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Youth Work • Playwork

The Workforce Development Plan for the Youth Work Sector in Wales

This plan has been developed and facilitated by ETS Cymru Wales & The Workforce Development Implementation and Participation Group. This work has been funded by Welsh Government.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Foreword

"The (Youth Work) sector needs to move away from an approach to workforce development and training that is piecemeal and opportunistic towards one that is systematic, progressive and sustainable." That was the view of the Interim Youth Work Board in its final report, ***Time to Deliver for the Young People of Wales (2021)***. They recommended a workforce development plan for the whole of the Youth Work sector to help give that planned, coherent approach, as part of ensuring a sustainable model for Youth Work in Wales.

The Youth Work Strategy Implementation Board (IB), the body responsible for putting into action the recommendations of Time to Deliver, then commissioned the Workforce Development Implementation Participation Group (WDIPG), made up of representatives from all over the Youth Work sector, to develop a plan to enable the Youth Work workforce to receive the support, training, development and qualifications they need to be better able to serve the young people of Wales. We consulted widely on the plan during January and February 2025, and we would like to thank all of you who gave your views and suggestions for improvement, which we feel have not only made the final document better and stronger but made it the Youth Work sector's plan – your plan!

With the 3 to 5 year Youth Work Workforce Plan agreed we can get on with the next stage, which is producing an annual delivery plan, setting out priorities for the year, and who is going to do what, when to make it happen, and how it is going to be funded. We're already seeing the benefits of the 2024 Skills and Training Audit, which identified what youth workers, youth support workers and volunteers need in terms of Youth Work qualifications, professional learning and development – **1274 have been on courses since March 2024**.

So, in summary, this Youth Work Workforce Development Plan, devised and owned by the sector, is for those who do Youth Work, those who lead and manage Youth Work, and those who fund, employ and strategically direct Youth Work. Its aim is to make us all more effective in serving young people.

We commend it to you and look forward to working on it with you.

Jo Sims

Chair of the Workforce Development Implementation Participation Group

Steve Drowley

Chair of Education Training Standards Cymru | Wales

1.2. Background

Youth Work in Wales has a rich history stretching back decades, supporting, guiding and improving young peoples' lives through a skilled intervention based on a non-formal education approach. Youth Work is underpinned by National Occupational Standards (NOS), its own qualifications framework and *Youth Work in Wales: Principles & Purposes*. Youth Work plays a valued role in the education, personal and social development of young people by developing trusting relationships with young people over time and by providing safe spaces where young people can socialise, learn and have fun.

As with any sector or profession, Youth Work Wales's greatest asset is its workforce. Whilst the sector continues to feel the pressures and strain from a prolonged period of austerity and against the backdrop of increased demand with fewer resources to meet this demand, the sector remains resilient and innovative, as evidenced in the Estyn Review of Youth Support Services (2018). As of April 2017, qualified professional youth workers and youth support workers, who are employed as such, are required to register with the Education Workforce Council, the regulator for the education workforce in Wales. alongside teachers, adult / work-based learning and further education staff.

Youth Work is delivered in a statutory capacity through the 22 local authorities and benefits from a strong voluntary sector workforce. In addition, some other sectors employ Youth Workers, who offer Youth Work to benefit young people and their communities, such as: The NHS, Housing, Armed Forces, National Trust and uniformed / armed services.

1.3. Rationale

In 2016, the Senedd's Children Young People and Education Committee carried out an inquiry into Youth Work in Wales. In response to the inquiry, the Interim Youth Work Board was established, which made fourteen recommendations in its report ***Time to Deliver for Young People in Wales***. This workforce development plan has been developed in response to Recommendation 13 'Welsh Government needs to build on its commitment to develop and promote the youth work profession with a career structure offering progression'. The plan sets out the vision and ambition for the youth work workforce by ensuring that the sector remains flexible, responsive, inclusive and sustainable in the context of a fast-changing environment by:

Addressing Skills Gaps: This plan, rooted in the Youth Work Skills and Training Audit (July 2024 https://etswales.org.uk/resources/the-skills-and-training-audit-2024/), will build on the strengths and address the existing and future skills gaps within the Youth Work sector by providing tailored training and development programmes that equip Youth Work practitioners with the necessary competencies to engage effectively with young people and improve their life chances.

