

Written Response by the Welsh Government to the report of the Children, Young People and Education Committee entitled 'What type of youth service does Wales want? Report of the inquiry into Youth Work'

February 2017

High quality youth work makes a real difference to young people's lives, whether it is through the experiences it opens up for them or the support it offers. It has a crucial role to play in supporting many young people to enhance their life chances.

The recommendations contained in the report fit closely with my current thinking and I am pleased to be able to accept the majority of them. Whilst taking forward some of the recommendations will require further consideration, I'm in broad agreement with their intent and the next steps that should be taken.

In accepting many of the recommendations, I am pleased to confirm that work has already commenced on taking some of them forward. This report and the evidence presented during its preparation will provide crucial information in assisting us with the review of the current strategy, thinking for the next steps and the refresh of Extending Entitlement. I thank the Committee for its support in highlighting some of the very real challenges the sector faces.

I have set out below my response to the Report's individual recommendations.

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that:

The Minister should review the National Strategy and refresh the statutory guidance in consultation with stakeholders and young people. A detailed action plan for implementation, including timescales, must be developed alongside a new strategy.

Response: Accept

I have already committed to refresh Extending Entitlement - the statutory guidance which underpins the provision and delivery of youth support services in Wales. Reviewing the National Youth Work Strategy will, by necessity, need to form part of this work. A detailed action plan for implementation will be developed and published by the end of March 2017.

Financial Implications – None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that:

The Minister should hold urgent discussions with the Ministerial Youth Work Reference Group to address the concerns from within the sector about a lack of engagement from Welsh Government.

Response: Accept

I met with the Youth Work Reference Group on 8 December 2016. I have asked the group to work with my officials on the refresh of Extending Entitlement. My officials will maintain regular engagement with the group and the wider sector as we develop our thinking around future plans for youth work delivery in Wales.

When considering the Committee's report and recommendations, my officials engaged with the reference group to ensure their views were taken into account.

Financial Implications – None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that:

There should be a clear and meaningful route for young people to be equal partners in developing youth services in Wales. This should be developed by the Minister, stakeholders and young people.

Response: Accept

The Welsh Government remains committed to enabling the voice of young people to be heard in decisions which affect them. We will continue to engage with young people and utilise the expertise of stakeholders including Children in Wales and Young Wales to engage with a broad range of young people around developing youth services in Wales.

Financial Implications – None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that:

The Minister should introduce a national model for youth work, encompassing statutory and voluntary provision. The Minister should report to this Committee on progress within 6 months of the publication of this report.

Response: Accept

Any consideration of a national model for youth work needs to be informed by the refresh of Extending Entitlement and the review of the National Youth Work Strategy. I am happy to report back to the Committee as this work progresses.

Financial Implications – None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendations 5, 6 & 7

The Committee recommends that:

5) The Minister should report back to the Committee within 6 months of the publication of this report on how he intends to assess the extent to which his commitment to universal, open access provision, in English and Welsh, is being delivered.

6) Within 6 months of the publication of this report, the Minister should commission an exercise to map voluntary youth work provision across Wales. The exercise should be refreshed periodically.

7) The Minister should ensure that youth work sufficiency assessments are undertaken by local authorities as part of their population needs assessments and report back to the Committee on progress within 6 months of the publication of this report.

Response: Accept in Principle

It is clear from the evidence provided to the Committee that the youth work landscape in Wales is changing. Local authorities have had to adapt to a challenging financial climate and the changing needs of young people in their area. This has often meant adopting different approaches to engaging with young people that go beyond traditional youth work provision. In order to get a better understanding of the situation I have asked my officials to work with key representatives from the sector to explore if sufficiency assessments might be a suitable vehicle to assist local authorities to assess the needs of their local populations. Sufficiency assessments may be able to provide a better understanding, at a local level, of what youth work support looks like on the ground. This is because any sufficiency assessment undertaken by a local authority would need to take account the current provision available to young people (both open access and targeted) which is provided through the statutory and voluntary sectors. Sufficiency assessments also provide a useful source of evidence for Public Services Boards to take account of in preparing their assessments of local well-being. I expect this work to inform the refresh of Extending Entitlement and any national model of youth work delivery. I am happy to report back to the Committee as this work progresses.

Financial Implications – Unknown at this stage.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that:

The Minister should develop an accountability framework for local authorities' use of funds for youth work via the revenue support grant. The framework should include sanctions if outcomes are not delivered.

Response: Accept in Principle

The RSG is an un-hypothecated funding stream, and it is therefore a decision of local authorities as to how this funding is utilised to best meet local needs and priorities. It is not possible to identify how much RSG is spent on youth work or to prescribe this amount – the Standard Spending Assessments are notional amounts that are used for calculation purposes only and are not targets for spending. However, historically the Welsh Government has provided direct support to a number of grant schemes intended to support the outcomes of youth work. We have begun the process to undertake a review of all these youth work funding streams to identify the true impact and to support future thinking for supporting youth work in Wales. I want to ensure we have better transparency and value for money.

Financial Implications – None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that:

The Minister should explore the potential continuation of Erasmus+ funding, should the UK Government decide not to do so.

Response: Accept in principle

We have published a White Paper, “Securing Wales’ Future: Transition from the European Union to a new relationship with Europe”, which can be found online at: www.gov.wales/brexit.

The White Paper provides a comprehensive and credible plan for the negotiations with our partners in Europe on the UK’s exit from the European Union – based on solid evidence that places Wales’ priorities center stage but which is designed to work for the UK as a whole. It balances the message which the Welsh people gave us that we should leave the European Union with the economic reality that makes participation in the single market so important for the future prosperity of Wales, and indeed the UK as a whole.

The decision is made that the UK will leave the European Union. The challenge we all face now is ensuring that we secure the best possible deal for Wales and the UK.

Financial Implications – None at this time. Whether this will be possible will depend on the UK Government’s position as negotiations around terms of Brexit become clearer.

Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends that:

The Minister should ensure that the statutory and voluntary youth work sector play a central role in the process of curriculum reform.

Response: Accept

The statutory and voluntary youth work sectors are both represented on the Education Reform Strategic Stakeholder Group (SSG). The group was established to ensure that key stakeholders, especially those who are not represented elsewhere in the governance structure or on working groups, are:

- informed of and involved in developing the approach to implementing *Successful Futures: Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales*, and *Teaching for Tomorrow’s Teachers: Options for the future of initial teacher education in Wales*
- informed of and involved in developing the approach to implementing the Additional Learning Needs Transformation Programme (ALN-TP), and are
- aware of alignment with Professional Learning for the workforce.

Financial Implications – None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.