Extending Entitlement Revisited: The Maintained Youth Service 2002-2007

Paper Number 8 – What did the maintained Youth Service in Wales do after Extending Entitlement and how was this measured?

Introduction

It is the intention of this short paper to examine how the maintained Youth Service delivers of a range of activities whose planned outcomes have an impact on meeting both the needs of those young people it comes into contact with and the requirements of government policy. To achieve this, a range of information will be examined which will identify:

- the programme the maintained Youth Service offers to young people;
- the planned outcomes of that programme; and
- the methods used for measuring the outcomes of that programme.

The programme the maintained Youth Service offers to young people

It is claimed that non-formal learning is linked to the needs of the individual but is not, as a consequence, an unplanned process. Evidence should therefore be available of a planned programme being developed by the maintained Youth Service that is relevant to meeting the needs of young people and the requirements of government.

Questionnaire survey results

In response to being asked in the questionnaire survey to describe the programme of activities on offer to young people (listed in order of priority with a maximum of five entries), respondents identified a relatively wide range of choices (Table 1). Sport was

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identified as the first priority by 9.4% (57) of respondents, followed by issue-based work, identified as the first priority by 8.9% (54) of respondents. Teaching was identified as the number one priority by 7.6% (46) respondents followed by skills development, selected by 6.9% (42) of respondents. Sport was the most popular response overall across the five priorities, identified by 21.4% (130) of respondents across the priorities. The second most popular overall response, teaching, was identified by 19.6% (119) of respondents. The third most popular overall response was out-of-centre activities with 18.2% (111) of respondents, despite only 2.3% (14) identifying it as their number one programme activity. The fourth most popular activity across the five priority areas was skills development, identified by 16.2% (101) of respondents, and the fifth was art and craft with 12.3% (75) of respondents.

Descriptions of activities were coded for analysis based on an interpretation by the researcher of the terminology used by the respondent. However, significant levels of ambiguity with regard to terminology can be identified in the analysis, which had some potential to affect the identified results. Football, for example, was coded as sport, but indoor games, which could involve playing football, was coded as indoor games. As a consequence, the figure arrived at for sport, 9.4% (57), could possibly be increased to 12.7% (77) of respondents if indoor games, 3.3% (20), were added. This ambiguity of terminology is particularly relevant to the issues of 'teaching' and 'skills development', which have a combined response across the five priority areas of 36.7% (220) of respondents.

Within the definitions of teaching were descriptions such as *"teaching literacy and numeracy"*, *"teaching cooking"*, *"teach them about basketball and life"*, *"senior member training"*, *"teaching art and craft"*, *"dance teaching"*, *"delivering accredited learning through youth achievement awards"* and *"teaching the alternative curriculum"*. These and other activities that included the term 'teaching' were coded accordingly. However, many respondents did not describe their activities as teaching but as skills development through the involvement of young people in a range of identified activities, which included football, basketball, art, craft, dance, music, woodwork and IT. It is logical to conclude from the information provided that there is a direct correlation

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between the involvement of young people in a curriculum of activities provided by the maintained Youth Service and a teaching process leading to the development of skills relevant to the activity being undertaken. There is rationality therefore, in suggesting that 'teaching' and 'skills development' are the same activity and should be considered as such. As a consequence, the maintained Youth Service could be described, from the evidence obtained from the questionnaire survey, as an organisation principally concerned with the teaching of young people through their involvement in the range of activities described previously.

It is important to note that respondents to the questionnaire survey had little difficulty in identifying a number one priority, which was completed by 94.8% (576) of workers; however, a number two priority could only be identified by 75.8% (461) of respondents, priority three by 58.6% (356) of respondents, priority four by 34.7% (211) and priority five by 14.6% (89) of respondents (Table 1). From this information, it is possible to conclude that many young people are gaining limited experience from their involvement with the maintained Youth Service in Wales.