Meeting Diverse Needs: Wales is a diverse nation with both young people and a workforce from various backgrounds, abilities, aspirations, and circumstances. A workforce development plan will help to ensure that Youth Work practitioners are equipped to meet the diverse needs of young people, including those from marginalised communities, ethnic minorities, and disadvantaged backgrounds.

Professionalisation of the Sector: By investing in Workforce Development. Youth Workers can maintain and further develop professional standards and qualifications, leading to greater recognition of Youth Work across society. Professional standards and qualifications promote further confidence and can be important elements in attracting more people into the profession and improving retention rates among the existing workforce, by following the progression route outlined in section 4.

Adapting to Changing Contexts: The Youth Work sector operates within a constantly evolving social, economic, and political context. A dynamic workforce development plan enables organisations and practitioners to adapt to these changes by providing continuing training and professional development opportunities, covering topics such as knife crime, anti-social behaviour, working with NEETS and Post 16, LGBTQ+ amongst a range of complexities which effect young people. It is recognised that youth workers are best placed to work with young people in addressing these issues due to the nature of the voluntary professional relationships built.

Promoting Innovation and Best Practice: Within this plan, objectives will include the introduction of sharing of best practice, innovation, and collaboration among youth workers and organisations. This fosters a culture of learning and improvement within the sector.

Supporting Career Progression: For individuals working in Youth Work, a workforce development plan can provide clear pathways for career progression, including opportunities for professional learning, specialisation, and leadership roles within the sector.

Aligning with National Priorities: The workforce development plan is aligned with national policies and priorities relevant to Youth Work, ensuring that Youth Work contributes effectively to broader social and economic objectives, such as improving educational attainment, reducing youth unemployment, increasing social inclusion and ensuring positive outcomes for young people, whilst not losing its unique focus of youth work in and of itself.

Overall, a workforce development plan for Youth Work in Wales is crucial for building a skilled, motivated, and responsive workforce that can effectively support the holistic development and well-being of young people across the country.

1.4. Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement

During the design and creation stages of this Workforce Development Plan, members of the Workforce Development Implementation Participation Group (WDIPG), ETS Wales and Welsh Government were involved and consulted through all drafts. A Youth Work Consultant was also commissioned to research issues affecting practitioners and senior leaders across the sector, ensuring that these are factored into this plan.

Should the Cabinet Secretary decide to proceed with a national body, this plan could and should be adopted by this body as part of the transition of functions into it, as per the relevant recommendation of the Interim Youth Work Board. If not, the plan provides the basis for any future national workforce development plan for Youth Work. To ensure that this plan is representative of and endorsed by the sector, the consultation process has run as follows:

Phase 1 A task and finish sub-group of the Workforce Development Implementation Participation Group (WDIPG) established to develop and approve a draft plan.

Phase 2 The draft Workforce Development Plan presented to the WDIPG for sign off and approval.

Phase 3 Consultation with the Youth Work workforce across Wales, and engagement with key strategic partners and groups such as the Principal Youth Officers Group (PYOG), CWVYS Workforce Development Group. and the Youth Work Strategy Implementation Board.

Phase 4 Presentation to Welsh Government for formal response, and adoption of the Youth Work Workforce Development Plan by the Youth Work sector.

During the consultation, 32 individuals gave feedback using the online portal, 3 consultation events were facilitated, which was attended by 34 people in total, 5 consultation workshops were conducted with students across the Higher Education Institutions at various levels of study, along with attending 5 strategic groups across the sector. Colleagues within the WDIPG also held sessions with youth forum groups to ensure that this plan adequately addresses their needs and priorities.

1.5. Vision and Ambition for Youth Work in Wales

Our vision is to ensure that the young people of Wales (some of whom will become Youth Workers themselves) continue to receive the appropriate service and support from the Youth Work workforce, one which meets their needs in a fast-changing context. Our vision is also to ensure that Welsh Government and those who practice as Youth Workers and organisations that employ Youth Workers aim to ensure that the conditions and opportunities for their Youth Work staff and volunteers are fully supported by investing in them.

Our ambition is that we will strive for the following:

High levels of staff engagement, motivation, well-being, and satisfaction

Better recruitment and retention through attractive and flexible working conditions, professional learning, and career development opportunities

A well trained and knowledgeable workforce, committed to Youth Work values and principles able to meet the changing needs of young people.

