



**Youth Programme
Quality Intervention
(YPQI):
The youth work policy
and practice context in
Wales**

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Youth Programme Quality Intervention (YPQI)

The youth work policy and practice context in Wales

Introduction

This briefing supports the UK-wide pilot of the Youth Programme Quality Intervention (YPQI) led by the Centre for Youth Impact, and funded by the National Lottery Community Fund.

The YPQI is a ground-breaking quality improvement process designed for and tested with youth organisations. Developed in the US, extensive research has demonstrated its effectiveness in improving outcomes for young people, promoting a sustainable and supportive culture of organisational reflection and improvement, and refocusing evaluation on the quality of relationships within different settings.

The Centre's pilot programme covers England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and runs until September 2021. The overall aims for the pilot are to test, adapt and embed the YPQI within youth organisations across the UK, establish the infrastructure required to train and support these organisations, and build the evidence base of the correlation between quality of provision and positive outcomes for young people.

From the outset, it has been clear that the potential benefits of the YPQI will only be realised in the UK if we work in close partnership and collaboration with the sector – practitioners, infrastructure bodies, commissioners, funders and policy-makers – to ensure that the process aligns with, and is complementary to, existing policy and practice at both local and national levels. In order for the process to be adopted and sustained over the long term, it must be suitably adapted and refined for practitioners across the four countries of the UK, as well as understood and endorsed by those who support and resource them.

This document is a key contribution to the achievement of this objective. It sets out the policy and practice context for youth work in Wales, and provides a summary of how the YPQI process fits within and could support that context. It also highlights some of the key opportunities and

challenges for the Centre and its partners as we proceed through the pilot. This briefing is part of a series written by our partners in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England.

In what Paul has set out below, we are both heartened by the strong alignment and connections between the YPQI and the youth sector in Wales, and committed to engaging positively with the potential barriers. We will use the publication of this briefing as a spur to patient, practical work to build meaningful, effective partnerships, with a shared focus on supporting continuous quality improvement across the whole UK youth sector.

This matters to us because, ultimately, the Centre's vision is that all young people, across the UK, have the opportunity to access high quality youth work and provision that supports their social and emotional development. In this pilot, and across all of the rest of our work, we know we can along achieve our goal by working with and through others. If you support our vision, we hope you find much to encourage you in what follows.

For more information on the YPQI pilot, including how to get involved, please visit [our website](#).

1. Key findings and recommendations

- The YPQI is a useful addition to youth work practice in Wales because it will:
 - support a sustainable approach to improving outcomes for young people;
 - encourage a continuous improvement culture within youth organisations;
 - improve evaluation and observation of the quality of provision;
 - support a more consistent focus on social and emotional learning outcomes across youth work practice.
- The YPQI connects with the key themes of the Youth Work Strategy for Wales and potentially the Quality Mark for Youth Work in Wales. Details on how these connections could more precisely align with the YPQI as realistic opportunities will be determined when a clearer steer emerges upon publication of the strategic Implementation Plan document and, within that, the Workforce Development Plan.
- Key challenges to work through include:
 - the perceived relevance of the YPQI by practitioners during a period of very positive but intensive change for youth work in Wales
 - the clarity of messages about the YPQI's potential to improve practice amongst voluntary sector organisations and local authority youth services
 - time/capacity to engage in a programme, which, although potentially beneficial to participants and the wider sector, will be competing with other priorities
 - the provision of learning resources, including support material, and delivery of the programme through the medium of Welsh and English languages
 - how, for policymakers, the YPQI complements the overall direction of travel for youth work in Wales, as the new Youth Work Strategy and its Implementation Plan are rolled out
 - longer-term funding to support the sustainable delivery of the YPQI, feasibly achieved and assisted by investment in local support/delivery infrastructure, appropriate long-term planning and buy-in by the wider sector
 - demonstrating a tangible difference in supporting better outcomes for young people

2. Youth policy and practice in Wales

It's an exciting time (and place to be) for youth work in Wales. Progress on its future has developed along the following timeline of policy and practice development:

- September 2015: launch of the Welsh Government [Quality Mark for Youth Work in Wales](#)
- December 2016: National Assembly for Wales's Children, Young People and Education Committee's ['Inquiry into Youth Work'](#) published – recommendations agreed by the Welsh Government and are being implemented – see ['Follow Up'](#)
- 2017: ['Our Future'](#) report, by Margaret Jervis MBE. was influential in shaping the future direction of youth work in Wales
- April 2017: Youth work registration via the Education Workforce Council
- May 2018: ['Evaluation, Impact & Outcomes: What does it mean for us?'](#)
- July 2018: Estyn report ['The Value of Youth Work in Wales'](#) published:
- October 2018: Interim [Youth Work Board](#) formed (in place for a two year period)
- November 2018: revised ['Youth Work in Wales: Principles and Purposes'](#) co-designed/written by CWWYS and Wales Principal Youth Officers' Group published:
- March 2019: [Quality Mark for Youth Work in Wales](#) 'paused' prior to an expected re-tendering process by the Welsh Government in 2019/20
- June 2019: new [Youth Work Strategy for Wales](#) launched by Kirsty Williams AM Minister for Education during Youth Work Week (23-30 June)
- July 2019: consultation closes on the draft [Curriculum for Wales 2022](#)

[Youth Work Strategy for Wales](#)

The Ministerial foreword to the Strategy highlights that it 'is intended to improve both youth work provision and our offer to young people'.

The five key themes of the Strategy are:

- Young people are thriving
- Youth work is accessible and inclusive
- Voluntary and paid professional youth work staff are supported throughout their careers to improve their practice
- Youth work is valued and understood
- A sustainable model for youth work delivery

The Strategy also identifies the need to develop, publish and implement a Workforce Development Plan. It outlines plans to review and update the Coherent Route of Recognised Youth Work Qualifications to improve progression.

There is a desire to develop and strengthen provision in order to improve outcomes, whilst acknowledging the need to ensure that youth work is ‘planned, delivered and reviewed’ to empower young people in having their voices heard. In addition, there is a need to match training of youth workers with the needs of young people; a clearer understanding of the contexts within which youth work takes place and to improve the audits of such provision (including the sector’s skills base, skill needs and how to address those current and future needs).

The aim here is to ensure that youth workers are supported continuously to improve their practice and also to develop provision in order to support and improve outcomes. However, recent evidence indicates that, for a variety of reasons, recruitment and retention of youth work staff is an issue in Wales. The Workforce Development Plan will need to take full account of these issues.

These are important commitments and provide useful links for future engagement in order to support the ‘improving rather than proving’ practice, which underpins YPQI’s delivery focus. An example is the ambition within the Strategy to evidence the impact of provision via toolkits and resources that focus on self-evaluation, impact monitoring and ‘measuring the satisfaction of young people in the quality of youth work they experience’. The YPQI could well have a role to play as one of a range of supportive measures to address such needs.

Implementation Plan

The Interim Youth Board for Wales is committed to publishing this plan in October 2019 to address the delivery of the key themes of the Youth Work Strategy.

Interim Youth Work Board for Wales

The Board is directly accountable to the Minister for Education and advises on how to support and deliver a future model for youth work in Wales. Its remit includes:

- providing advice on the development, implementation and monitoring of the new Youth Work Strategy for Wales;
- advising on recommendations from the National Assembly for Wales’s Inquiry into Youth Work;
- supporting and strengthening partnership working;
- overseeing the sufficiency of services, including through the medium of Welsh;
- advising on grants programmes; considering European Policy, in particular relation to Erasmus+;
- commissioning research into youth work;
- providing clear strategic advice to Ministers; providing challenge and scrutiny of Welsh Government’s policy; and
- providing recommendations for the role of a future Board or body .

Funding

The 2019-20 youth work budget was enhanced by £10m to local authority youth services in support of direct provision, youth homelessness and the emotional wellbeing and mental health of young people. Local authorities are expected to utilise these monies by working in collaboration with the voluntary sector.

Curriculum for Wales 2022

‘Youth work is education and learning’

This recent quote from a youth worker, in response to a question about where youth work sits in relation to education, represents a widely held perspective on the value and contribution of youth work in Wales. The sector has been actively engaged in long-term representation on strategic groups to ensure that youth work has a voice and role in consultation processes that have been supporting the development of the new Curriculum for Wales.