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Table 1 Main activities, identified in questionnaire survey, ranked by 1st to 5th choice

Response	1st choice		2nd choice		3rd choice		4th choice		5th choice	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Sport	57	9.4%	32	5.3%	23	3.8%	12	2.0%	6	.98
Issue-Based Work	54	8.9%			23	3.8%			5	.82%
Teaching	46	7.6%	37	6.1%	30	4.9%	6	1.5%		
Skills Development	42	6.9	28	4.6%	23	3.8%	8	1.3%		
Organising Events and Activities	38	6.3%	24	3.9%	22	3.6%	14	2.3%	5	.82%
Advice and Information	38	6.3%	12	2.0%	16	2.6%	10	1.6%		
Art and Craft	26	4.3%	28	4.6%	17	2.8%	15	2.5%	9	1.5%
Discussion	25	4.1%	22	3.6%	16	2.6%	9	1.5%		
Management/Organisation	24	3.9%	15	2.5%						
School-Based Youth Work	23	3.8%	9	1.5%						
Indoor Games	20	3.3%	36	5.6%	13	2.1%	16	2.6%		
Youth Forums	19	3.1%	10	1.6%					10	1.6%
Policing	19	3.1%			10	1.6%				
IT	14	2.3%								
Out-of-Centre Events	14	2.3%	31	5.1%	21	3.5%	31	5.1%	14	2.3%
Support to Young People.	13	2.1%			10	1.6%				
Canteen	12	2.0%								
Other	92	15.1%	94	15.5%	90	14.8%	90	14.8%	40	6.5%
Group Work			25	4.1%						
Dance/Drama/Music			19	3.1%						
D of E Award Scheme			17	2.8%						
Community Projects			12	2.0%						

Responding to Need			10	1.6%							
Health					20	3.2%					
Fundraising					12	2.0%					
Competition					10	1.6%					
No Response	32	5.2%	147	24.2%	252	41.4%	397	65.3%	519	85.4%	
Total	**608**	**100.0%**	**608**	**100.0%**	**608**	**100.0%**	**608**	**100.0%**	**608**	**100.0%**	

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Youth Work in Wales Excellence Awards applications

Further evidence related to the types of programme activities carried out by those working within the maintained Youth Service can be identified by the information contained in the 193 applications for the Youth Work in Wales Excellence Awards submitted by the maintained Youth Service between 1997 and 2002. From the analysis of these entries, it is possible to identify both the type of programme on offer to young people and the intended outcomes of their involvement within what was considered by the applicants as high quality practice. The most popular programme activity submitted for an Excellence Award was identified under the general term 'art' which made up 14% (27) of entries which included a number of community art projects involving young people in producing a mural or artwork in community locations. This was closely followed by performing arts with 13.5% (26) of entries. The third most popular programme activity was described in the award applications under a general heading of 'health' which was included in 11.9% (23) of entries: many of these entries were linked to advice and information provision in the sense that they involved young people obtaining relevant health-related information through a variety of innovative practices. These practices included peer presentations, weekend events with 'expert guests' providing advice and information on topics such as healthy eating, sex education, and raising awareness of drug and alcohol misuse. The fourth most popular programme choice was involving young people in youth forums which was included in 10.9% (21) of entries; this activity was followed by international exchanges included in 5.7%, (11) of entries, and by developing community links in 5.7% (11) of entries. Reconnecting young people to education was identified in 4.7% (9) of entries, as was information services and skills development. Many of the applications described more than one purpose of a programme activity. For example, a senior member training programme (described as the main activity) used a programme that involved developing community links (described as a secondary purpose). The full extent of these multi-purpose programmes are identified in Table 2. It should be noted that skills development was the most popular secondary activity, with the same number of respondents who selected art as the primary purpose. The term 'skill development' is also mentioned later in this paper as an outcome of the work; this

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situation reinforces the confusion amongst workers of the differences between Youth Service process and Youth Service outcomes.