A compassionate culture with skilled and capable leaders and managers

Increased numbers of Welsh language Youth Work practitioners

2. Youth Work Governance Framework

In Wales, Youth Work is shaped by a comprehensive policy and legislative framework that emphasises the importance of supporting young people's development, well-being, and participation in society. Youth Workers and Youth Work organisations also make valued contributions to some Welsh Government policies that are not directly aimed at Youth Workers. Key elements of the policy context for Youth York in Wales are demonstrated in the summary map below:

Policies, legislation & guidance linked to Youth Work delivery

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

Youth Work helps Welsh Government to further its seven well-being goals using a variety of methods.

Learning and Skills Act 2000

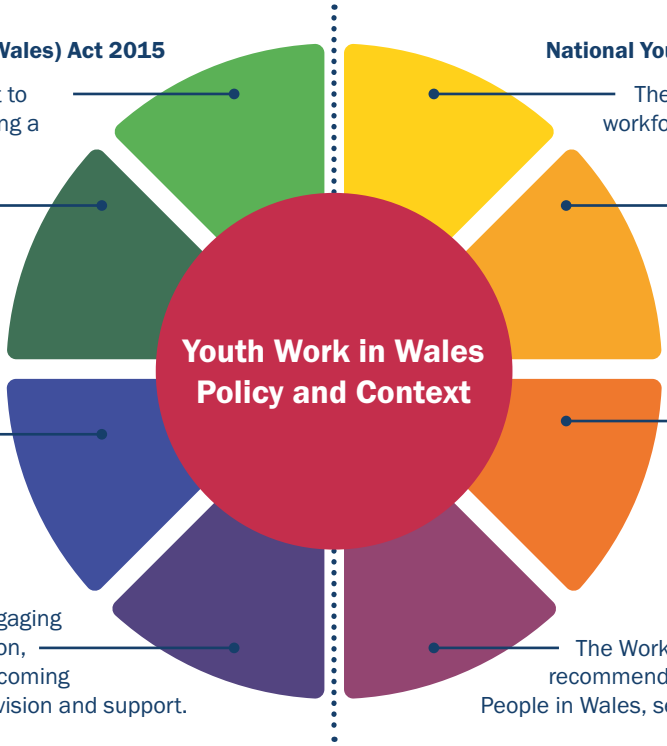
Local Authorities are mandated to offer secure provisions and Youth Support Services for young people.

Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021

Youth Work makes a valued contribution to the 4 purposes of the curriculum.

The Youth Engagement and Progression Framework 2022

Youth Work plays a vital role in re-engaging young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) or becoming homeless by providing adequate provision and support.



Policies, legislation and guidance that directly involve Youth Work

National Youth Work Strategy for Wales (2019)

The Strategy is aimed at the Youth Work workforce. Its 5 clear aims set the strategic direction of Youth Work in Wales.

Principles and Purposes of Youth Work in Wales (2022)

The sector's document which presents the principles and purposes of Youth Work in Wales.

The National Occupational Standards (NOS) 2019

The Youth Work NOS set out the aims and competencies required by practitioners to deliver Youth Work.

Time to deliver for young people in Wales (2021)

The Workforce Development Plan responds to recommendation 13 of Time to Deliver for Young People in Wales, setting the vision and ambition for the Youth Work workforce.

The United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) 1990

Youth Work Practitioners strive to ensure Youth Work is offered through a rights based approach.

Youth Work contributes to a number of Welsh Government priorities, including but not limited to: ***The Children Act (2004), the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure (2011), Social Services Wellbeing (Wales) Act (2016), Cymraeg 2050, Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan and LGBTQ Action Plan for Wales***. These Acts, Measures and Plans refer in different ways to the need to ensure that young people have a clear voice in the decision-making processes affecting them.

Youth Work has the potential to contribute to these agendas by demonstrating and promoting how young people aged 11-25 can be placed at the heart of decision making.

The policy context for Youth Work in Wales reflects a commitment to promoting the well-being and empowerment of young people, fostering their participation in society, and ensuring the provision of high-quality Youth Work services that meet their diverse needs.

The new statutory framework for Youth Work in Wales currently being consulted upon is proposing changes to the Directions and Guidance for Youth Work, and to the legislative definition of Youth Work. These will be included once the new framework is agreed.

3. Current Workforce

The current Youth Work workforce in Wales is diverse, comprising professionals with a range of qualifications, backgrounds, and experiences. **Youth Work in Wales is delivered primarily through both the 22 local authorities and multiple voluntary sector organisations with the latter having the option to become members of CWVYS.**

It is a legal requirement for any paid Youth Worker or Youth Support Worker who holds, or is working towards, a recognised qualification and who is delivering 'youth development services' to register with the Education Workforce Council (EWC) which is linked to specific JNC recognised Youth Work qualifications.

