to all young people of school-leaving age, providing reliable information and emphasising a positive approach to being young and the opportunities on offer. The packs could include a Youth Card, offering attractive

discounts and other advantages - with the possibility of moving to a SMART card as the required technology advances.

5.26 Developmental work in each of these areas is currently being taken forward in Wales by Canllaw Online, with the encouragement of the WYA. Canllaw Online is a not-for-profit limited company with charitable status. Additional resources will be necessary if Wales is to keep pace with developments elsewhere, for example in Scotland the Young Scot organisation has been developing this approach for several years with support from the Scottish Parliament.

Summary

5.27 The Education and Training Action Plan (ETAP) vision for Careers Wales gives a clear basis for developing the specialist contribution of careers services in the wider network of support for young people. This is a major opportunity for Careers Wales, which needs to give high priority to ensuring that it reaches effectively all young people - including those currently not receiving the service at all or for whom the present service does not meet their needs for cultural or other reasons.

5.28 The Assembly should support a higher profile for and investment in the information services work of the Wales Youth Agency and local authorities.

CHAPTER 6 : YOUTH SERVICES

'In the past each generation has recognised the need for informal and formal support for young people as they grow up, encouraging their positive aspirations and ambitions and countering social problems and disadvantage.....There is a long list of previous efforts to provide the right service for young people.' (the then First Secretary's statement 18.1.00)

Context

6.1 This report attempts to place services that support young people in the broader context of services that affect them. Youth services are a relatively small part of the overall network - returns from local authorities suggest that they spend about 1% of their education budgets on the service. Research suggests that although some 90% of young people come into contact with the statutory or voluntary youth sector, only around 1 in 3 are likely to have significant contact or to take up the informal learning opportunities it offers.

6.2 The report devotes considerable attention to the youth sector because:

- for some young people it can have a major impact in re- connecting them to wider opportunities
- it has the potential to be a platform for disadvantaged and vulnerable young people to be included with other young people in mainstream informal provision
- it is in a process of major change and its potential contribution to social inclusion and lifelong learning needs to be more firmly acknowledged.

History

6.3 The Albemarle review of youth services in England and Wales (1960) discussed the activities and facilities of the youth service suggesting that its role is to provide an opportunity for 'commitment, counsel and self determination' and allows for recreation, the development of skills and interests and preparation for adult life through opportunities for association, training and challenge. Chapter 8 looked at the position in Wales, arguing for both similarities and difference. The Thompson report of 1982, "Experience and Participation", covered England only and focused on the types of experience which young people had through the youth service and the need for young people to participate in the development of a curriculum for the youth service. The Welsh version (HMI survey 13) was published in 1984.

6.4 Throughout Wales the service available to young people is made up of both the statutory service provided by local authorities under the provisions of Section 11 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 and Sections 2, 15 and 508 of the Education Act 1996 and services provided by a very large number of voluntary organisations as discussed below. The statutory basis for youth services has long been recognised as inadequate and will be strengthened by the new provisions of the Learning and Skills Bill (Annex 2).

6.5 Although Albemarle rejected a separate national council for Wales, the Wales Youth Work Partnership was established in 1985 in International Youth Year. This was followed by the creation of the Wales Youth Agency in 1992 which provides support for both the maintained and voluntary youth services in Wales and delivers the work programme for the Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services.

What youth services do

6.6 The role of youth work can be summarised as follows :

- it assists young people's personal and social development through informal education and seeks to engage 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 the services provided for them and in wider policy developments
- it aims to provide a bridge between young people's priorities and the aspirations of public policy.

6.7 Youth services work with young people in many different ways to promote lifelong learning, employability, citizenship and healthy lifestyles. They engage with young people as individuals with the objective of building their capacity to make choices and pursue constructive paths. A key principle is that young people choose to participate and are able to do so in ways that build on their interests.

6.8 One of the strengths of the youth work sector is its diversity of process, offering choice to young people to participate and achieve in different ways through provision with different styles. It includes groups and organisations with a long tradition of work with young people. Some are unique to Wales, such as yr Urdd, and some are Welsh sections of UK organisations, such as Young Farmers and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. The work of many of the voluntary sector organisations is supported through a number of National Assembly and local authority budgets - both for core and project funding.

6.9 To simplify, the sector can be described as follows (this is not intended to be a definitive list, but only an indication of the breadth and diversity of the sector).

- maintained (funded through local authority revenue and capital budgets) which includes clubs, centres and projects for young people, Information Shops, residential provision, issue based provision, group work, outreach and detached work, generic or focused
- all-Wales voluntary organisations - of great diversity as exemplified by the recipients of the Assembly's National Voluntary Youth Organisations grant which include the Welsh Association of Youth Clubs, Gwerin y Coed, and PHAB Wales]
- national and local voluntary organisations concerned with children and young people in need including the YMCA, Save the Children, NCH Action for Children, Children's Society, Barnardo's
- specialist youth projects and organisations, often targeted explicitly or implicitly at disadvantaged young people including the Prince's Trust, NACRO Cymru Youth Choices, Fairbridge, Youth at Risk, Weston Spirit
- projects and organisations who work to develop the capacities of young people with a particular emphasis on peer led education/mentoring and problem solving eg Youth Link, Youth Action Groups, the Ladder Project
- organisations working with young people as part of area based regeneration projects such as Valleys Kids, the Penywaun Partnership
- groups offering opportunities for learning and skill development through the arts, leisure, drama and sport.

6.10 There have been a number of key developments in recent years

- the **core maintained youth service** has been reduced significantly in real terms over the past decade as local authorities responded to other pressures, including the requirement on Local Education Authorities (LEAs) to maximise investment in schools and minimise overheads - which normally include the youth service (as reported to the National Assembly, local authority spending in 1998-99 on current and capital budgets for LEA youth services was less than £14 million)
- funding for **projects including youth work** has been increased by a number of Welsh Office and Assembly initiatives including the Youth Access Initiative, the Children and Youth Partnership Fund and the Youth Work and Schools Partnership programme - see Chapter 9.

- there has been an increased focus on targeted youth work, aimed at preventing social exclusion, offending and other problems, with a reduced emphasis on open access work - the effects of this are discussed below
- the Wales Youth Agency has led work to improve the contribution of youth work to a range of partnerships and to support the voluntary youth sector through the Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services.
- the youth work sector in Wales has developed a stronger focus on informal learning with the development of practice based on the Youth Work Curriculum Statement for Wales, delivered in a wide range of settings often with partners including schools, colleges, social services, probation and the police.

the Youth Work Curriculum Statement for Wales: opportunities that are

- educative
- participative
- empowering
- expressive

delivered through diverse activities involving young people in

- discussing health and relationships
- becoming sensitive to community, culture and heritage
- achieving through adventure and challenge
- receiving information and advice
- developing sporting and expressive skills
- travelling and hosting international visitors

in a context of equal opportunities and social inclusion

Vision for Youth Services in Wales

6.11 A clear vision for the youth service in Wales has recently been developed with three key elements :

- working directly with young people, in partnership with the voluntary sector, to offer a range of choices for young people to access information, support and opportunity

- working strategically with other agencies to contribute to the broad health, learning and employment agenda in order to ensure that service delivery is relevant and responsive to the needs of young people
- helping young people themselves to contribute to decision making at local level, as discussed in Chapter 3.

Why the ethos of youth work is important

6.12 This vision is helpful in defining the contribution of youth work to supporting and developing young people :

- it respects young people and places them at the centre - it views them as individuals not as problems and creates opportunities for them to contribute to the management and delivery of services
- it is inclusive and preventative - it starts from the premise that all young people should be able to access the advice and support they need when they need it
- it offers support not in a stigmatising way but as part of a service geared to enjoyment, challenge and opportunity
- it values young people and encourages them to think of themselves as contributing individuals with rights and responsibilities to others.

6.13 But there are two key provisos in relation to the claims made for the potential of youth work

- there a significant gap between this vision and reality on the ground in different parts of Wales and a number of constraints on progress
- the youth service, both statutory and voluntary, needs to be seen as part of a wider network, delivered through partnership and team working across sectors

6.14 Tackling these is addressed in Chapter 10.

Practical constraints

6.15 Creating a quality youth service, capable of making an effective contribution to meeting the needs and developing the potential of all young people, as well as responding to the special needs of young people with problems, and contributing to a strong local network of universal and specialist services, is a major challenge. The present service is patchy with great variation in quality and coverage across Wales. This report is not an inspection document and the Policy Unit visits and discussions were not designed to, or capable of, evaluating the quality of services across Wales. The issues discussed below were raised in a number of meetings and visits and

have also been identified in a number of Estyn reports and other evaluations.

Training

6.16 There are some key positive developments, unique to Wales in relation to the training of youth workers, including the current work led by the Wales Youth Agency to create coherent routes to qualified status from volunteering or part-time work (which for many young people develops from deriving enjoyment and benefit from youth provision into training and a career). The key issues for the future are

- the shortage of suitably qualified staff
- the adequacy of professional youth work training as a preparation for the role which the new vision of youth work entails
- appropriate occupational destinations for experienced and qualified staff - which is related to the funding structure discussed below.

6.17 There needs to be an enhancement of the skills which produce effective intervention with young people and a recognition of the challenges demands and risks involved in working with some groups of young people - this calls for professionally trained and supported staff, complemented by trained and supported volunteers.

6.18 Training also needs to develop a better balance between the theoretical, sociological and psychological component and the practical understanding of the management (eg of facilities and staff, including volunteers) and policy environment which is crucial to helping young people in practical ways to be successful in the environment they face. This is part of the duty to explain mentioned in paragraph 2.34 above.

6.19 These training issues are not confined to youth workers - other professionals working with young people receive no specific training for working in partnership with other agencies to meet individual needs. This is part of a much wider UK professional training agenda raised in the Bridging the Gap report and the Connexions strategy document (see paragraphs 2.5 and 2.6 above) but there is scope to influence at the Welsh level through the in-service training of teachers, social workers, careers advisers and others.

The balance between open access and targeted services

6.20 As with many other services, Welsh local authorities have to strike a difficult balance between investing in services for the most disadvantaged young people and maintaining universal, open access facilities like youth centres and information shops. This is a constraint in both rural and urban areas.

6.21 In rural areas maintaining a local network of provision with reasonable access for small numbers of young people is made more difficult by, for example, new health and safety requirements and the growing recognition of the risks involved when centres are run by only one person. In Powys, for example, this dilemma is being resolved in part by a greater emphasis on social exclusion by the statutory service with the wider service delivered in partnership with the voluntary sector. In Gwynedd the large network of community youth clubs relies heavily on single workers, mainly volunteers, which creates a number of difficult management and resourcing issues. It is important to recognise that effective provision for disengaged or potentially disengaged young people depends on a mix of open access and targeted services as discussed in Chapter 7.