Table 2 Programme activities identified within the Youth Work in Wales Excellence Award applications

Type of Activity	Primary purpose		Secondary purpose	
	Number	%	Number	%
Art	27	14.0%	6	3.1%
Performing Arts	26	13.5%		
Health	23	11.9%	14	7.3%
Youth Forum	21	10.9%	3	1.6%
Community Links	11	5.7%	18	9.3%
Youth Exchange	11	5.7%		
Information/Advice	9	4.7%		
Reconnect to Education	9	4.7%	6	3.1%
Skill Development	9	4.7%	27	14.0%
Crime Reduction	7	3.6%		
Young People's Issues	6	3.1%	3	1.6%
IT	5	2.6%		
Senior Member Training	5	2.6%	3	1.6%
Camp Craft	4	2.1%		
Residential	4	2.1%	3	1.6%
Sport	4	2.1%		
Community Aid	3	1.6%		
Shared Experiences			6	3.1%
Others	9	4.7%	20	10.4%
No Reply			84	43.5%
Total	**193**	**100%**	**193**	**100%**

Interviews

From the evidence obtained from those involved across the occupational strands in the interview process it is possible to identify a high level of agreement that the main purpose of the maintained Youth Service was providing young people with somewhere to go and something to do. This required those working in the maintained Youth Service to establish a community base within which a range of activities could be delivered, the

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most important programmes of these were described as sport, art, outdoor activities, and performing arts.

The 'somewhere to go and something to do' hypothesis was however contested by a number of workers who held a view that was articulated by a focus group of full-time workers who claimed:

> *"we are living in a world of commercialism within which young people have unprecedented access into a wide range of leisure-time opportunities which have cutting edge facilities. Many young people also have access to the world in their own houses through the internet. Those we see now also have sophisticated music systems, playstations, gameboys, and televisions with 900 channels. Young people also have parents who have the means and the willingness to take their children to a range of specialist clubs who focus on single activities like swimming, gymnastics, and self defence, If the Youth Service thinks it can just open the door of a poorly located poorly equipped, poorly decorated building and attract young people it will be mistaken."*

This view is supported by evidence which identified the generally low standards of buildings used by the maintained Youth Service. Many buildings were described as being incapable of providing an appealing environment for young people. Also of importance to those being interviewed, either as individuals or within focus groups, was the opportunity to identify a range of reasons why the maintained Youth Service was restricted in delivering a more creative and interesting range of programme opportunities for young people. It is possible to locate these reasons within two broad themes.

First, was the limited understanding of staff employed by the maintained Youth Service of the purpose of the maintained Youth Service and the principles and values that underpinned the development and delivery of an appropriate range of programme activities for young people. This, it was claimed, was not caused by low levels of commitment and enthusiasm but by both a lack of opportunity to become qualified and by inadequate levels of in-service support.

The second issue identified was the times the maintained Youth Service is available to young people. A number of workers employed part time claimed that they were on fixed evening contracts that only paid them to work with young people for a maximum of 52

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hours a year, calculated at 2 hours per week for 26 weeks. Others were employed on more generous contracts, but it appeared to be usual for the maintained Youth Service to operate, in the very best examples, for a maximum of 40 weeks a year. As a consequence of this limited contact time with young people, often in buildings of poor quality with limited facilities and resources, the opportunity to be creative and innovative when developing programmes was significantly curtailed. Full-time workers were faced with similar circumstances but for different reasons. Many identified a changing role which often included an enhanced management responsibility, which effectively removed them from direct contact with young people and from directly influencing the development of appropriate programmes.

The comments on levels of contact time with young people can be supported by the findings of the questionnaire survey, which asked respondents to indicate whether they worked during school holidays and weekends. The results of these questions can be found in Figs 1 and 2:

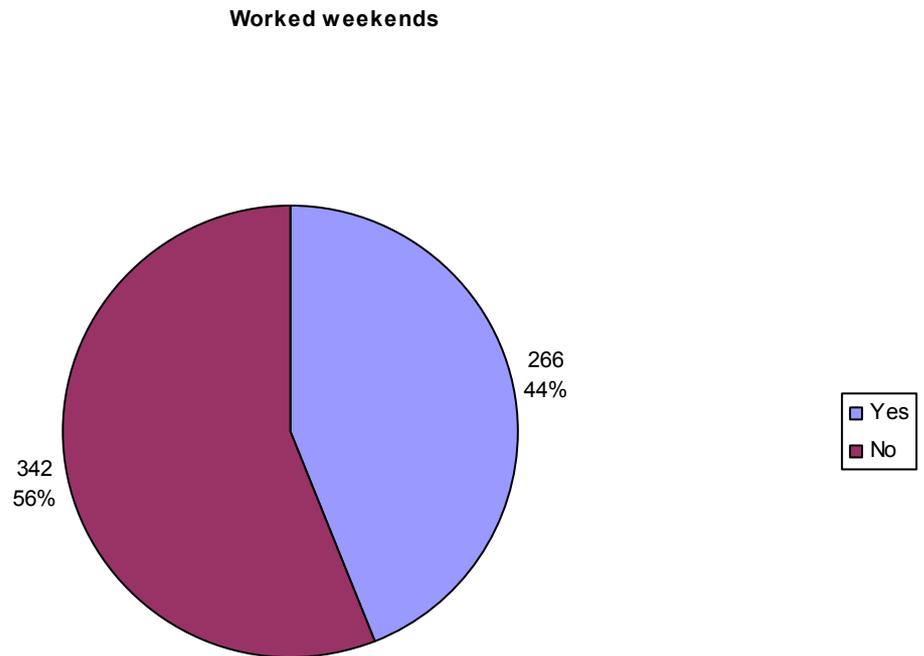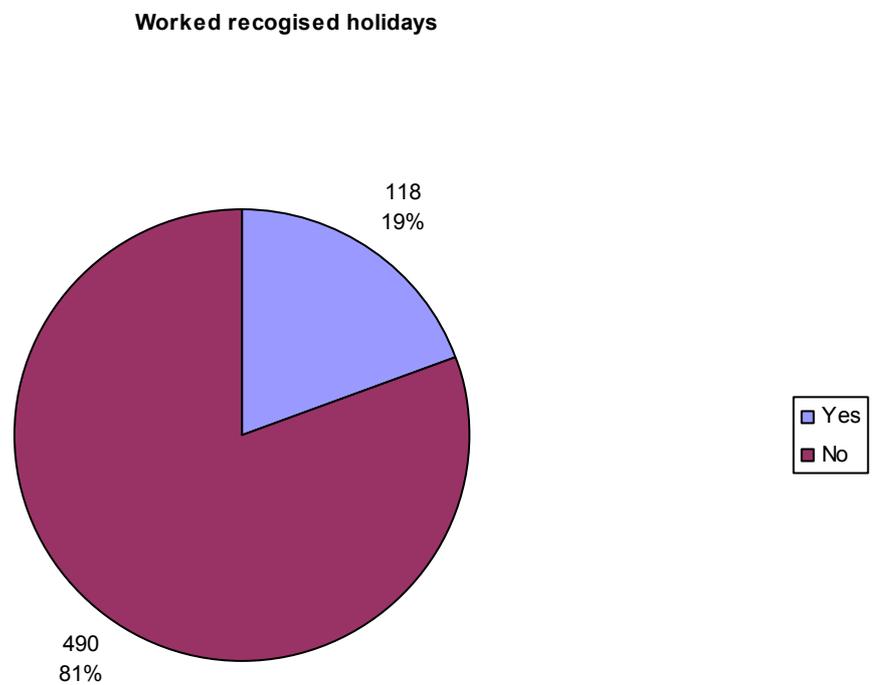Paper Number 8 – What did the maintained Youth Service in Wales do after Extending Entitlement and how was this measured?

Fig. 1. Working weekends

Worked weekends

Fig. 2 Working recognised holidays

Worked recogised holidays

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The issue of calculating the numbers of workers who work weekends and holidays is important in determining the way the maintained Youth Service responds, in a practical way, to the identified needs of the specific groups of young people in contact with it. On the evidence provided through the analysis of the questionnaire survey, the Youth Service only offers opportunities to young people during weekdays and during school term time. The obvious implication is that many young people are deprived of the benefits of the maintained Youth Service at the time when it could be legitimately argued they need it the most, which is at weekends and school holidays. This situation is of particular importance given the age profile of the young people using the maintained Youth Service, which was identified as being primarily those between 12 and 15 years old. What was required, in the opinion of many of those interviewed, was an increase in funding and a change in working patterns that would take workers, particularly those employed full-time, away from management and administration tasks into direct contact with young people particularly at weekends and during school holidays.

