

The *Wales Principal Youth Officers Group* (PYOG) is the representative group of officers nominated by each local authority as the professional and strategic head of the youth service. The Group has an established role in advising on the strategic development and delivery of youth services and other associated initiatives on behalf of the *Association of Directors of Education in Wales* (ADEW) and are a sub-group of the ADEW structure. The PYOG also has a strategic connection with the *Welsh Local Government Association* (WLGA).

The PYOG recognises the importance of a continuum of learning and well-being and the important contribution which youth work can and does play towards improving outcomes for young people in Wales aged 11-25 years by enabling “...*young people to develop holistically, working with them to facilitate their personal, social and educational development, to enable them to develop their voice, influence and place in society and to reach their full potential.*” Youth Work National Occupational Standards.

The Wales PYOG welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry into an important part of the education sector but one which, despite supporting and educating some of the most disengaged and vulnerable learners, can suffer from low levels of investment and lack of focus/support.

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1. Whilst primarily the responsibility of schools and local authorities, EOTAS is a crucial area of work for a number of agencies in ensuring that young people are able to properly access their right to a good quality education and that they achieve to the best of their potential. Whilst more recent developments and discussions regarding EOTAS have focussed on the role of PRU's (which have governance arrangements similar to schools, including Management Committees and can register pupils, which most other EOTAS provision do not/cannot), the PYOG would welcome a focus on the role and contribution of

youth work in this, which can be easily be underestimated. The Youth Service offer numerous education projects using a Youth Work approach e.g. bespoke projects which work in and/or with schools for part of a learner's time to Youth Work run alternative curricular provision, which may see a learner attend part or whole time.

2. Under the *Learning & Skills Act*, (2000) Section 123, local authorities are required to “provide, secure and participate in the provision of youth support services” with *Extending Entitlement* (the related Welsh Government (WG) Directions and Guidance document) clearly outlining the important role which the Youth Service plays within this ‘offer’. Youth work, is a specific method of working which focuses on the personal and social development of young people aged 11-25 years based on a voluntary engagement and contributes to a number of agendas as well as education, such as Social Justice, Health, Social Care etc.
3. This is often done by utilising different learning methods which suit a learner's needs, which schools may struggle to provide e.g. experiential learning (offered by the Youth Service in a variety of ways), which is also a recommendation in *Successful Futures*, for all learners. Children and Youth Support Services provide a ‘wrap around’ support which closely compliments delivery in schools, assisting teachers in their goal of producing positive, productive contributors to (and full members of) society. With **children and young people spending around 85% of their waking time outside of school** (Professor Tim Brighouse, *Education Without Failure*, The Royal Society of Arts Digital Journal, 2008), the Youth Service provides not only a wide range of general and specialist support services but also, through a non-formal/informal learning approach, is **an educational provision in its own right**, taking place in schools (e.g. as part of PSE provision) and communities via other project based work and support.
4. In 2013 the *National Youth Agency* (NYA) carried out a [commission into the role of youth work in formal education](#), chaired by Tim Loughton, MP. As well as outlining what youth work can and does contribute in formal education settings, the report's findings asserted that youth work “...creates opportunities

for young people to develop the skills, capacities and attitudes required (to promote personal and social development)..." and "...good youth work can help improve attendance and behaviour, promote achievement and improve home and community links."

5. As an effective preventative service, youth work contributes to a number of WG objectives, including education; poverty; efforts in discharging requirements of the UNCRC; transition to adulthood; Families First; young offenders and transition from custody; looked after children; young carers; young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) etc.
6. As a valued part of the education 'family', since April 2017, as a degree qualified profession with its own National Occupational Standards and qualifications framework, youth workers have been required to register with the Education Workforce Council (EWC), alongside, teachers, colleges of Further Education Lecturing and support staff and Work Based Learning staff.
7. The Samaritans recent report on school exclusions in Wales <https://www.samaritans.org/wales/news/exclusion-school-major-inequality-factor-which-cannot-continue-be-overlooked-urges-samaritans-cymru/> identifies a concern that children and young people can enter "into a cycle of inequality and the urgency of addressing the issue due to its link to suicide risk". The Youth Service is often either already working with and/or 'pick up' young people who have either been excluded or 'off-rolled' and can be the only service that the young person is engaging with. Whilst carrying out this important supportive role e.g. via the Youth Engagement & Progression Framework (YEPF), where young people who are either disengaged or are at risk of disengagement are identified and offered relevant support to stay in/return to school and/or to break down barriers preventing attendance at school, Youth Services also act as an important link between schools and communities.
8. Youth Services are experiencing additional pressure as a result of 'off-rolling' practices in schools, whereby young people are left without any formal education provision. Youth Workers are increasingly coming across such individuals either as part of the Vulnerability Assessment Profiling process

under the YEPF, incidentally via street-based work and/or by word of mouth. These are often particularly vulnerable young people who may benefit from either a fresh start in another school or other EOTAs provision but who may not have come to the attention of the local authority.

9. Youth Workers also act as advocates on behalf of these young people and brokers back into relevant/appropriate formal and/or alternative provision.
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