6.22 In recent years the type of funding available has skewed youth work significantly towards targeted projects to promote specific policy objectives such as reducing substance misuse or offending by young people. Many areas have been successful in attracting European, voluntary sector and specific grant funding from the Assembly for short-term (1, 2 or 3 year), targeted projects. But general budget pressures have led to reductions in the core of traditional youth provision and the management structures available to support it. As a result, in most unitary authorities the permanent staffing structure for youth work consists of one Principal Youth Officer with few other full-time permanent posts, responsible for managing and supporting a large network of volunteer-run centres and projects; a recent audit conducted by the Wales Youth Agency revealed that the ratio of part-time youth workers and volunteers to full-time youth workers in the statutory sector is currently more than seventeen to one.

6.23 Those who work in the sector point to a number of problems resulting from this developing structure :

- its instability undermines the continuity and commitment to communities and individuals needed for effective relationships and value for money
- services are patchy - with wide variations in what is available to young people across Wales
- young people become suspicious of workers they see as promoting a particular agenda
- there is no career structure to pull the best youth workers into permanent posts - and there is a worry that if the new Connexions service in England (discussed in Chapters 2 and 10) produces more permanent posts for youth workers trained and experienced staff will be lost to Wales.

6.24 The key issue is the balance between work funded to promote specific targets and generic work to promote young people's capacities generally. The two are not exclusive - there

is evidence to suggest that the generic youth work is an important platform for targeted interventions. A key conclusion from the five Youth Action Projects based in Manchester (1996) was that they worked best where there was already a framework of generic youth work in place, and the project which was least effective took place in an area where there was little 'ordinary' youth work provision - because a short-term, targeted initiative had no point of access to the networks of young people who were the focus of intervention.

Need for flexibility - constraints of existing infrastructure

6.25 As a result of the constraints discussed in this chapter, the service which currently exists is some way from the vision suggested above. Youth services have often been expected to maintain facilities which have become surplus to education requirements - in many cases these are run down or in the wrong place and give the wrong messages to young people about how they are seen and valued by the authorities. Upgrading can however cause unforeseen problems for example in one village the installation of expensive theatre equipment in a hall previously used for youth work has led to new restrictions on youth activities.

Volunteers

6.26 Youth services rely very heavily on volunteers, often working one or two sessions a week, in unsocial hours. These are often highly committed individuals with a particular talent for understanding young people. They are prepared to help out in the cold and rain with groups of young people on canoeing expeditions, or to turn up twice a week for no pay to keep something going for young people in a town or village. They are motivated by a desire to 'put something back' or the satisfaction of seeing a 'problem' young person blossom. Often young people respond to what they can sense is a genuine commitment and interest in them.

6.27 The key issues for the Assembly and those who manage volunteers in both the statutory and voluntary youth sectors is how to provide the level of support and recognition which is needed to make the most of their crucial input. This needs to include quality training and development opportunities - as well as arrangements to ensure that those recruited are suitably vetted and supervised where they will be placed in positions of trust and responsibility.

Delivery challenges

6.28 Designing services for young people presents a number of challenges because success in reaching them depends on so many factors and young people are particularly responsive to atmosphere and 'feeling welcome'. Places to meet are important to them, as discussed in chapter 3, but delivering this is not straightforward. Managing youth centres can be fraught with problems including resolving real or perceived tension within and between groups of young

people and others. Whether to provide separate provision or to integrate with other community facilities depends on a number of factors including location, design, access and management arrangements.

6.29 Historically many youth centres have been attached to schools - this works in some areas but not in others. The contribution of such centres, in the context of the vision for young people in an area, needs to be thought about carefully. Centres for young people to meet provide opportunities for much more than simply social and recreational activities. They can be the base for outreach work designed to draw in young people and provide the setting for carefully planned discussion and debate, diagnosis and interventions as well as offering first contact for young people who need to be referred on to more specialist agencies. Youth workers also support young people in accessing this specialist support - including accompanying them when needed.

The Role of the Wales Youth Agency

6.30 In the light of the changing agenda for youth work, and the need for a broad partnership approach to supporting young people in Wales, the Group believes that it is time for the Assembly to review the role and functions of the Wales Youth Agency with a view to enabling it to support

- the development of effective work with young people across the range of Assembly responsibilities and
- the strengthened Assembly capability to develop policies for young people advocated in Chapter 10.

Summary

6.31 The present and future role of youth services in the broad network of local services for young people will vary across Wales depending on eg the management arrangement of the local authority and structures for implementing local strategies including Communities First, community plans and so on. The youth work sector in Wales has a key role to play in delivering better support and opportunity for young people, but for this to be effective the constraints set out in this chapter need to be addressed including;

- training
- facilities and equipment
- supply of high quality trained staff
- imbalance in funding and staffing structures.



CHAPTER 7 : ENSURING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES, ACCESS AND INCLUSION

7.1 This chapter discusses what a universal network of services for young people should contribute to promoting equal opportunities and supporting those facing difficulties. It suggests that targeted services need to be part of a coherent local structure designed to prevent problems by providing early and accessible support and opportunities.

7.2 The entitlement model proposed in Chapter 1 is important because it is inclusive, applying to all young people and it provides a standard against which local provision for all groups of young people can be measured. It also highlights the question of access and barriers to making the entitlement a reality for some young people. Access may depend on :

- transport which is a major constraint on young people's participation, not only in rural areas, or
- on whether services are diverse and responsive enough to be genuinely accessible to all young people. For example, services may not be available in young people's language of choice - as required by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child - eg in some parts of Wales services may not be available in Welsh, or they may be available only in Welsh - either will exclude some young people.

7.3 A minority of young people in Wales face disadvantage which may be associated with one or more of the following factors :

- discrimination
- disability
- caring responsibilities
- poverty
- family breakdown and homelessness
- involvement in offending and risk taking.

7.4 This report does not attempt to address these issues in detail - they cover a diverse range of special needs and are addressed in the Assembly strategies mentioned in Chapter 1. The major barrier for young people in poor areas is the economic and social environment in which they live. For these young people the key role of a youth strategy is to deliver a commitment to equal opportunities and social inclusion for all young people whatever their background and circumstances. An effective response to their needs would need to recognise two key points

- a. young people who are members of disadvantaged groups or communities have many experiences in common with other young people in Wales but for them growing up is made more difficult by discrimination and disadvantage, particularly if they live in poor communities where services are absent or of poor quality and opportunities and positive role models are few. A major issue for young people in deprived communities is isolation and lack of confidence to access wider opportunities. Effective support needs to both work within their communities and develop strong links outside to widen horizons, within Wales and beyond.
- b. policies are increasingly recognising the need to work in ways that support young people and take account of their views, in particular the Children First support arrangements for children who are in or have recently left care and the creation of the Children's Commissioner for Wales. But, as discussed in Chapter 1, many interventions continue to tackle parts of the problem without responding to the whole young person and the underlying needs which have to be addressed if he or she is to find and sustain a positive path in life.

How it feels

7.5 The perspective of a group of previously homeless young people in the Valleys provided the Policy Unit with an insight into some of the problems faced by the most disadvantaged young people, some of whom were previously in care, some had long term family problems and some had been on a positive path until at around age 16 a change in family circumstances forced them to leave home. All shared mainstream aspirations to find a job, a steady relationship and become independent. The major problems they faced were

- money: the huge difficulty of meeting basic needs on a benefit income (after deducting housing costs) or training allowance of around £40 a week without any family support
- organisation: the reality of managing an independent household for a young person aged 16-17
- the need for time to manage independently before sustained participation in education or training can become possible
- the lack of opportunities and choice of work or training, and feelings of failure made worse by unsuccessful or poorly planned placements
- being passed around different agencies, including the Benefits Agency, social services, housing departments and so on.

7.6 In many, but not all, parts of Wales the voluntary sector has responded to these problems, sometimes in partnership with local authorities, sometimes with little local authority involvement, effectively creating a safety net which recognises the vulnerability of these young people and the fact that many services seem designed to put barriers in their way. For example a young person aged 16 who becomes homeless has to meet several different tests to qualify for income support and housing benefit and may fall between local authority housing and social services departments. In some cases the onus is on the distressed young person to prove estrangement from an abusing adult.

7.7 Some of these issues could be tackled by a more corporate approach within local authorities, others relate to the benefit system which is outside the remit of the Assembly. These problems were identified in relation to England by the Social Exclusion Unit's PAT 12 report whose recommendations include reviewing the present system for establishing whether a young person is estranged from their parents or carers and looking at ways to improve the performance of the Benefits Agency and Employment Service in dealing with young people in crisis.

7.8 The ethos of the voluntary sector response, run by both local and national charities, is to start by seeking to help the young person and to overcome in a realistic timescale the barriers to re-engaging with learning and work. Support includes encouraging independence and personal development through opportunity and challenge. The level of support provided is flexible and workers stay in touch over a long period to see if further help is needed.

7.9 This kind of safety net is needed for only a small minority of young people but it should be available throughout Wales, to protect young people and to enable them to stay in touch with their community and families. Homelessness amongst young people should be ameliorated by the Assembly's proposals to review the criteria for extending the categories of homeless people who are regarded as being in priority need of accommodation ie homeless people aged 16-18 and care leavers, but the impact of this will need to be reviewed as part of the strategic approach discussed in Chapter 10.

7.10 This report does not consider how the intensive support required for the most vulnerable young people might be integrated with the broader network of advice and support services for young people but this would need to form part of the remit of the broad youth strategy advocated in Chapters 1 and 10. The Advisory Group believes that improving the responsiveness and quality of the services discussed in this report should benefit all young people - but recognises that the most vulnerable face major barriers in accessing mainstream services and that these need to be addressed if the entitlement is to be a reality for them.

Young people in public care

7.11 There is considerable research evidence describing the underachievement of children and young people in public care - who represent some 1% of the cohort - and their vulnerability to exclusion. This underlines the importance of making the entitlement proposed in Chapter 1 a reality for all young people and addressing the major barriers to participation faced by those looked after by local authorities and other vulnerable young people. At present, education for some young people means only 3-5 hours a week home tuition.

7.12 As discussed above, financial support for post 16 education is also a key issue for care leavers and others lacking family support. For the majority of young people continued family support, including financial support, is the norm, often well into their 20s - where this is not available the barriers to continuing in education are substantial. For care leavers these issues are being addressed through the Assembly's policies for children looked after by local authorities and through the Children (Leaving Care) Bill.

Ethnic minority young people

7.13 For many ethnic minority young people the racial discrimination faced by all ages in their communities is made worse by the discrimination they face as young people and the poverty and lack of opportunities that can exist in their communities. They face numerous barriers in accessing services designed for the majority and need to feel welcome and understood in order to participate.

7.14 Services which aim to support them in, for example, accessing learning and training opportunities need to be sensitive to cultural issues, for example, family reluctance to allow young women into mixed sex environments. Recruiting and developing young workers with personal experience of the barriers is likely to make support much more effective. Community regeneration strategies which genuinely engaged with ethnic minority communities would provide avenues for their young people to contribute and benefit.

Young people with disabilities

7.15 Young people with disabilities face all the problems of other young people growing up, often compounded by their own and their parents' anxieties about their growing independence. Many depend on a very local support structure and face considerable practical, psychological and attitudinal barriers in moving further afield for education or training. As they get older, young people with disabilities move out of the ambit of services for children and the school system and may be disadvantaged because health and social services for adolescents are often on the periphery of children's services.