EWC Data are published annually which identify the number of registered Youth Workers, Youth Support Workers and those working towards a qualification outlined in the EWC schedule. Currently, there are more registered Youth Support Workers, than Youth Workers.

EWC Data (March 2025) shows that 18.9% of Youth Support Workers indicate that they can speak Welsh and 15% have declared that they are able to work through the medium of Welsh (9.7% unknown in both).

In addition to EWC data rel ating to the registered workforce, other research has been undertaken to map the extent of the Youth Work workforce in Wales such as:

Mapping Research conducted by Elizabeth Bacon (2023), funded through the KESS Programme: Mapping and analysing the voluntary Youth Work sector in Wales, which detailed a significant number of voluntary Youth Work organisations in Wales.

The Skills and Training Audit, 2024

3.1. Skills and Training Audit

Alongside the development of this plan, ETS Wales and the Workforce Development IPG commissioned Data Cymru to develop a Skills and Training Audit (SATA), which was designed to map the current skills and qualification levels across the sector, as well as the current and future training needs across the sector. The last time a similar audit was carried out was in 2013 across local authorities. The interim period has seen training needs evolve significantly. In response, whilst the previous audit was used as a template, a number of changes were necessary and have been made for the 2024 SATA. Two surveys were circulated to the sector, one eliciting responses from individuals to ascertain the practitioner's ability to meet the needs of young people they are working with. The other survey was aimed at organisations from across the voluntary / third sector and local authorities to understand the recruitment and retention issues, along with the need to develop the workforce. For the survey of individuals, **501 responses were received, whilst 44 responses were received from the survey of organisations, with a breakdown of 24 from voluntary sector organisations and 20 from local authorities. From that audit, 8 recommendations were made, and a training programme was produced. More information is available here.**

The findings showed that **over 700 practitioners do not hold the minimum qualification level to register as a Youth Support Worker with EWC i.e. that they do not hold a level 3 qualification or above.** However, this includes a broad range of people including volunteers and part time workers. Whilst not all these people would wish to go further with their youth work qualifications, those who wish to remain as Youth Support Workers, and therefore to be able to register with EWC from May 2025, will need to undertake additional training. The training plan, which is funded through Welsh Government, has a strong focus on supporting those people who wish to progress to this level.

Additionally, organisations recorded that 80.5% of respondents indicated that their organisation has been affected by recruitment and retention problems, where the highest outcome of that result had 72.7% of respondents explaining that staff were working beyond their capacity.

4. Youth Work Qualifications and Progression Route

Our Aims

Within three years, The Youth Work workforce will have a systematic, progressive, and sustainable approach to developing Youth Work as a profession, with clearly articulated opportunities for progression.

Why Are We Doing This?

Having a clear Youth Work qualification progression route is essential for ensuring that individuals can effectively develop their skills, gain JNC recognised Youth Work qualifications, and progress in their careers. It provides a clear road map for the sector (Education and Training Standards Wales).

The workforce is the Youth Work sector's greatest asset and, to ensure sustainability, needs a clear purpose, sense of direction and a clear career structure that provides reward and progression at all levels of the profession. We recognise the need to work strategically and collaboratively with Welsh Government and other key stakeholders to secure strategic support and funding for organisations leading and delivering youth work.

To do this it is our intention to:

Objective 1	Develop a national strategy to enable a continual and adequately funded progression route for Youth Work practitioners to gain JNC Youth Work qualifications and enable them to meet registration requirements; this will include young people, volunteers, Youth Support Workers, and Youth Workers.
Objective 2	Develop, co-ordinate and support the delivery of training and career development opportunities locally, nationally, and regionally. Develop expertise and specialist subject knowledge that can be shared to improve Youth Work practice and support localised needs.
Objective 3	Promote the Youth Work progression route to all within the sector, so that the qualifications journey is transparent and understood, with the addition of using the route to attract people into the sector.
Objective 4	Review the variety of, and the structure in which, youth support worker qualifications are delivered to ensure the qualification is accessible to those who work part-time and to those not able to commit to full days of delivery, so that practitioners have flexibility and can choose the right course for them.
Objective 5	Consider alternative and flexible ways of assessing qualifications, such as the apprenticeship offer within Wales for practitioners to qualify as a Youth Support Worker.
Objective 6	ETS to continue to make use of the JNC endorsement processes to ensure the quality of professional qualifications meets the needs of the Youth Work sector; and to develop an approval process to ensure standards are upheld and consistent in other professional learning and training courses.
Objective 7	Ensure there is provision for all learners to be able to achieve, by recruiting and promoting courses to under-represented minority groups and ensure the courses are accessible for those who need additional learning support.
Objective 8	Invest in the infrastructure for trainers and assessors who can train, assess and quality assure Youth Work qualifications confidently and develop training for supervisors, supporting Youth Workers in training.