Meaningful and inclusive co-design and co-production approaches involving all parts of the wider education sector will yield better and more informed outcomes. Conversations about ‘learner-led and designed’ provision highlight the participative nature of youth work but also raise questions concerning how this might be achieved in formal education settings. This is another instance of how youth work can assist the overall approach and perhaps utilise the YPQI framework in support of engaging formal education providers in their understanding of youth work delivery, practice and the need for continuous quality improvement processes.

The sector engages readily with these strategic opportunities and provides examples of good practice and provision which enhance the proposed Curriculum. Youth work’s contribution to preventative working and early intervention is clear, but it also enhances the educative offer across the Curriculum’s ‘Areas of Learning and Experience’. CWVYS Member organisations deliver an enormous range of diverse services and opportunities which incorporate expressive arts, emotional well-being and mental health, personal and social development, along with a culture of learning within young people-friendly and led environments which include transformative experiences via international projects and programmes. These add huge value to the education offer to young people in Wales.

3. The YPQI in context

Over recent years there have been various attempts within Wales to determine a national outcomes framework for youth work; indeed, it was one of the aims of the National Youth Work Strategy (2014-2018), which stated a need for *‘a strengthened and robust evidence base on the impact of youth work’* that would be *‘vital to inform and drive the development of a more consistent and high-quality national youth work offer across Wales’* whilst also identifying that *‘more needs to be done to systematically and robustly evidence the contribution of youth work’*. In spite of the sector’s best efforts to develop and support such a plan, the over-arching aim was not realised as intended.

However, with recent publication of the Youth Work Strategy for Wales, and the expected, imminent arrival of a strategic Implementation Plan, there is a clearer sense of purpose and direction of travel. The table below seeks to map out where the domains of the YPQI relate to current strategic developments and how it may relate to those developments in a practical, field-based sense. In particular, it indicates the relationships between the five key themes of the new Youth Work Strategy for Wales, the need for sector-wide participation and a drive towards improvements in youth work provision and the offer to young people.

Quality Mark for Youth Work in Wales

Prior to the Welsh Government Quality Mark being in place, CWVYS designed and delivered its own Quality Mark on behalf of the voluntary youth work sector. It enabled volunteers, trustees, employees and funders to feel confident that the organisation has the understanding and knowledge of good practice, and how to measure and maintain it.

The CWVYS Quality Mark was developed in parallel with the Youth Service Quality Mark developed by the ETS Wales (Education and Training Standards Wales), to ensure that both quality marks complemented each other and were appropriate for use in the youth work sector. CWVYS has supported the Quality Mark for Youth Work in Wales (delivered by Atkins Associates) since its inception and has encouraged its members to engage in the assessment processes – as organisations and as individual assessors.

YPQI Domains	Safe environment	Supportive environment	Interaction / Engagement	Professional Learning
Youth Work Strategy for Wales and Implementation Plan	<p>Young people are thriving</p> <p>Youth work is accessible and inclusive</p> <p>Workforce supported to improve practice</p> <p>Youth work valued and understood</p> <p>Sustainable model for delivery</p>	<p>Fun</p> <p>Fully participative</p> <p>Rights-based approach</p> <p>Collaborative planning</p> <p>Skilled Workforce</p> <p>Accountable</p> <p>Leadership</p>	<p>Enhanced opportunities for young peoples' personal, social and educational development</p> <p>Supporting more Welsh language youth work provision and accessibility to language of choice for young people</p> <p>Aligns with 'Youth Work in Wales: Principles and Purposes'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Empowering - Educative - Expressive - Participative - Inclusive 	<p>Develops and supports good, participative practice.</p> <p>Engages the workforce in being supported to improve practice</p> <p>Workforce Development Plan</p> <p>Coherent Route to learning and qualifications</p> <p>Support across sector to enable access to learning</p>
Quality Mark for Youth Work in Wales	<p>1.2 Quality of Youthwork Practice</p> <p>2.3 Equality and Diversity</p>	<p>1.3 Young People's learning and Development</p> <p>2.2 Curriculum</p>	<p>2.1 involving Young People</p>	<p>3.1 recognising Young People's Learning and Achievements</p>
Curriculum for Wales 2022	<p>Improving working relationships with young people</p> <p>Fosters emphasis on long-term engagement</p> <p>Improved understanding of issues faced by young people</p>	<p>Co-design/ co-construction involving wider education sector to yield more informed outcomes.</p>	<p>'Youth work is education and learning'</p> <p>Diverse, informal/non-formal services add huge value to formal education.</p> <p>Culture of learning within young people-friendly/led environments</p> <p>Transformative experiences.</p>	<p>Cross-education sector/shared learning.</p> <p>Improved professional status for youth work</p>