7.16 A support network which includes all young people in the local authority area would need to respond to young disabled people, both by making mainstream youth centres and activities accessible to them and by recognising and supporting their need to meet and share experiences with other young disabled people.

Young carers

7.17 There is an increasing recognition of the problems faced by young people with caring responsibilities and the need to be pro-active in helping them to share the experiences and opportunities available to the majority of young people.

Young parents

7.18 Health and education strategies are increasingly recognising the need to support young parents in the interests of their children, through for example targeted initiatives like Sure Start, and the mainstream work of health visitors and early learning provision by local authorities. The contribution of a service for young people would be to emphasise the needs of parents as young people and to work with other services to support their development as individuals as well as in the parenting role.

Offenders

7.19 'Young people on probation are no different from many other young people - they just got caught' (Probation officer working with Duke of Edinburgh's Award group in Powys).

7.20 The work of Yots is highlighting the importance of family support and community strategies which promote positive alternatives to offending as well as creative solutions to reduce opportunities for offending and promote safer environments eg through the design of housing and public spaces. Projects such as CAR - Community Autos Rhyl - are using young people's interest in cars as a means of delivering qualifications and enabling them to develop maintenance and safe driving skills, engaging young people alongside other age groups and reducing car crime.

7.21 That crime prevention should be driven at local level is recognised by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 which specifies that the Assembly, as a designated body, will act in partnership with local authorities and police authorities to achieve the common purpose of reducing crime and disorder. This could have a significant impact on the future prospects of young people who are victims of crime, in trouble themselves, or at risk of getting into trouble.

7.22 A service which met the needs of all young people in Wales would need to respond to young people placed within the secure estate on remand or at sentence. Some 40% of offenders in Welsh prisons are under 25, most are young men, most are likely to be both victims and perpetrators of crime and most are likely to have had some experience of the care system.

7.23 There are particular issues about provision for young offenders from Wales who are sent to institutions in England. The importance of maintaining links with family and community in order to promote rehabilitation and help ex-offenders to get jobs and stay on a positive path are well recognised but prisons are still in many respects isolated within their communities. Young prisoners from Wales sent to institutions in England may be at considerable distance from their families and also face discrimination for example when Welsh is their first language. There need to be strong links

- between the Assembly, the Youth Justice Board and the Home Office to enable these issues to be addressed and to ensure that the management of prisons and prisoner allocation takes account of the needs of Welsh prisoners
- between local authorities and Prison Governors to make the community prisons strategy a reality in Wales.

Risk-taking behaviour

7.24 Young people facing social disadvantage are more likely to engage in risk taking behaviour - such as substance misuse, irresponsible sexual activity, offending - and are more likely to be victims of crime, abuse and exploitation. But risk taking is part of growing up and many young people who become, for example, substance misusers come from stable and/or well off families. The key role for a robust youth support service is to promote opportunities for all young people to take positive decisions, seek advice, cope with risk and pressure and work out what is in their own interests, including distinguishing good advice from bad.

7.25 As discussed in Chapter 6, within such a service there needs to be a complementary relationship between open-access youth centres and outreach work so that disengaged young people can be included and re-engaged with other young people. Schemes like the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and the Prince's Trust programmes provide opportunities of this kind where young people from all kinds of backgrounds can participate and celebrate a common form of achievement.

The role of targeted interventions within a universal structure

7.26 This approach points to rooting preventative interventions in a strong local structure including schools, careers and youth work which develop positive attributes to help young

people to deal with the sometimes very strong pull of negative influences in their lives. For some youth workers helping young people to cope with and find alternatives to the violence they encounter regularly is a key part of their role.

7.27 For prevention to be effective there needs to be something to connect 'at risk' young people with. Services which are simply targeted at eg young offenders or those identified as likely to offend run the risk of seeming to reward poor behaviour and stigmatising the young people concerned. A robust network of services for young people can reduce this by taking opportunities to connect disengaged young people with mainstream activities and also reinforce positive steps being taken in school.

7.28 This was illustrated by the example of a young man in Denbighshire who had been successfully re-engaged with school but was still part of a problem group on his home estate. Without a route to tackle this through the community, his progress in education was at risk. These are the connections that need to be made through a comprehensive local strategy for young people, that views school and community services as part of a continuum focused on helping young people to achieve and participate.

Summary

7.29 The main points are

- for young people facing disadvantage, the key role of youth support is to promote equal opportunities and inclusion - this should be built into the remit of the local service outlined in Chapter 10.
- there needs to be intensive support for all young people with serious problems, including a safety net for those estranged from their families or fleeing abuse, which needs to be rooted in a strong support strategy, based in the community, designed to prevent problems from becoming serious and enabling young people with problems to be included in mainstream activities as much as possible
- such a support strategy would need to include stronger, more accessible family support including support for parents of older children and stepparents
- services and interventions for young people presenting with particular problems are likely to be effective only if they respond to the underlying needs of the young person - simply slotting them into a course or training scheme is likely to be counter productive and reinforce their sense of failure

- stronger links are needed with the Youth Justice Board and the Home Office HM Prison Service to build on the work of Yots and to respond to the needs of young people from Wales in the secure estate and in prisons across Wales and England.

CHAPTER 8 : YOUNG PEOPLE'S HEALTH

'Children and adolescents in Wales have some of the worst health damaging behaviour indicators in western Europe. The need for multifaceted interventions incorporates action on public policy issues, advocacy and community development, in addition to health education and clinical interventions... A wide range of professionals, agencies and community agents, including children and young people themselves, should be involved in promoting health.' (Annual report of the Director of Public Health 2000, Bro Taf Health Authority)

8.1 This chapter draws out the connections between the Assembly's Better Health Better Wales strategy and the aims of services to support young people. If delivered effectively, these should reinforce each other because helping young people to fulfil their potential and maximise their earning power will help to reduce the economic and social inequalities associated with poor health. And for many young people, support to overcome health and relationship problems is the first step to successful engagement or re-engagement with opportunities for education, training and work.

8.2 There is much information³ about the health and lifestyle of young people in Wales highlighting the increasing prevalence of smoking, drinking, the use of illegal substances, unintended pregnancy and poor sexual health. This year, for example, the annual reports of the Directors of Public Health of Bro Taf and Dyfed Powys Health Authorities (which focused on the health of children and young people) emphasised the underlying socio-economic determinants of health inequalities and the importance of integrated community-based action to promote the health of children and young people.

8.3 There are a number of problems in the planning and delivery of health services for young people, often made worse by wider service deficiencies in poor areas. Traditionally, health service interventions have focused more on the health of young children than young people, mainly reflecting the much greater use of services by children. Young people access services relatively infrequently and were therefore assumed to have fewer health problems.

8.4 These assumptions are being challenged and there is a greater awareness of unmet health needs amongst young people, and the very strong connections between their physical and mental health and between their emotional health and their education. For example problems

3 Including Welsh Youth Health Survey 1996 and 1998, Health Promotion Division, National Assembly for Wales.

with peers and family, including relationships and caring responsibilities, have long been recognised as important factors in poor school attendance - these also affect the capacity of children and young people to learn while at school or college. Some studies suggest that as many as 40% of children may not be capable emotionally of taking advantage of educational opportunities.

8.5 Those who work with young people point to many examples of unmet health needs. These have been recognised for example in relation to children in public care through the Children First programme, but need to be addressed in relation to all children and young people by strengthening access to professional health advice eg through the school nurse and health visiting services.

8.6 There is a need to identify ways of improving access to health services for older young people who may not be in contact with other agencies eg young people in employment with mental health problems would not be identified by outreach programmes targeted at the unemployed and may be experiencing barriers to eg registering with a GP. Many young people are in touch with primary care but are unable to access the specialist services they need because of long, unrecorded, waiting times for eg treatment for substance misuse.

8.7 Health authorities are increasingly recognising the need to be proactive in considering how to meet the needs of young people who may not wish to access services with their parents and may be deterred from services that they need because they feel uncomfortable. Smoking cessation and birth control clinics are often seen by young people as designed for adults, and may be physically inaccessible to them because of opening times or transport problems. Young people often lack the confidence to seek health advice and are deterred by attitudes among professional staff that seem to them hostile or patronising.

8.8 Tackling these problems need to be addressed in the wider context of policies to make health services more responsive and accessible to people of all ages. There is sometimes a tendency to respond to the needs of young people by calling for separate provision for them - this can be the best solution but this risks undermining the value of sharing experiences with older people eg in combating nicotine addiction which could help to promote mutual understanding and support across generations within communities.

The contribution of youth support services to improving the health of young people in Wales.

8.9 Steps to improve support services for young people in Wales as advocated in this report have a major part to play in promoting the health of young people :

- by supporting health agencies in developing the skills and techniques needed to engage effectively with young people from diverse social and cultural backgrounds in designing health services
- by providing a network of entry points for information and advice in friendly non-stigmatising settings, including schools, youth centres and careers offices
- by integrating health information and advice with a wider information services strategy for young people, delivered in planned contexts and including pointers to professional advice where needed
- by promoting the skills to take decisions and make lifestyle choices which are crucial both to healthy living and to success in learning. This includes decisions about risk and responsibility - young people are at greater risk of accidental or criminal injury and death than any other age group
- by helping young people to develop successful relationships - research suggests that young people's vulnerability to, for example, sexually transmitted diseases, to early pregnancy, to depression and substance misuse is related to relationship problems and in some young people, particularly women, a longing for any kind of relationship can lead to risk taking behaviour
- by helping young people to contend with negative pressure which impacts on their physical and mental health, including not only peer pressure but wider cultural expectations such as the sexualisation of youth culture and the need to conform in relation to body image, dress and possessions which are extremely powerful for many young people
- by addressing the increasing prevalence of psychosocial disorders in young people (especially suicide amongst young men, and eating disorders among young women). Worldwide analysis of these trends suggests that they are the product not so much of social disadvantage as of social dislocation - young people feeling confused and disorientated about their place in the world⁴. This supports the need for services and opportunities available to all which confer on young people a sense of value, purpose and direction.

4 Pyscho-social Disorders in Young People: Time Trends and Their Causes, Rutter and Smith 1995



CHAPTER 9 : FUNDING ISSUES

Context

9.1 This chapter considers the priorities for funding in order to move towards a comprehensive advice and support service for young people in Wales in accordance with the remit set out in Chapter 1. It does not, of course, evaluate these priorities in relation to other National Assembly budgets, or in relation to the other mainstream (education and training, health) and specialist support (eg Children First) budgets which are crucial for young people.

9.2 Two related issues are discussed :

- the processes for allocating funding for advice and support work with young people
- the priorities for future investment in this work.

Existing funding

9.3 Table 1 summarises the key resources currently provided (at least in part) to the main advice and support services discussed in the report.