Progression: the Route of Recognised Youth Work Qualifications in Wales

You can stop at any stage. Youth Support Workers working at that level do not need to complete a degree.

Scan the QR Code to see the available training for **Youth Workers in Wales**

JNC recognised qualifications (UK & all of Ireland)

CPD/PL = Professional Learning that takes place throughout your career

Level 2
Certificate in Youth Work Practice

26 Credits

Level 3
Certificate in Youth Work Practice

27 Credits

Level 3
Diploma in Youth Work Practice

36 Credits

Note: Some universities offer a Foundation year level before Level 4 which may include the Level 3 Certificate in YW Practice. **Note this will use one year of your student finance.**

Level 4
Certificate HE Youth & Community Work

120 Credits

Level 5
Diploma HE/Foundation Degree Youth & Community Work

120 Credits

Level 6
Honours Degree in Youth & Community Work (includes L4 & L5 training)

120 Credits

Level 7
Post Graduate Diploma/Masters (Initial qualifying & post qualifying)

120/180 Credits

No level
Entry & Level 1-2 Introduction to Youth Work

CPD/PL

5. Professional Learning (CPD) for the Workforce

Our Aims

To enhance the professional competencies, knowledge, and practices of Youth Workers in Wales through a dynamic, inclusive, and culturally relevant learning strategy that fosters ongoing development, supports diverse young people's needs, and aligns with national priorities for Youth Work.

Why Are We Doing This?

It is essential that Youth Work practitioners, leaders and managers continue to recognise and meet the needs of young people within their communities. This plan will enable strategic decision makers to ensure policy meets the needs of Youth Work practitioners, using a variety of engagement methods. National approaches to professional development and learning have been few and far between in recent years due to several issues including Covid 19, austerity, recruitment and retention issues, which have had a significant effect on professionals and organisations.

To do this it is our intention to:

Objective 1	Work collaboratively with key stakeholders to strengthen the professional learning/CPD offer within the Youth Work Sector for both qualified and unqualified staff, including young people and volunteers, as well as Youth Support Workers, Youth Workers, and Youth Work leaders and managers.
Objective 2	Work with leaders and managers and aspiring leaders and managers to strengthen leadership development opportunities for the Youth Work sector and provide opportunities for promotion and career development.
Objective 3	Develop a strategy to regularly identify and prioritise professional learning needs and opportunities within the sector, so that practitioners are in a better position to support young people through emerging needs.
Objective 4	Further sustain and develop work with strategic networks and organisation that offer similar approaches to Youth Work, to share innovation and creative practices, which can be disseminated throughout Wales.
Objective 5	Work with partners to develop a bank of training resources and assessment methods that can be replicated at an organisation level and within regions, which will be available to trainers across Wales and owned by the sector.
Objective 6	Promote a strategic approach to the development of professional learning for the Youth Work and allied sectors, to enable them to respond quickly and effectively to future challenges that impact upon young people's outcomes and overall well-being, for example the use of modern digital technology including AI.
Objective 7	Develop a long-term professional learning plan of funded courses, to enable strategic leaders to add this into their annual planning; and work with Higher Education Institutions that offer the Youth Work programme to be able to embed funded training into their programmes.
Objective 8	Continue to upskill the sector to enable practitioners to be able to offer their own training, in house and externally to other practitioners within their sector that can be delivered locally and regionally.

Professional learning for youth workers is crucial for enhancing their skills, knowledge, and effectiveness in supporting young people. Building on the evidence from the Skills and Training Audit, ETS Cymru Wales has developed a range of training opportunities available for youth work practitioners and will continue to add to the training programme. To find out more follow the link here: https://tinyurl.com/9wdr4c46.