Trends in provision and approach to measuring outcomes/impact in youth work in Wales

Workshops organised jointly by WISERD, Aberystwyth University and CWVYS (May 2018) sought to re-start a much-needed national discussion regarding evaluation, impact and outcomes in youth work. These were enhanced by the presentations of Bethia McNeil (CEO at the Centre) on the need for effective and meaningful approaches to evaluation and impact measurement

Trends experienced in youth work in Wales reflect other areas of public policy, including an emphasis on evidence-based policy and a greater reliance on quantitative indicators to measure impact. *'Evaluation, Impact and Outcomes: What does it mean for us?'* outlines the Theory of Change framework and the Most Significant Change method as potential tools to strengthen evaluation processes. The report outlines key questions to guide development of a 'Wales approach' to evaluation and impact.

This is associated with developing mechanisms and schemes to support organisations to strengthen how they demonstrate the impact of the sector, learn from good practice in discussions with funders, and the potential role of sector representative bodies in establishing a consensus around good practice and practical arrangements to strengthen the validity and quality of organisations' data and evaluation processes; and how the HE sector in Wales can support this work.

National Occupational Standards

The [Youth Work National Occupational Standards](#) (NOS) describe the competencies required to carry out the tasks undertaken by the youth work workforce. They do not describe a specific role, rather standards of performance and knowledge required in youth work practice and in formal youth worker training. **Annex A** below provides a mapping of both the 2012 and newly updated NOS against the YPQI Domains of Practice.

4. Summary and next steps

YPQI could make an important contribution to the youth sector in Wales because of its positive impact on practitioner understanding and skill sets in improving practice. It could also play a key role in supporting the aims of the proposed Workforce Development Plan, as outlined in the Youth Work Strategy for Wales. The next six to twelve months will be critical in developing a shared understanding of how best the YPQI can add value to these policy developments.

Empowering the workforce to develop those skills, to share learning and embed an improvement culture whilst being supported with an external assessment process also allows for development of confidence, ability and meeting the needs of young people.

To enable this to happen, and to ensure that the necessary capacity building is factored in as an essential component of its longer-term aims, the Centre needs to follow through on its ambitions for the YPQI programme in Wales across the three year pilot: to work closely with the youth work sector in Wales in order to understand the landscape in which provision is delivered, in determining the current and future role of the YPQI in an evolving strategic, political, operational, linguistic, cultural and economic context.

About the author / organisation



- The Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services (CWVYS) is the representative body for the voluntary youth work sector, enabling a collective voice for those delivering services for young people throughout Wales.
- Working pan-Wales, CWVYS currently has a vibrant and diverse membership of 101 organisations and is pro-actively engaged in strategic and operational developments in support of the sector and of/for young people.
- It provides a frontline service for voluntary youth organisations and an important vehicle through which Welsh Government delivers the Youth Work Strategy for Wales and a range of important projects.

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Appendix A – Mapping the YPQI Domains of Practice against National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Youth Work

nb Both the 2012 and 2019 NOS are included in the table below. The 2019 NOS have only recently been approved, and hence many training programmes and qualifications are still working from the 2012 NOS.