9.4 Table 1 represents only a small part of the picture however :

- it includes only National Assembly budgets earmarked for support and advice - it does not cover the wide range of relevant activities funded from eg delegated school budgets, Further Education and TEC budgets or local authority budgets (housing, social services and community education) which may include significant spending contributing to the objective of supporting young people but are not measured or collected centrally
- it excludes Children First and other targeted funds
- it excludes substantial sums spent by other Government departments in Wales including the Employment Service and the Home Office
- it does not include the substantial sums spent by the voluntary sector supported by National Lottery and European funds.

Table 1*Funding earmarked for advice and support for young people in Wales*

Service/programme	Type of funding	Budget provision for 2000-01 £ million
Careers service	Annual contract with NAFW	14.9
Education Business Links (see note 1)	Annual contract with NAFW	3.6
Youth Gateway	Annual contract with NAFW	3.3
Local authority youth service	Supported by Revenue Support Grant from the NAFW	[13.6] (see note 2)
Wales Youth Agency of which: Youth Work and Schools Partnership Programme	Grant from the NAFW	1.25
Support for voluntary youth sector		0.4
Children and Youth Partnership Fund (see note 3)	Grant from the NAFW	10
Youth Access Initiative	Grant from the NAFW	2.5 (see note 4)
TOTAL		49 (rounded)

Notes

1. Includes both individual mentoring /work experience and the business input to the curriculum.
2. No provision figure is available for 2000-01. The figure of £13.6 million represents local authority revenue and capital expenditure on LEA youth services in 1998-99, the latest year for which information is available, and is based on information provided to the National Assembly by local authorities. For comparison purposes, expenditure by the careers service in 1998-99 was £13.7 million.
3. Enrichment and prevention programmes targeted on children aged 8 to 16. The provision of £10 million is for the total Fund and does not therefore all relate to young people covered by this report.
4. The Youth Access Initiative is part funded through TECs (£2 million) and part funded through the Grants for Education Support and Training programme (£0.5 million). The aggregate of £2.5 million is further supplemented by TECs from their own internal resources (budget surpluses and the Local Initiative Fund) and, in some cases, by European programmes.

Processes for allocating funding

9.5 Part of the remit of this study is 'to identify gaps in provision and to reduce duplication and complexity'. Achieving this is complex because the aim is a flexible response in proportion to the needs of young people - starting with a universal entitlement with more intensive support where needed.

9.6 Some of the schemes in [Table 1](#), introduced by the Welsh Office and the Assembly in recent years, have provided welcome additional investment in young people including

- action to action to identify and tackle disengagement and poor behaviour at local authority and TEC level (often including work in schools but with a wider area and pre and post 16 focus) - funded through the Youth Access Initiative, the Youth Gateway and TEC local initiative funds
- careers advice and guidance for all young people at an earlier age and with more intensive vocational preparation for those who need it, and with detailed diagnostic assessment through the Youth Gateway - funded through direct NAFW contracts
- support and enrichment activities for children and young people - funded through the Children and Youth Partnership fund.

There has also been school-led action to tackle truancy and poor behaviour and respond to special educational needs starting from a school base - funded through GEST and local authority education budgets.

9.7 Some degree of overlap in these activities is both inevitable (as discussed in Chapter 2) and desirable if we are to achieve a more effective process of 'institutional looking out'⁵ for young people at risk. But duplication which leads to young people repeating the same activities is wasteful and likely to demotivate and alienate them.

9.8 It has not been possible for the Group to carry out the detailed audit of provision needed to establish the extent of gaps or duplication across Wales - although it is clear that both exist. There is a lack of detailed information about the quality and reach of the services available and how many young people are being missed out and why. These data problems, including the quantifying of resources invested, reflect the low priority attached to youth work services and were highlighted by the Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector 1998-99, which reported that :

5 Mapping Troubled Lives, DfEE research report RR181, January 2000

'The financial resources for youth and adult education are rarely enough to provide adequate levels of service and a significant number of authorities are not meeting statutory requirements. Few authorities have an effective policy in place for managing quality. Data collection and analysis do not provide enough of a basis for developing and improving the service.'

9.9 The current Wales Youth Agency project to audit the coverage of youth services in Wales, across both the maintained and voluntary sectors, will provide valuable information, as will the benchmarking work of local authorities, but it will not be capable of evaluating effectiveness or unmet need. The key issue is how the various programmes fit together on the ground as experienced by young people. This can only be established by detailed local audit as suggested in Chapter 10.

9.10 The challenge for the Assembly funding mechanisms is to support an integrated approach on the ground. A strategy to merge schemes with similar objectives, for example the Youth Access Initiative with the Children and Youth Partnership Fund, would go with the grain of planning in many local authorities which already roll up these programmes to create a larger pool for action at local level. And, as is already envisaged, bringing together the Youth Gateway and Education Business Partnerships as part of the new Careers Wales portfolio of schemes will promote greater coherence in relation to vocational advice and support.

9.11 The newness, short-term timescales, criteria and allocation mechanisms of some programmes is as much of a problem as the number of schemes. The fact that some schemes are funded for only two or three years undermines value for money by creating a high turnover of staff and prevents the long term commitment to individuals and communities which is needed, as discussed in Chapter 6. It is also demotivating for young people when valued projects close at the end of the funding period.

9.12 Apart from the budgets for the careers service and the local authority funded youth service, the targeted schemes in **Table 1** will continue to be seen as experimental bolt-ons to the mainstream service unless there is a longer term commitment from the Assembly. If supporting young people and increasing engagement is a priority these actions need to be part of mainstream provision.

9.13 Short-term project funding is also supported from sources outside the Assembly budgets, including from the National Lottery Charities Board. The Policy Unit discussed with the officers of the Board how to promote a more complementary relationship between Lottery funded projects and local strategies and how to tackle short-termism. For the Lottery, as with the Assembly, there is a choice between extending the timescale of existing projects and retaining the capacity to fund new ones.

9.14 The key issue in relation to extraneous funding for youth work projects is that there should be early dialogue between the originators of the project, the local partnership for young people advocated in Chapter 10 and the funding provider about how the proposal will fit with existing and planned provision and how longer-term funding issues will be addressed. To require guaranteed long-term funding would stifle innovation and would have prevented many very successful projects from getting off the ground - but the exit strategy when project funding is due to end needs to be considered earlier and in a more integrated way than is currently the case.

The amount of funding available

9.15 This report does not make detailed funding recommendations - quantified evidence to support these is not available. The resources currently provided for advice and support services (see Table 1) is modest by comparison, for example, with local authority current expenditure budgets for education of some £1.45 billion in 2000-01.

9.16 The Advisory Group believes that to make improvements in the service currently provided to young people in Wales, over and above what is likely to be achieved by eliminating duplication, and to move towards making a reality of the proposed entitlement, the priorities for additional investment are :

- a. to strengthen the capacity in local authorities to support the broad partnership needed to address the needs of all young people in their area as discussed in Chapter 10, with short-term earmarked start-up funds for local partnerships to set up the strategic capacity
- b. to strengthen the quality and reach of youth work in the statutory and voluntary sectors including by tackling the present imbalance between full time and part time, and temporary and permanent posts, to support quality, open access, generic youth work, to provide effective support and training for volunteers, and develop information services as discussed in Chapter 5
- c. to strengthen the contribution of Careers Service companies - and Careers Wales from April 2001 - as discussed in paragraphs 9.26-27 below
- d. to increase core funding for the all-Wales voluntary youth sector as discussed in paragraphs 9.23-25 below.

9.17 Consideration also needs to be given to ways of providing cash help to young people where the absence of family resources is a real barrier to continuing in education and training. The recent increases in Access funds administered by colleges of further education have provided a welcome source of support. However, the Assembly needs to look at the forms of

targeted continuing support being evaluated in England through the Education Maintenance Allowance pilots introduced in England following research quoted in the Bridging the Gap report (see paragraph 2.5 above) which shows that young people from low income families are less likely to remain in learning post 16. The Assembly should review the impact of changes in student financial support arrangements for post 16 education on participation in Wales - as part of the information monitoring advocated in Chapter 10.

Issues in relation to local authority funding

9.18 There are complex issues in relation to the mechanisms for investing in youth work at local authority level. The fact that funding for youth services has been cut back in recent years (see paragraph 6.10) has led to a concern that any additional Assembly funding should be ring-fenced to ensure that it is not diverted to other local authority priorities.

9.19 Against this is the worry that ring-fenced funding would be inconsistent with the goal of integration with mainstream local authority budgets and the partnership approach to priority setting which the Assembly is developing with local government. And ring-fenced, short-term funding would not address the priority of strengthening the core mainstream youth service as recommended in Chapter 6.

9.20 The Advisory Group recognise that this is a complex issue for the Assembly to resolve but would emphasise that more resources for quality work with young people are needed to meet the objectives of the Learning and Skills Bill and to fulfil the guarantee proposed in this report. Any additional demands made on local authorities will represent a new financial pressure which will need to be discussed with the Welsh Local Government Association.

9.21 In part, quantifying these requirements will depend on the mapping and prioritisation work of the local partnerships proposed in this report. This will need to take into account, inter alia, the extent to which projects to support and develop young people's participation are included in the local plans which attract European programme funding. The emphasis in Objective 1 and 3 on integration into the labour market, capacity building and preventing disaffection, could mean that these are additional sources of funding for services for young people.

9.22 However these potential projects should not drive the local strategy for young people which needs to work from the perspective of the needs of all young people and the entitlement proposed in Chapter 1. Further consideration needs to be given to how this can be integrated with proposals for implementing community priorities for regeneration in the most deprived wards in Wales which are being worked up through the Assembly's Communities First programme.

Support for the voluntary sector

9.23 There is also concern that the enhanced role for local authorities in youth support could lead to crowding out of valuable work already being done by local voluntary projects. The Group believes that this is unlikely to happen where local authorities work through voluntary agencies who have already established a track record of effective work with young people in their areas. A further option would be to establish a mechanism for the Assembly to fund local voluntary projects directly. The Group decided against recommending this approach because of the difficulty of establishing from the centre the relative priority and integration of each project in the context of existing local provision.

9.24 However a feature of the Assembly's implementation strategy should be to monitor the effectiveness of partnership working - including the expectation that a significant proportion of funding allocated for work with young people will be delivered by local agreements with the voluntary sector - with the option of direct funding for voluntary youth projects kept in reserve for the future.

9.25 The Assembly should increase the currently modest (£0.4 million) resources provided for the all-Wales voluntary youth sector grant scheme - recognising that supporting the central costs of national organisations is crucial to enable them to deliver their contribution to a national service.

Provision for Careers Service companies

9.26 How to strengthen the contribution of Careers Wales should be reviewed in the light of the experience of its contribution to the local partnerships and the outcome of the current audit of provision being carried out as part of the ETAP process. A key issue will be to ensure that discretionary funding previously provided by the TECs for vocational advice and guidance is not lost during the creation of the new National Council for Education and Training funding structure.