To receive regular updates on available courses, sign up to ETS Cymru Wales mailing list by clicking here: http://eepurl.com/iNf3n-/.

6. Ways of Working

Our Aims

To create a collaborative and well-connected Youth Work workforce in Wales by developing robust networking opportunities, promoting effective collaboration among sector colleagues and stakeholders, and establishing innovation.

Why Are We Doing This?

As highlighted in the 2024 Skills and Training Audit report, the Youth Work sector faces growing barriers in accessing professional learning and qualifying training. The sector does not have a bank of practitioners that can provide cover. Therefore, Youth Workers attending training can often lead to closure of youth provisions, cancellation of support sessions, or individuals making the decision not to attend training, despite how useful that training could be in the long run. To reduce the burden of training and to make it more accessible, the objectives below could help reduce barriers, and encourage delivering training differently.

To do this it is our intention to:

Objective 1	Develop opportunities to nurture a learning culture for Youth Work practitioners in Wales, by creating networking and collaboration opportunities, to share practices, develop and share resources.
Objective 2	Work with colleagues across the Youth Work sector to develop innovative training methods, to reduce barriers in accessing training by means of developing non-traditional training methods.
Objective 3	Develop innovative and creative methods of professional learning by means of creating training events that are a mixture of traditional and non-traditional methods of training, such as podcasts, e-learning, mentoring, effective supervision, and peer- led research opportunities with others across the sector.
Objective 4	Develop a communications framework and delivery process whereby training and qualification opportunities can be promoted directly to practitioners to enhance the reach of training across Wales.
Objective 5	Continue to work with Welsh Government to fund the Workforce Development project that is hosted by ETS / WLGA.
Objective 6	Ensure continuation of the role of Workforce Development Officer to lead and manage workforce development for the Youth Work workforce.
Objective 7	Continue to work with Play Wales, the playwork sector and the Playwork Education and Training Council for Wales (PETC Wales) to offer shared professional development opportunities for youth workers and playworkers.
Objective 8	Work with training and Youth Work qualification providers to ensure the programmes on offer reflect the complexities and realism of the work pressures the sector faces regularly, such as unsociable hours, weekend working etc... to ensure the recruitment strategies are transparent and that course content meets the current needs of young people, in Wales.

7. Welsh Language and Culture

Our Aims

It is Welsh Government's aim to achieve 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050, with the introduction of the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill, in which there are proposed changes to the way Welsh language education is planned and delivered. The aim is that all young people become independent Welsh language users by the time they reach the end of compulsory school age. The Youth Work sector has a key role in helping to achieve these aims. Increasing the number of Welsh speaking Youth Workers who can work with young people through the medium of Welsh should continue to be a priority.

Why Are We Doing This?

Recruitment and retention of Welsh language practitioners is a challenge within the Youth Work sector and wider. Therefore, it is crucial that the sector adheres to the Welsh Language Standards and supports Welsh Government in its target to have one million Welsh speakers by 2050 and to offer young people opportunities to celebrate Welsh culture.

To do this it is our intention to:

Objective 1	Develop innovative opportunities for practitioners to communicate in Welsh and to gain confidence in delivering provision for young people through the medium of Welsh, such as through sabbatical placements and mentorship programmes.
Objective 2	Develop long term transitional opportunities for Youth Work practitioners to engage in professional learning that will enhance their knowledge and skills in Welsh culture, to enable them to deliver activities for young people to learn about their Welsh heritage, culture and language.
Objective 3	Invest in developing a base line of Youth Work practitioners who can deliver, assess and quality assure qualifications across Wales. This will enable tutors to facilitate more specific professional learning and Youth Work qualifications, through the medium of Welsh.
Objective 4	Encourage Welsh Language practitioners to engage in professional learning and qualifications to be able to apply for leadership and management positions.
Objective 5	Develop opportunities for non-Welsh speakers to learn Welsh and grow in confidence in using the language, with the scope to celebrate Welsh language and be able to offer provision for young people by promoting existing programmes and organisations such as Dysgu Cymraeg.
Objective 6	Develop targeted recruitment campaigns that have a focus on Welsh Language based Youth Work opportunities for practitioners in the workplace and Youth Work qualifications such as Level 3 Certificate in Youth Work Practice and the Degree programmes.
Objective 7	Ensure the voices of Welsh language practitioners are captured when designing and implementing policy and strategies for the Youth Work sector in Wales.
Objective 8	Develop a national network of Welsh medium Youth Workers across all providers to support delivery of Welsh medium Youth Work. This will provide an opportunity to share expertise, develop resources and a more cohesive approach to support provision.