YPQI Domains of Practice	Youth Work NOS (2012)	Youth Work NOS (2019 Updated)
Safe environment Creating safe spaces	YW01 Initiate, build and maintain purposeful relationship with young people YW18 Explore with young people their well being YW20 Embed organisational policy for the protection and safeguarding of young people YW22 Ensure that youth work activities comply with legal, regulatory and ethical requirements.	YW01 Initiate, build and maintain relationships with young people YW03 Comply with legal, regulatory and ethical requirements when carrying out youth work YW16 Equip young people with safeguarding techniques YW17 Monitor and review your organisation’s policy and practices for the protection and safeguarding of young people and self YW18 Engage with young people to promote their emotional wellbeing and mental health YW19 Develop a culture and ethos that promotes inclusion and values diversity
Supportive environment Emotional coaching Scaffolding learning Fostering growth mindset	YW06 Enable young people to work in groups YW14 Facilitate young people’s exploration of their values and beliefs YW16 Enable young people access information to make decisions YW18 Explore with young people their wellbeing	YW02 Assist young people to learn and engage with the youth work process YW06 Explore the concept of values and beliefs with young people YW07 Apply youth work values and principles in group work YW08 Engage with and empower young people to make use of digital media in their daily lives YW13 Access information for and with young people to inform decision making YW15 Assist young people to assess risk and make informed choices in the management of their health and well being YW18 Engage with young people to promote their emotional wellbeing and mental health

<p>Interaction</p> <p>Fostering teamwork Promoting responsibility and leadership Cultivating empathy</p>	<p>YW07 Encourage young people to broaden their horizons to become effective citizens YW15 Advocate on behalf of young people and enable them to represent themselves to others YW17 Work with young people in promoting their rights YW21 Develop a culture and systems that promote inclusion and value diversity YW27 Facilitate and engage young people in the strategic development and delivery of youth work.</p>	<p>YW07 Apply youth work values and principles in group work YW09 Support young people to become responsible citizens through active involvement in youth work YW11 Plan, prepare and facilitate learning activities with young people YW14 Assist young people to recognise, realise and defend their rights YW19 Develop a culture and ethos that promotes inclusion and values diversity. YW23 Engage young people in the strategic development of youth work</p>
<p>Engagement</p> <p>Furthering learning Supporting youth interests Supporting goals and plans</p>	<p>YW05 Enable young people to use their learning to enhance their future development YW11 Plan, prepare and facilitate activities with young people YW12 Work with young people to manage resources for youth work delivery YW13 Support young people in evaluating the impact of youth work activities</p>	<p>YW02 Assist young people to learn and engage with the youth work process YW05 Enable young people identify, reflect and use their learning to enhance their future development YW11 Plan, prepare and facilitate learning activities with young people YW12 Manage resources with young people for youth work activities YW23 Engage young people in the strategic development of youth work</p>
<p>Professional Learning</p>	<p>YW04 Develop and maintain productive working relationships in collaboration with colleagues and stakeholders to support youth work YW24 Influence and develop youth work strategies YW29 Monitor and evaluate the quality of youth work activities YW30 Work as an effective and reflective practitioner YW31 Provide youth work support to other workers</p>	<p>YW04 Develop and maintain productive working relationships in collaboration with colleagues, agencies and stakeholders for youth work YW22 Influence and develop youth work strategy YW24 Monitor and evaluate the impact of youth work strategy and delivery YW25 Work as an effective and critically reflective youth work practitioner YW26 Provide leadership to other youth work practitioners and volunteers</p>



THE CENTRE
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CENTER FOR YOUTH
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The Centre for Youth Impact is a community of organisations that work together to progress thinking and practice around impact measurement in youth work and services for young people. Our vision is for all young people to have access to high quality programmes and services that improve their life chances, by enabling embedded approaches to impact measurement that directly inform practice. Our work, therefore, is dedicated to three objectives, together with our expanded networks and other organisations from across the youth sector: curating the debate, building the movement and shaping the future.

Find out more about the Centre for Youth Impact at www.youthimpact.uk and follow us on @YouthImpactUK.

David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality

The YPQI was developed in the US, by the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality. Extensive research has demonstrated its effectiveness in improving outcomes for young people, promoting a sustainable and supportive culture of organisational reflection and improvement, and refocusing evaluation on the quality of relationships within different settings. The Youth Programme Quality Intervention (YQPI) is the intellectual property of the David P Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality. The Centre for Youth Impact hereby acknowledges the Weikart Center's ownership of the YPQI, the Program Quality Assessment (PQA) tool, and associated materials.

National Lottery Community Fund

This document has been commissioned as part of the Centre for Youth Impact's pilot of the Youth Programme Quality Intervention - or YPQI - in the UK. The Centre has received funding from the National Lottery Community Fund to pilot this ground-breaking quality improvement process for youth organisations. The pilot covers England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and is running between April 2018 and September 2021.

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