9.27 The priority should be to ensure that the contracts with the Assembly, and the planning guidance to which they relate, provide sufficient flexibility, and are adequately funded, to enable the Careers Service companies to

- raise quality and extend the reach of their services in accordance with Estyn reports and other evidence - including meeting the demand for more one-to-one interviews, reaching young people currently missed by the service and raising standards of delivery across Wales to those of the best

- promote an integrated approach to careers and work-related education to make use of employer input to provide young people with better opportunities to develop an awareness of employment options and the skills to manage their learning throughout life
- respond effectively to demand generated by the Youth Gateway scheme, introduce Gateway options earlier in young people's school career or other changes suggested by consultation with young people to improve the relevance and effectiveness of the service
- provide tailored provision for young people who need specialist support, building on best practice developed through initiatives such as transition teams, On Track and Compact Plus, in line with the agreed local strategy.

More radical restructuring

9.28 One option, designed to address the risk of duplication discussed in Chapter 2, would be to restructure all sources of funding for youth support into a new single funding stream for allocation at local level across providers. The Group considered and rejected this option for the following reasons :

- the disruption caused by restructuring would be unlikely to be justified by gains in delivery
- restructuring would be a distraction from service improvement
- there is a good case for maintaining the Careers company input as a centrally funded stream to preserve the independence of vocational advice to young people
- some simplification is already happening, or is under consideration - through restructuring of Careers Wales and the work on the forthcoming Children and Young People's Strategy.

CHAPTER 10 : THE WAY AHEAD

10.1 This chapter suggests to the National Assembly the principles which should inform the future development of services to support young people in Wales and attempts to map out the changes needed to implement this vision at Assembly and local level.

Why an entitlement model?

10.2 The Group believes that the aims of promoting participation and achievement for all young people should be pursued in Wales through a universal entitlement to quality services, as set out in Chapter 1. This means giving priority to :

- improving the quality and reach of existing services, tackling the gaps between the vision and reality identified in this report
- effective partnership working at the local level to create a network open and accessible to all and capable of responding proportionately to young people with problems.

10.3 Structuring service delivery around this entitlement is crucial because

- it is inclusive - recognising that all young people need support from family, friends and community and the role of the state is to help where this support is lacking
- it focuses on offering opportunity to young people, not on policing their participation
- it aims to motivate young people by encouraging them to seize opportunities in their own interests, not to comply with the agendas of others
- it gives service providers a framework and standard for planning delivery in ways that move towards meeting the needs of all young people.

Principles

10.4 The key principles should be

- to support and encourage all young people to develop as individuals and to enthuse them with the value of learning
- to develop a proportionate response to those in need of extra support
- to focus on what young people can contribute and give them opportunities to influence services that affect them

- to raise the quality and extend the diversity of what is offered to young people so that they are motivated to participate in learning and as citizens
- to recognise the diverse nature of Wales's communities in order to produce better outcomes for all our young people.

Structures

10.5 This report is not proposing new structures to support young people in Wales. The Group has considered the new service being developed in England - the Connexions service - based on the concept of a personal adviser for all young people aged between 13 -19 whose role will be to broker with other services and track the progress of all young people into education, training and work. The Group believes that the priority for Wales should be to achieve the aim of promoting better outcomes for young people by improving the support provided by existing services and improving co-ordination at National Assembly and at local level. To achieve this the following needs to happen and the Group would expect to see substantial steps forward over the next 5 years.

National Assembly level

10.6 The Assembly needs to create the capacity to

- lead and co-ordinate policy in relation to young people in Wales, including engaging effectively with young people and promoting their involvement in the design and delivery of services which affect them
- promote a new way of thinking about and working with young people to develop their capacity to make the most of their own lives and contribute effectively to their communities
- to monitor progress towards the vision for youth support set out in this report, including working with a multidisciplinary implementation monitoring group drawn from the groups represented in the local partnerships (10.8.1 and 10.8.2)
- monitor a wide range of information on what is happening to the lives of young people in Wales.

Local authority level

10.7 The Learning and Skills Bill 2000 (Annex 2) creates a new statutory base for youth support which is unique to Wales, with local authorities at the centre, responsible for securing the service for young people in their area. Its provisions include the objectives of encouraging young people to

- participate effectively in education and training

- take advantage of opportunities for employment
- participate effectively and responsibly in the life of their communities

and requires the local authority to provide opportunities for young people to express their views. How local authorities will be expected to fulfil this new requirement will be subject to direction by the National Assembly.

10.8 The key issues which should be covered in this direction are discussed below.

Strategic

10.8.1 In every local authority area in Wales there needs to be a partnership responsible for reviewing and developing services for the entire cohort of young people in their area. There are complex issues about how this should fit with existing partnerships - including those with a statutory base such as Yots and the forthcoming Community Consortia for Education and Training, and other groups such as School Governors, Local Health Alliances and Local Health Groups - and this needs to be resolved locally. Young people should contribute to the design of the strategy and to monitoring its effectiveness.

10.8.2 The partnership needs to include :

- the Chief Executive's office - reflecting the corporate nature of an effective local authority response to young people and its links with modernisation, Community Plans, regeneration, European programmes and Best Value
- the authority's youth service - reflecting the service's direct links with young people and its ethos of informal learning and inclusion
- the voluntary sector, Careers Service companies, schools, colleges, training providers, the police, the probation service, the Employment Service and health authorities.

Delivery

10.8.3 The function of the partnership should be to pull together the separate local services to create a network for young people and determine the priorities for change to achieve this by

- reviewing what is happening to the cohort of young people in the area - pulling together a wide range of evidence related to health, participation and achievement, offending etc at local authority and community level - to identify who is being missed out and why
- mapping what is on offer to young people and how effective it is - including in the eyes of young people

- reviewing how far the ethos and proposals of existing plans and strategies fit with the vision of empowering and supporting young people set out in this report
- taking forward detailed issues such as referral protocols, and systems for keeping in touch with individuals as discussed below.

Information services

10.8.4 Information services are a key aspect in changing a disparate set of services into a network for young people and this needs to be integrated with the all-age information services being developed by all local authorities in Wales. The first steps are :

- delivering the information services components of the young person's entitlement through the Canllaw Online strategy, using all available outlets including young people specific outlets like Information Shops (static and mobile) and generic ones like public libraries and leisure centres
- producing a detailed local young people's handbook/prospectus - which should complement Canllaw Online and identify local entry points
- a different version of this handbook to be produced for all professionals working with young people in the local authority area - designed to help them see how they fit in to the wider network.

Roles and responsibilities

10.9 Chapters 4-6 review the contribution of the services which currently have the major input to providing support for young people in Wales. The Group is recommending no fundamental change in the structure or roles and responsibilities of these services - because it believes that

- a period of stability is needed to enable local authorities and their partners to pull together effectively the large number of recent initiatives including proposals for European funding, Communities First and implementing the new post 16 education arrangements, and
- structural change would detract managers from the improvements in quality and reach across services needed to respond to Estyn and other evaluation reports.

10.10 The Advisory Group recognises that this places considerable responsibility on the local partnership to identify and resolve gaps and duplication and to put in place referral and keeping-in-touch systems. However the Group believes that resolving these issues locally is likely to be more effective than by central direction because :

- there is great variation in the present roles and ways of working of the relevant agencies across Wales
- this will build on existing partnerships arrangements, for example identifying who is best placed locally to fill a gap, taking into account existing facilities, resources and relationships with young people and communities.

Keeping-in-touch systems

10.11 The Advisory Group is proposing a flexible approach to keeping in touch with young people - working out from strong generic services. This will be less system-based than is proposed in England through Connexions and will need to be reviewed regularly to determine whether we are succeeding in reducing the numbers of young people in Wales who reach 18 with major skills deficits and personal barriers to participation. There are a number of concerns about 'tracking' young people and the Group believes that the ethos should be one of guiding young people and offering help and encouragement, not policing them. It is important to be informed about the current position of all young people in order to ensure that we extend the hand of opportunity to them, even those who may temporarily have dropped out or become sidetracked from mainstream routes of transition.

Monitoring progress

10.12 Monitoring outcomes for young people will require much better information than is currently available, at national and local level, in a number of areas including :

- the coverage of existing services - eg the data provided to the Assembly by local authorities on spending on youth services does not at present represent a comprehensive or consistent source of information - improved protocols need to be developed, drawing on the current benchmarking work being carried out by local authorities and the Wales Youth Agency. The new Local Government Statistics Unit within Syniad, the improvement, development and employers agency for local government in Wales, would be well placed to lead on this
- collating and interpreting, at national and local level, data on young people's participation in education, training and employment, including the Labour Force Survey and destinations data collected by Careers Service companies.

10.13 Ensuring that appropriate systems are in place should be part of the remit of the implementation group proposed above.

Information-sharing and confidentiality

10.14 A related difficult issue is the sharing of information between professionals about the progress of individuals. There is a tension between the need to respect the confidentiality of the young person and the need for professionals to share information that could help them respond appropriately and sympathetically. Young people say that they don't want to feel that everyone they deal with knows their past history and they often argue for total confidentiality. The Learning and Skills Bill provides the Assembly with new powers to enable information to be shared - guidance on this will need to address these complex issues including seeking the views of young people. The Assembly should set up a specialist group to look at this and draw up guidance - involving voluntary advocacy groups with expertise in working with young people and consulting them on these sensitive issues.

Conclusion

10.15 The key message in this report is simple - making existing services work better for young people and evaluating this, including by asking young people what they think. But achieving this at local level is complex and involves attention to the wide range of detailed issues addressed in this report while keeping a clear focus on the needs of the young people at the centre. Working with the grain of their needs and aspirations is key to more successful policy and delivery.

**STATEMENT OF 18TH JANUARY 2000 BY
THE RT HON ALUN MICHAEL AM MP (THEN FIRST SECRETARY)
TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY****Statement on Supporting Young People in Wales**

The First Secretary: I am pleased to report that we have received agreement from the UK Cabinet for the inclusion of Welsh clauses in the Learning and Skills Bill to enable us to develop a Welsh system for the support of young people. Ours will be a partnership approach, building on the strength of the statutory and voluntary sectors in Wales.

In the light of this good news, I report to the Assembly on how we propose to take forward the cross-cutting agenda for support for young people in Wales. It will involve extensive consultation with young people and those who work with them in the statutory and voluntary sectors. Tom Middlehurst will report on progress to the Post-16 Education and Training Committee and invite that Committee to contribute to developing the detailed policy. I invite the Assembly as a whole to be involved in developing a Welsh strategy for the young people of Wales.

Engaging more effectively with young people and helping them to fulfil their potential in the workforce and their communities is key to achieving a more prosperous and fairer Wales. This is part of the much wider effort to promote inclusion and achieve better outcomes for all the people of Wales, which will be the subject of the Plenary debate later today.

Tapping into the potential of our young people requires concerted action by the statutory and voluntary sectors. Each of the mainstream programmes—in education, training and the careers service—must ensure that provision is of high quality and responsive to the needs of all young people. However, that is not enough on its own.