8. Meeting The Needs of The Young People Through The Development of The Workforce

Our Aims

To ensure that the delivery of professional development opportunities, Youth Work qualifications and innovative methods is maintained at a high standard to meet the needs of young people by means of supporting Youth Work practitioners through their learning journey.

Why Are We Doing This?

Retention of Youth Work staff is a significant issue within the maintained and voluntary sectors, which urgently requires addressing to develop a sustainable workforce. This workforce development plan and strategy identifies issues relating to workforce recruitment and retention and includes strategic and practical solutions to address them.

To do this it is our intention to:

Objective 1	Work collaboratively with Welsh Government and other groups to share and inform workforce development updates, training, and development opportunities, that are fit for purpose and can be communicated directly to youth work practitioners.
Objective 2	Work with sector colleagues to ensure that training and skill development needs are captured to reflect the needs of young people, with the addition of aligning to new and emerging national priorities.
Objective 3	Based on results from an annual training needs analysis, develop a training programme that is funded, flexible, suitable, and accessible to Youth Work practitioners, to more effectively meet the needs of young people.
Objective 4	Work with young person led participation forums, to establish how the workforce can meet the needs of young people, by utilising the forums that have already been established.
Objective 5	Ensure there are effective methods of evaluation, to identify the success of the training offered, and whether it is suitable to meeting the desired outcomes.
Objective 6	Promote a strategic approach to the development of professional learning for the Youth Work sector and sectors that support or are supported by Youth Work, to enable them to respond quickly and effectively to future challenges that impact upon Youth Work practitioners and their delivery when working with young people.
Objective 7	Develop methods to forecast future needs of young people and future policy areas that will affect Youth Workers' responses in their ability to support young people and deliver a provision.
Objective 8	Work with Youth Work sector leads to develop opportunities for practitioners to develop Digital Youth Work practices and the dissemination of Youth information, support and guidance, using up-to-date techniques.

9. Promoting Youth Work as a Career Option

Our Aims

To establish practical initiatives and strategies to promote Youth Work as a career option, which is essential for attracting talented individuals who are passionate about making a positive difference in the lives of young people.

Why Are We Doing This?

Recruitment of Youth Work practitioners remains a challenge across the sector in Wales. Although this issue is not unique to Youth Work, it is disproportionate in comparison to other sectors within Wales. An intention of this plan is to make Youth Work an attractive career pathway, which increases enrolment onto Youth Work qualifications, thereby increasing the potential size of the workforce across Wales and creating more capacity for Youth Work organisations, thus increasing opportunities for young people.

To do this it is our intention to:

Objective 1	Work collaboratively with Welsh Government to devise and develop a long-term marketing strategy and plan to promote professional Youth Work Training, and Youth Work as a career. Disseminate the strategy to promote Youth Work as a professional and rewarding career.
Objective 2	Review and monitor the need for a bursary system, that mirrors those in place for teaching and social work and test whether there is scope to fund Initial Youth Worker Education (IYWE).
Objective 3	Support and promote the provision of good quality supervision and mentoring for youth work students, practitioners, managers and leaders.
Objective 4	Promote Youth Work as a profession in line with other sectors such as formal education and social work, by means of highlighting the methods by which Youth Work is delivered and Youth Work's strong value and standards base.
Objective 5	Review the need and, if necessary, develop an induction phase in Youth Work for newly professionally qualified Youth Workers (NQYW), similar to the requirement for newly qualified teachers (NQT).
Objective 6	Work with the Further Education sector to ensure that Youth Support Worker qualifications are accessible, funded and utilised across the sector to ensure there is a constant flow of the future workforce.
Objective 7	Develop a coherent entry programme that supports young people and volunteers into Youth Work, targeting young people who are already engaged in Youth Work by means of youth participation forums, volunteering or work programmes.
Objective 8	Work with the EWC through the Educators Wales programme and partners such as Careers Wales to attend careers events develop campaigns, and to promote Youth Work qualifications, such as the BA / MA programmes and Youth Support Worker Qualifications, targeting young people leaving school / college and those from other professions looking to work with young people.

10. Governance and Accountability

Our Aims

To maintain and further develop an effective governance and accountability framework for the Workforce Development Plan for Youth Work in Wales (the Plan) in order properly to support the development, qualification and training of the Youth Work workforce.