In the past, each generation has recognised the need for informal and formal support for young people as they grow up, encouraging their positive aspirations and ambitions, and countering social problems and disadvantage. Our voluntary organisations—Albermarle, youth and community work in the 1970s—grow from these roots, as do the public organisations. There is a long list of previous efforts to provide the right service for young people.

Although the statutory youth service was cut back during the early 1990s, it still makes an important contribution, as do leisure services and community groups. The voluntary sector plays a vital role, often showing immense capacity for innovation as well as an ability to adapt and review its contribution. While existing organisations have adapted their work, other organisations have developed and emerged as a result of different initiatives or as a response to new social and economic challenges. Youth action groups, the Weston Spirit, Millennium Volunteers, Prince's Trust initiatives and new Urdd initiatives are just a few examples.

In addition, we have many initiatives targeted at young people, which are designed to engage them in voluntary and community action and to re-engage disaffected young people and build their personal and social skills. The challenge is to look strategically at how these programmes and schemes fit together to provide a coherent network of support and opportunity designed to help young people take full advantage of education, training and employment, obtain specialist support where it is needed and to participate fully in their communities. The issues are complex, and solutions need to fit closely into the Assembly's vision for education and training, children and families, lifelong learning, health and wellbeing, social inclusion and sustainable communities, economic development and equality of opportunity.

We will use the opportunity presented by the Learning and Skills Bill to introduce new Welsh clauses on youth support during the passage of the Bill. These clauses will be tailored to our circumstances. They will enable us to fulfil the commitment we gave in our Green Paper 'Learning is for Everyone', to clarify the statutory basis for youth work and to develop a more focused and coherent approach. Local authorities will be at the centre of this, charged with connecting planning and delivery at a community level in partnership with the voluntary sector and the other statutory agencies. This partnership approach is crucial to achieving a holistic response to young people's needs.

It is crucial we ensure that we address the real current needs of young people and listen to their views. In conjunction with youth organisations in Wales, I propose that this shall be an early focus in the development of Young Voice/Llais Ifanc, which I launched following a statement to the Assembly in December. To prepare the ground, I have asked the policy unit to look at the relevant programmes and initiatives and advise on what needs to be done to make them more coherent and responsive to young people's needs and to link them better with community regeneration. I have also asked the unit to identify and support those young people at risk of getting into trouble, to identify gaps in provision and to reduce duplication and complexity.

An advisory group of experts in the field will help to ensure that the analysis addresses all the policy issues. I am pleased to say that the following individuals have agreed to act as that professional group. Between them they cover a wide range of support services and work with young people. They are:

Mrs Margaret Jervis, from Valleys Kids and Play Wales;

Dr Howard Williamson, from the school of social science, Cardiff University, who is also vice-chair of the Wales Youth Agency;

Mr David Adamson, who is associate head of the school of humanities and social sciences, University of Glamorgan;

Mr Peter Perkins, who is Deputy Lord Mayor of Cardiff (Schools and Lifelong Learning) and chair of CareerPaths (Cardiff and the Vale) Limited;

Mrs Viv Sugar, who is chief executive of Swansea City and County Council;

Mr Keith Towler, from the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders, who is the adviser to the Assembly on youth offending teams;

Mrs Joyce M’Caw, chief executive of Careers Plus - Gyrfa u Mwy, North East Wales;

Mr John Taylor, chief executive of the Training and Enterprise Council South East Wales;


Dr Sharon Hopkins, director of public health at Bro Taf Health Authority, who has recently become chair of the Bro Taf drug and alcohol team and a member of the Assembly substance and misuse advisory panel;

Ms Jane Williams, senior youth and community officer at Conwy County Borough Council, who chairs the principal youth officer group for Wales;

Mr Jim O’Rourke, chief executive of Urdd Gobaith Cymru; and

Ms Sheila Hendrickson from Race Equality First.

In addition the unit will work closely with the team developing the strategy for children and young people, and with groups working directly with young people in Wales. We will talk directly to public bodies, especially the Welsh Local Government Association, and with voluntary organisations and others who have an interest in the field and experience of working with young people. The work will be publicised widely and contributions will be invited from all interested parties, including young people. Our virtual youth Assembly, which is being designed as the Assembly’s own communications network for young people—I refer to Young Voice/Llais Ifanc—will play a significant role in this.



This is not a finalised, top-down approach, but an opportunity to be grasped. We are seizing the legislative opportunity to put enabling clauses forward to do something which drew me into political action—to engage and give opportunity to young people. However, designing the policy detail and making it work is a job for the whole Assembly and our partners throughout Wales. I hope that Assembly Members will also make a contribution and encourage their young constituents, youth workers and community groups in their areas to do the same.

YOUTH PROVISIONS OF THE LEARNING AND SKILLS BILL

Support for 11 to 25 year olds: Wales

Provision of services

123.-(1) The National Assembly for Wales may direct a local authority-

- (a) to provide youth support services;
- (b) to secure the provision of youth support services;
- (c) to participate in the provision of youth support services.

(2) In this section "youth support services" means services which in the opinion of the National Assembly will encourage, enable or assist young persons (directly or indirectly)-

- (a) to participate effectively in education or training,
- (b) to take advantage of opportunities for employment, or
- (c) to participate effectively and responsibly in the life of their communities.

(3) In this section "young persons" means persons who have attained the age of 11 but not the age of 26.

(4) A direction under subsection (1)-

- (a) may include provision for grants, loans and other kinds of financial assistance to be provided by the National Assembly (whether or not on conditions),
- (b) may require local authorities to have regard to guidance issued by the National Assembly, and
- (c) may require local authorities when making arrangements with other persons to require those persons to have regard to guidance issued by the National Assembly.

(5) A direction under subsection (1)-

- (a) may relate to a particular class of young person;
- (b) may make different provision for different classes of young person;
- (c) may be revoked or varied by a later direction.

Local authority: duty and powers

124.-(1) A local authority-

- (a) shall comply with a direction given to it under section 123(1), and
- (b) may provide, secure the provision of or participate in the provision of youth support services otherwise than in accordance with paragraph (a).

(2) Action which a local authority takes in pursuance of subsection (1)-

- (a) may relate to a particular class of young persons;
- (b) may relate to services for a person from another area.

(3) In complying with a direction under section 123(1) a local authority shall have regard to the expediency of co-operation with voluntary organisations.

(4) For the purpose of subsection (1) a local authority may-

- (a) incur expenditure;
- (b) employ officers;
- (c) enter into agreements for the supply of goods or services;
- (d) do anything else (other than forming companies) which they consider necessary or expedient.

(5) Nothing in or done under section 123 shall prejudice any power of a local authority to provide services or incur expenditure.

Consultation and co-ordination

125.-(1) Before complying with a direction under section 123(1) by providing, securing the provision of or participating in the provision of services for residents of a particular place or area, a local authority shall consult each of the following with responsibility for all or part of the area-

- (a) a Health Authority,
- (b) a chief officer of police,
- (c) a police authority,
- (d) a probation committee, and
- (e) a youth offending team.

- (2) The local authority shall also-
- (a) consult any voluntary body which provides services for young persons in the place or area concerned and which the local authority think it appropriate to consult,
 - (b) consult the National Council for Education and Training for Wales,
 - (c) consult any authority or person with whom arrangements have been made for the place or area concerned under section 10(1) or (3)(a), (b) or (c) of the Employment and Training Act 1973 (careers services),
 - (d) consult any relevant organisation established for the purpose of enabling voluntary bodies to co-operate and co-ordinate their activities,
 - (e) consult such other persons as the local authority think appropriate, and
 - (f) provide such opportunities as the local authority think appropriate for young persons in the place or area concerned to express their views.
- (3) Subsection (4) applies where a local authority-
- (a) provide or propose to provide youth support services for the residents of a particular place or area,
 - (b) secure or propose to secure the provision of youth support services for the residents of a particular place or area.
- (4) Where this subsection applies, persons and bodies listed in subsection (1) with responsibility for all or part of that place or area shall-
- (a) exercise their functions so as to support and assist the services provided, secured or proposed by the local authority, and
 - (b) co-ordinate the exercise of their functions, so far as seems reasonable, with persons providing those services.
- (5) Subsection (4) shall not require persons or bodies to take action which would significantly interfere with the efficient or effective exercise of their functions.

Educational institutions : information and access

126.-(1) Where a person is involved in the provision of services in pursuance of section 123(1)(a) or (b), an educational institution to which this section applies shall, for the purpose of the provision of those services-

- (a) provide him on request with the name and address of a pupil or student;
 - (b) provide him on request with the name and address of a parent of a pupil or student;
 - (c) provide him on request with information in the institution's possession about a pupil or student;
 - (d) permit him to have access to a pupil or student on the institution's premises at reasonable times;
 - (e) make available to him, so far as is reasonably convenient, facilities on the institution's premises for providing services to individual pupils or students or groups of pupils or students.
- (2) Information shall not be provided under subsection (1)(c)-
- (a) in the case of a pupil or student who has not attained the age of 16, if a parent of his has instructed the institution not to provide information of that kind under this section, or
 - (b) in the case of a pupil or student who has attained the age of 16, if he has instructed the institution not to provide information of that kind under this section.
- (3) This section applies to the following institutions-
- (a) community, foundation and voluntary schools,
 - (b) community or foundation special schools (other than those established in hospitals),
 - (c) city technology colleges and city colleges for the technology of the arts,
 - (d) pupil referral units,
 - (e) institutions within the further education sector, and
 - (f) institutions in receipt of funding from the National Council for Education and Training for Wales.

Inspection

127.-(1) Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales-

- (a) shall advise the National Assembly for Wales on request about matters relating to services provided in pursuance of section 123(1),
- (b) may give the National Assembly other advice about those matters,

- (c) shall, when requested to do so by the National Assembly, inspect and report on the provision of those services, and
 - (d) may undertake such other inspections of the provision of those services as he thinks fit.
- (2) The National Assembly shall consult the Chief Inspector before making a request under subsection (1)(a) or (c).
- (3) A request under subsection (1)(c)-
- (a) may be general or in relation to specific matters,
 - (b) may relate to a specific person or institution providing services, or to a specific class of person or institution, and
 - (c) may relate to a specific area.
- (4) A reference in subsection (1) to the provision of services includes a reference to the management and use of resources in providing services.

Conduct and effect of inspections

128.- (1) This section applies where a service is inspected pursuant to a request under section 127(1)(c) or in accordance with section 127(1)(d).

- (2) A person carrying out or participating in the inspection shall have the same powers as an Inspector under the following provisions of the School Inspections Act 1996-
- (a) section 6(3)(a) and (b) (right of access), and
 - (b) section 42 (computer records).
- (3) Section 42A of that Act (publication of records) shall apply.
- (4) Where the Chief Inspector arranges for the publication of a report of an inspection, the person who provides the inspected service shall-
- (a) prepare a written statement of the action which he proposes to take in the light of the report and the period within which he proposes to take it,
 - (b) publish the statement within such period, and in manner, as may be prescribed by regulation made by the National Assembly for Wales, and
 - (c) send copies of the statement to such persons as may be prescribed by regulations

made by the National Assembly.