In order to achieve this the governance framework should:

- ☑ Build on the work of the Workforce Development Implementation Participation Group (WDIPG) involving multiple layers and stakeholders to ensure the effective and efficient implementation of the Plan.
- ☑ Ensure that the Plan aligns with national policies, meets the needs of young people, and is accountable to both the public and the Youth Work sector; and underpins and drives training, professional development and learning across the sector, by articulating the challenges and opportunities affecting the sector and by acting as a platform for change.

To enable effective governance of the implementation of the Plan, an Annual Delivery Plan will be developed which will indicate each year the actions to be put into operation from the Youth Work Workforce Development Plan. The Annual Delivery Plan will be the responsibility of the Workforce Development Officer, who currently operates within ETS, which is hosted by the WLGA. The Delivery Plan will give further details and methods which will outline timescales, person(s) responsible and measurable impacts.

Whilst awaiting a decision about whether a national body for Youth work is established or not, the WDIPG will provide governance, ensure accountability and scrutinise the Workforce Development Plan and the Annual Delivery Plan. Further actions should include:

- Work with sector colleagues to ensure the Plan is regularly reviewed to ensure it is both current and relevant.
- Development of clear evaluation and monitoring methods to measure the success of the Plan and the Delivery Plan by means of establishing agreed key performance indicators, regular reporting and auditing, and continual stakeholder engagement.
- Actively consulting the Youth Work sector and strategic partners on this workforce development Plan and ensuring alignment with Welsh Government policies and strategic direction.
- Developing a piece of work to understand the potential and real gaps in service provision, to understand how many practitioners the sector will require, whilst ensuring a sustainable provision, and avoiding issues such as service closures or operating on skeleton staff, which is detrimental to both young people and the workforce.
- Developing a piece of work to understand where students find employment and/or volunteering opportunities once they qualify to understand the success of the Youth Work qualifying programmes and to ensure the offer of professional learning is accessible to all youth workers, regardless of setting.

11. Recommendations for Welsh Government

For this plan to be effective, it important that the points listed below are considered by Welsh Government:

With the decision that has been made to develop a National Body for Youth Work in Wales, Welsh Government should continue to fund the Workforce Development project that is hosted by ETS / WLGA and ensure continuation of the role of Workforce Development Officer to lead and manage workforce development for the Youth Work workforce.

With the decision that has been made to develop a National Body for Youth Work in Wales, Workforce Development should be a key function within the body, where it would benefit from collaboration with supporting disciplines, such as administration, communications and marketing. If it is decided not to move to a National Body a National Workforce Development project should continue to be responded to and be able to meet the needs of young people within their communities.

Should the new legislation and resulting Welsh Government guidance require local authorities to lead on and produce 5-year strategic plans, it is anticipated that these will include workforce planning and development. This being the case, any guidance in this regard will also need appropriate oversight, scrutiny and support as part of these plans to avoid duplication, to ensure local, cross-border and regional workforce development is coherent with and complements the national workforce development plan, that there is full involvement of the third sector and to ensure workforce sustainability.

Lastly, Welsh Government should consider including Youth Work programmes in the Professional Learning Entitlement and a bursary to fund practitioners to gain JNC Youth Work Qualifying degrees or Post Graduate Diploma's, once a service provision gap review has been concluded, to encourage people into the sector and for those practitioners operating as a Youth Support Worker, to professionally qualify and progress within their Youth Work career.

Throughout the consultation on this Plan, colleagues have reflected that, due to difficulties in accessing relevant funding, their ability to engage with workforce development and training is regularly compromised. Therefore, the sector calls for funding which will give organisations the ability to provide relevant cover (where available) when taking part in Youth Work qualifying training, thereby avoiding closure of provision.

We welcome the support from Welsh Government and stakeholders to be able to implement the Youth Work Workforce Development Plan.

12. References and acknowledgements

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- Bacon, E Mapping and analysing the voluntary youth work sector in Wales (uswvarious1.blob.core.windows.net) 2023
- National Occupational Standards (NOS)
- Youth Work in Wales: Principles & Purposes
- Estyn Review of Youth Support Services
- Youth Work Strategy Implementation Board
- Time to Deliver for Young People in Wales
- Education and Training Standards Wales
- EWC Data
- JNC

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Scan the QR Code to see the available training for **Youth Workers in Wales**

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