Where a local authority provides an inspected service, or secures or participates in the provision of an inspected service, the authority-

- (a) shall ensure that the action specified in any statement prepared under subsection (4)(a) is sufficient to remedy any weakness mentioned in the report, and
- (b) shall take all reasonable steps to ensure that the action specified in the statement is taken within the period specified.

(6) If the National Assembly consider that a local authority is failing to comply with its duties under subsection (5)-

- (a) the National Assembly may give directions to the local authority about the performance of those duties, and
- (b) the authority shall comply with the directions.

Supplementary

129.-(1) In sections 123 to 128-

"local authority" means a county council or a county borough council,"Health Authority" has the meaning given by section 8 of the National Health Service Act 1977,

"parent", in relation to a child, means a person who has parental responsibility for him within the meaning of section 3 of the Children Act 1989,

"probation committee" means a committee established under section 3 of the Probation Services Act 1993,

"police authority" has the meaning given by section 101 of the Police Act 1996,

"young person" has the meaning given by section 123(3),

"youth offending team" means a team established under section 39 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, and

"youth support services" has the meaning given by section 123(2).

(2) The power under section 123 shall not relate to services which are provided or to be provided outside Wales.

Wales : provision of information by public bodies

138.-(1) For the purpose of the provision in Wales of services mentioned in subsection (2), any of the persons or bodies mentioned in subsection (3) may supply information about a young person-

- (a) to a local authority;
- (b) to any other person or body involved in the provision of the services.

(2) The services are-

- (a) services provided in pursuance of section 123 of this Act,
- (b) services provided in pursuance of any sections 2, 8, 9 and 10 of the Employment and Training Act 1973 (training and careers service), and
- (c) service wholly or partly funded in pursuance of section 12 of the Industrial Development Act 1982 (careers in industry).

(3) The persons and bodies are-

- (a) a local authority,
- (b) a Health Authority,
- (c) the National Council for Education and Training for Wales,
- (d) a chief officer of police,
- (e) a probation committee, and
- (f) a youth offending team.

REPORT OF FOCUS GROUPS

1 Background

As an element of the review of youth provision in Wales conducted by the National Assembly Policy Unit and supported by an Advisory Group, a programme of consultation with young people has been implemented. The chosen methodology was to hold around 20 focus groups with a representative sample of young people drawn from a range of social backgrounds and physical locations in Wales. A total of 17 group reports were available at the time of writing this summary report.

Each group was requested to address a number of central themes that the advisory panel felt might bring out the critical issues in considering the pattern of support for young people in Wales. These were:

- Pre-16 experience
- Post-school transition
- Access to existing services
- Unmet need
- Vision for future support

However, in keeping with the focus group approach, opportunity was presented to range outside the identified topics to reflect the specific interests and concerns of the participants.

In order to achieve a relatively uniform approach across all the focus groups, a workshop for group convenors was held in Llandrindod Wells on Friday 5th May, 2000. At the workshop convenors explored the themes and how they might be presented to the focus groups. The detailed approach was established and it was agreed that the main topics would act as a framework rather than a structure and that local conditions would influence the actual delivery mechanisms. Convenors were requested to submit a record of the focus group discussions and a separate summary of what they felt to be the dominant themes that emerged.

In the event, however, some of the reports deviated considerably from the proposed framework. In some cases, no reference was made to the agreed headings and few convenors included their own summary of themes. The outcome is that the reports vary considerably in quality and several are little more than a question and unmediated answer session in which the in-depth views of young people were not fully plumbed.

Variation in procedure and quality is an expected by-product of an exercise where focus groups are run in different locations and by different convenors but the level of variation in the present exercise was unexpectedly high. This experience points to the need to build effective consultation into the process at an early stage to allow a trained team to administer the full consultation process in a uniform and structured way.

The limited number of reports received and the variable quality of interaction which occurred should be considered when reading the implications of this account onto the wider Welsh stage. However, the views expressed are clear and unambiguous and there is no reason to suspect that they are not typical for large numbers of young people in Wales today.

2 Reports received

Because this analysis is based on only 17 reports, caution must be exercised in drawing conclusions about the views of young people in Wales generally. The results of the limited consultation succeed in providing some small insight into the views and experience of young people in Wales today. Reports were received from:

Location/ Organisation	Gender	Age range	Other details
Aelwyd Crymych	mixed	aged 18-25	Welsh speaking
Cardiff	mixed	aged 17-18	A-Level Students
Conwy	male	aged 16-17	Homeless
Conwy	mixed	aged 17-25	Youth Access Initiative group
Flintshire	mixed	aged 14-16	Young carers
Newport	female	aged 11-20	Asian
Newport	mixed	aged 16-25	Mixed ethnic minority
Rhondda Cynon Taff	female	aged 12-16	Youth Justice group
TEC South East Wales			Modern Apprenticeship group
Swansea	mixed	aged 11-16	
Swansea	mixed	aged 11-16	
Swansea	mixed	aged 14-16	Pupil Referral Unit
Swansea			Youth Offending Team group
Tonyrefail	female	aged 13-15	Barnardo's group
Tonyrefail	male	aged 13-15	Barnardo's group
Wrexham	mixed	aged 17	Youth Gateway Scheme group
Wrexham	mixed		Unemployed New Deal group

Also, "Voices from Care" made available a report of consultation with eighteen young people on health issues entitled "Promoting the Health of Young People Looked After".

3 Main themes

Some of the pre-arranged themes drew little comment from the groups, whilst other themes emerged quite strongly. The clearly dominant theme is the lack of facilities for young people and their desire to have a place which they can control and where they can meet without undue interference. That theme and others are presented here in summary form, dealing first with the pre-arranged topics.

3.1 Pre-16 experience

There is little which can be derived from the groups of direct relevance to this heading with little commentary provided. Clearly this theme held little attraction to the groups and the majority of the groups make no direct reference to it in their reports. Of those that do, the majority refer to positive experiences of school and family life. The exception to this derives from groups of 'disaffected' young people who had experienced school expulsion and family-based problems. The specific issues of family and school experiences are dealt with below.

3.2 Post-school transition

Again few groups dealt directly with this important stage of transition to adulthood. One group identified the difficulties of securing part-time work whilst still at school and pointed to the exploitative pay rates which were given for part-time work. Others pointed to the difficulties of studying whilst working part-time. Most groups mentioned the expense of being a teenager with strong pressures to conform to patterns of consumption and clothing styles. In general there was a collective ambition to sign up to a fairly conventional lifestyle centred on finding a job, home and car ownership.

Specific mention of colleges was made by a number of groups. Colleges were felt to provide a more appropriate learning environment for young people. Members of the modern apprentice group felt that college 'was a waste of time', but the small number in this group does not support generalisation of this view. Some valued the greater degree of independence offered by college but others felt that more structure in college life was needed. This was echoed by a group of sixth-formers studying A-Levels in that the school did not structure their time sufficiently leaving them to succumb to the temptations of the pub.

Training experiences were mentioned in several groups and almost always recounted as an entirely negative experience. Usually seen as providing cheap labour sources, several groups

expressed the desire for effective training with real outcomes. Modern apprentices had a more favourable view of their training experience and saw themselves as starting out on 'a career rather than just a job'.

A related activity which drew favourable responses was provision of Outward Bound type physical activities. Participants who had experienced such provision felt it helped build confidence and that it was personally beneficial. This echoes opinion expressed by tenants of a supported housing scheme in Aberdare who had been consulted in an earlier stage of this exercise. Together with their professional team, they strongly advocated interventions of this kind.

For the sixth form group, college and University was the natural transition from school. This was viewed with some trepidation about the ability to self-motivate and organise the study process. Additionally, worries about financial pressure were evident and there was a consensus in this and other groups that tuition charges were unfair and should be abolished. Participants in groups that were contemplating University were content to study in a local University providing the quality of what was on offer was up to standard.

As in other areas of discussion there was considerable disparity between the hopes and aspirations of those who might be described as "engaged" and those who were "disengaged" from the academic process altogether.

3.3 Access to existing services

A very wide range of experience was described under this heading. The diversity of views and range of experiences expressed

creates some difficulty in organising the information thematically. In general terms there was a sense of low levels of satisfaction with existing services. Much of this is dealt with under specific headings about school and facilities for young people. The pattern of engagement and disengagement from school (discussed in section 3.7 below) is to an extent replicated in levels of satisfaction with other services. The most disengaged groups expressed a sense of poor access and outcomes in relation to a wide range of service providers including the health service, police, careers service and youth clubs. Within this general subject some key issues were raised :

- Quality of outcome dependent on who dealt with case
- Lack of continuity between staff dealing with case on subsequent visits
- Time delays in having matters resolved by statutory agencies

- Operation of stereotyping by agency staff
- Agency staff seen as unfriendly and obstructive
- Lack of understanding of difficulties faced by young people
- Bureaucracies and procedures very difficult to understand
- Lack of basic information about rights
- Lack of knowledge about the agencies and support mechanisms that do exist.

Careers services, health facilities and local authorities were frequently singled out for specific criticism. The latter were seen to be remote and undemocratic. There were several calls to make local members and National Assembly members get out into the community they serve, to meet people and understand their needs more fully. One group had positive experiences with a Youth Forum in their area but still felt that the local authority could do more to take into account the views and needs of young people. There was virtually no mention of voluntary sector organisations in any of the discussions under existing services.

3.4 Unmet need

The most significant unmet need was clearly in the absence of anywhere for young people to 'hangout'. This issue appears with sufficient frequency to merit a separate treatment of its own and is dealt with in section 3.8 below. Beyond this very major pre-occupation, most convenors felt that the groups were unable to articulate their unmet needs effectively. This is unsurprising and frequently encountered in community development programmes. (Visioning events such as JIGSO and Planning for Real Exercises are usually necessary to map unmet need.)

Several groups expressed the view that internet and IT facilities should be widely available for young people to allow them to take full advantage of the new technologies. Specific suggestions in this context were that local authorities should provide free email addresses for all young people and that libraries and schools should have full internet access which should be open to the public.

Those respondents with experience of homelessness clearly felt there had been inadequate support from social services and other agencies. One reported effective support from the school with meals and financial help. This group felt it had not been provided with access to information about voluntary organisations that might have helped them.

Despite the absence of specific discussion by the participants there was an overwhelming sense of unmet need implicit in the comments, and in the depressed expectations and unfulfilled ambitions which run throughout all the groups. The absence of a conscious awareness of the gaps in provision stems from the simple failure of the imagination to see what could and

perhaps should be provided for young people.

The issue of health provision did not arise in any of the focus groups but the report submitted by Voices from Care detailed responses to a previous consultation specifically on health and young people. That report referred to the issues of confidentiality and the lack of confidence many young people have in current health provision. The group believed that emotional health was neglected in favour of concern with physical health although young people were more likely to experience difficulties with the former. The report also felt that current health provision does not recognise the link with poverty and the difficult economic circumstances experienced by many care leavers.

3.5 Vision for future support

An overall depressing feel of low expectations and minimal ambitions characterised all the discussion under this heading. Many participants could see themselves only as unemployed, imprisoned, using drugs, getting drunk or homeless in the future.

"I'm worried about the future, but can't think about it", mixed group aged 14-16

Even those with ambitions to attend college were limited in the range of options they felt open to them. Most felt that they would have to leave their communities to attend college and to find employment even if they did not want to leave.

No clear vision of a support framework emerged in any of the groups. However, there were clear needs which participants felt were not being met by current provision or were being met inadequately. Issues identified were :

- More responsiveness from benefit agencies
- Better careers advice
- More effective training
- Desire to be treated as an adult
- Recognition of the qualities of young people, not just their qualifications
- Lack of financial support for college attendance
- Being listened to and taken more seriously
- More support for lone parents

One group discussed the concept of some kind of personal advisor and welcomed the idea. They were concerned that the quality of information provided would be accurate and that

confidentiality would need to be guaranteed.

3.6 Family life

The ability to comment on family life was clearly limited by the absence of confidentiality in the group setting. One convenor commented on the need to arrange individual interview sessions if information of this kind is required. Groups noted the diversity of family life in contemporary society and there were both criticisms and defences of lone parents. No further comment is possible from the limited accounts of the discussions in this area.

3.7 School experience

Opinion divided quite clearly between groups who were moving routinely through the educational system and those experiencing difficulties with it. Predictably, those with an experience of exclusion and problematical school participation held fairly negative views of the support school offered them. Teachers were felt to be sarcastic and disparaging and pupils with difficulties perceived themselves to be blamed for every ill deed in school. This "labelling" process was clearly a major problem to them and fuelled their negative perceptions of school. Some "disaffected" young people reflected on their own behavioural contribution to the creation of the label.

In contrast, groups with more engaged pupils valued their school experience and generally were more positive about teachers. Certain individual teachers clearly inspired and supported pupils more than others. One group particularly valued the form tutor relationship and felt the pastoral role of teachers to be very important. The same group recognised the high workloads of teachers and the lack of resources they often experienced. It was felt that adults outside the school environment did not appreciate the hard work done by teachers.

Divisions between pupils were also evident in comments. One group referred to the difficulty of a school 'achiever' attending a 'rough' school'. Another group with members of a Youth Forum, when in school did not refer to their participation in the Forum as it would be regarded as 'soft' by the majority of pupils. This division is apparent in the group reports. The experience of school splits between (i) a body of opinion with a clear engagement with school and a cultural expectation to proceed to university or college, and (ii) a body of opinion which regarded school as "crap" and "rubbish". Members with these views truanted or were excluded, and felt that the whole system, including teachers, had let them down.

'You feel like a "rem" when everyone else knows it all', female group aged 13-15

This division is perhaps self-apparent to anyone working with young people but it is very convincing to see it underlined in the values and perceptions of the young people themselves. Laid bare in this way it points to the underpinning of processes of social exclusion which an effective youth service for Wales must tackle.

In general terms most of the groups felt that there were problems with the school system and the relationship between teachers and pupils. There is an overall impression of disinterest and disengagement by teachers with occasional, exceptional teachers providing guidance and inspiration. Participants in ethnic minority groups had major concerns about both individual racism of teachers and institutionalised racism in school procedures and practices. Teacher and school responses to racist bullying were inadequate, teacher understanding of cultural difference was poor, halal food was not available in school canteens, ethnic minority languages were not available on the curriculum, no ethnic minority teachers were employed and pupils with poor English skills were often defined as 'Special Needs' pupils. This points to a highly negative school experience for children from ethnic minorities.

School councils were regarded as ineffective and prefects, head boys and girls were regarded as 'swots' by the A-Level group.

3.8 Facilities for young people

One of the first responses made in several of the groups was to point to the 'boredom' experienced by young people. Whilst at first sight this might appear almost a reflex action when young people are asked about where they live, the claim was backed in all cases by a critical reflection on the absence of appropriate facilities. Experience from other youth focus groups (e.g. in Rhydyfelin and Treherbert) suggests that such claims are sometimes made, even when local facilities do exist. The critical point is that young people feel excluded from such facilities and that they do not feel any ownership. Many comments refer to the control of community and youth facilities by adults and their lack of understanding of the needs of young people. Community centres were generally held in very negative light and epitomised the generational gap between those who run them and those who were expected to use them:

"Community centres are sometimes run by adults for young people, but it's the adults who decide what goes on. This is mad, because how can a fifty year old know what a teenager today needs?", mixed group aged 14-16

Youth clubs were also generally felt to suffer the same problem and few participants used youth club facilities. One group felt that all youth clubs should have a youth worker aged between 18 and 20 to ensure that they kept in touch with young people's needs. It was also felt that young people should be part of the management of the clubs and should effectively be running them. The actual name 'youth club' was identified as a problem and it was felt that a more modern image was required.

"They're (youth clubs) boring, rubbish, they don't do anything, you can't smoke, it's just teacher again", female group aged 12-16

What young people felt they needed was a place to "hang out", to get away from parents and "say and do what you want- within reason". One group specifically mentioned a venue for young people, which was alcohol free, but provided full facilities. This was a recurring theme and clearly a high priority for young people in Wales.

3.9 Transport

A small number of groups (two rural, two urban) raised the issue of transport and the general difficulties of getting around. Comments were not specific but referred to costs and inaccessibility of city and town based resources by bus. One modern apprentice reported difficulties of finding work placement within the limited travel distance possible by public transport. Dependence on parents for transport to leisure and entertainment venues was seen as problem. Car crime was a feature of life for one of the offender groups but less for the transport it provided and more for the relief of boredom. Schemes to tackle car crime by offering driving and mechanical repair skills were cited by several participants as providing a very positive experience.

3.10 Ethnic minorities

Although only two focus groups of young people from ethnic minorities were conducted the views and experience described are worthy of specific comment. The generally negative experience of the school is described in section 3.7 above. The racism experienced in the school context is also evident throughout the discussions with Asian and black young people.

Caught between two cultures, British Asian respondents felt that there was no place for them in either culture. They wished to live a modern lifestyle but which remained true to their religious and cultural background. The absence of cultural facilities and products in shops, cinemas, recreation centres, libraries and concert halls prevented participation in many activities. They described considerable distrust of the police and believed them to be racist and slow to respond to request for assistance from ethnic minorities, especially in instances of racist abuse. Respondents also perceived prejudice in the job market. As with other groups they desired a safe place to meet.

"The group stated that racism was a factor of their lives, every member of the group had suffered racism and it made them angry and upset", Asian females aged 11-20

Although small in number, respondents with refugee status had particularly negative experience and felt isolated and endangered. All the problems reported by ethnic minorities were exaggerated for refugees, who often experienced additional language and interpretation difficulties when accessing public services, including health facilities. The voucher system of payment was felt to degrade and humiliate and prevent access to culturally required foods.

4 Interpretation

The implications of much of the above reporting are self-evident and require little comment or interpretation. Those convenors who made comments and discussed the groups opinions present a strong appeal for young people to be treated with higher regard by 'adult' society. Many of the young people spoke of the lack of respect given by adults, the suspicion they were dealt with in many social settings and the general feeling of not belonging.

A powerful theme of disenfranchisement from civil society runs throughout much of the reporting. This is in part a perceived failure of local politicians and politics to meet the needs of young people and in part a sense of remoteness of key institutions such as schools from the real life concerns of young people. These accounts of young people's views make depressing reading in a society which has so much opportunity for those who are able to take it. The success of a re-shaped youth service for Wales will lie in its ability to enable all young people to take the opportunities that exist.

POLICY UNIT VISITS AND DISCUSSIONS

Ms Susan Lewis	Chief Inspector, Estyn
Mrs Liz Kidd	Estyn
Mr Angus Dumphy	Head, Fitzalan High School
Mr John Williams	Head, Penydre High School, Gurnos, Merthyr
Mr Dewi Jones	Director of Education Merthyr Tydfil CBC
Mr John Roberts	Head, Pupil Referral Unit, Denbighshire
Goitre Junior School, PIC Accelerated Learning Project	
Mr Geoff Cox	Principal, Pontypridd College
Careers Service Association for Wales	representing the eight Careers Service companies
Dr Mark Drakeford	Cardiff University
Mr Brian Williams	Chief Executive, Wales Youth Agency
Wales Youth Agency Advisory Council	
Mr Wayne David	Wales Youth Agency
Mrs Kim Egelstaff	Youth Worker, Brecon High School
Mr Alan Whittick	Assistant Director (Youth and Community), Powys County Council

Ms Enid Williams (Deputy Youth Officer) and Ms Carys Roberts (Schools Youth Worker)	Gwynedd County Council
Mr Jim Humphreys	Principal Youth and Community Officer, Wrexham CBC Youth Service
Mr David Saunders	Youth Officer, Denbighshire Youth and Community Service
Mrs Lin Howells	Education Officer, Vale of Glamorgan Council
Information Shop, Penarth	
Mr Liam Keeley	Senior Community Education Officer, Merthyr Tydfil CBC
Mr Keith Thomas	County Youth Officer, Pembrokeshire
North Wales Principal Youth Officers Group	
Llandudno Junction Youth Club	
Prestatyn Youth and Community Centre	
Community Autos Rhyl	
Mr John Griffiths	Chair, Council for Wales Voluntary Youth Services
Mr Brian Davies	Chair, Antur Cymru
Mrs Sandra Skinner	Secretary for Wales, Duke of Edinburgh Award
Mrs Veronica Wilson	Youthlink
Mr Tom Davies	Prince's Trust, Cymru
Mr Alun Owen, Mr Robert Cornwall	Gurnos Community Workshops Merthyr

Mr Andy James, Policy Officer Ms Noreen Davies, Ms Angela Hoare	Barnardos
Ms Barbara Castle and two young front-line workers funded by the Rank Foundation	Penywaun Enterprise Partnership
Mrs Mandy Jones and team	Newid Community Development project, Bonymaen, Swansea
Mrs Catriona Williams	Director, Children in Wales
Mr Julian Richards	Cornerstone Community Project, Swansea
Penygraig Community Project	
Mr David Jones	Homewards Adref Ltd, Aberdare (Homelessness in South Wales' Valleys)
Mr Paul Morrisey	New Employ, Cardiff
Ms Sarah Lloyd-Jones	People in Work Unit, Abergavenny
Mr Phil Treseder	Save the Children, Cardiff
South Wales Youth Offending Teams Advisory Group	
Mr Eddie Isles	Manager, Swansea Youth Offending Team
Mr Norman Lloyd	Crime Concern
Mr David Morgan Mr Lindsey Evans	TEC South East Wales
Mr Phil Drakeford	Dyfed Education Business Partnership
Mr Arnold Phillips	Director of Housing, Swansea
Mr David McKenna	Anti-poverty Officer, Swansea

Mr Trevor Gough

Director of Sports and Lesiure, Cardiff

Mr Colin Jones

Welsh Local Government Association

Mr Peter Tyndall

Ms Lynda Bransbury

Mr Roy Norris

Director, National Lottery Charities Board

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