The planned outcomes of the programme offered to young people

Non-formal community-based learning of the sort delivered by the maintained Youth Service is driven by a philosophical position that requires it to provide a structured learning environment within which there is intentional learning from the learner's perspective. Evidence was sought during this investigation to determine how effective the maintained Youth Service is at providing a structured learning environment for young people clearly identified by learning outcomes.

Intended outcomes - questionnaire survey

To obtain the evidence detailed above, respondents to the questionnaire survey were asked to indicate if the activities they delivered were planned to achieve specific outcomes (Table 3). Those who responded positively to this question were asked to describe the types of outcomes they planned for their work with young people through the maintained Youth Service (Table 4).

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Table 3 Are outcomes for the maintained Youth Service activities planned?

Response	Number	%
Yes	486	80%
No	61	10%
No Answer	61	10%
Total	**608**	**100%**

Of those who responded, 20% (122) of workers either stated they did not plan their activities to achieve specific outcomes or did not reply to the question. 93.4% (114) of those who said no or did not answer the question were part-time workers and 6.6% (8) were full-time workers. Further analysis revealed that of the 114 part-time workers, 84.2% (96) could be identified as unqualified. All of the full-time workforce who said they did not plan their work to achieve specific outcomes or who did not answer the question were classed as unqualified.

Other than the high level of unqualified workers, it was not possible to identify, from the information supplied during the questionnaire survey, if there were any particular reasons why 20% (122) of the total number of respondents did not plan their work to achieve specific outcomes. The conclusion that can be reached from the evidence is that a significant number of respondents were working with young people in a way that was only concerned with process, that is, enabling them to take part in an activity for no particular outcome, either planned or incidental. An example of this approach can be found in the reply of a youth-work trainee employed full time with between 1-4 year's service who did not plan activities to achieve specific outcomes and listed his main activities with young people as:

- Entertainment;
- Information;
- Fun;
- Providing somewhere to go for young people; and
- Support.

This type of response was found throughout the questionnaires completed by those who claimed not to plan their work to achieve specific outcomes. As a result, it is possible to

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conclude that many of those working within the maintained Youth Service are only providing a social provision within which young people appear to be left to develop their own interest.

Those 80% (486) of respondents who did indicate that they planned their work to achieve specific outcomes were asked to list the outcomes, with no restriction on the number they were able to identify. The analysed results can be found in Table 4.

Table 4 Planned outcomes

Planned Outcome	Number	%
Social skills	221	36.3%
Informal Learning	123	20.2%
Key Skills	112	18.4%
Recognised Qualifications	108	17.8%
Practical Skills Development	65	10.7%
Fun	33	5.4%
Greater Awareness of Drug/Alcohol Issues	22	3.6 %
Records of Achievement	22	3.6%
Providing Information	20	3.3%
Enhanced Opportunities	20	3.3%
Meet the Requirements of the Youth Work Curriculum Statement	17	2.8%
Meet the Needs of Young People	14	2.3%
Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme	13	2.1%
Empowerment of Young People	10	1.6%
Others	92	15.13%
Did not plan their work to achieve planned outcomes	61	10.0%
Did not complete this section	61	10.0%

When trying to analyse the results of this element of the questionnaire survey, similar difficulties were encountered to those identified during the analysis of the prioritised activities detailed in Table 1. Because the question allowed respondents to identify the planned outcomes of their work in their own terms, a number of different descriptions were used that could be interpreted as being related to the same outcome. For example, replies with the highest level of response included (in first, second and third position respectively) outcomes that were identified as 'social skills, 'informal learning' and 'key

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skills'. Originally, these were coded and quantified to reflect the replies obtained and are identified in Table 4 as three separate outcomes. Following further evaluation of the results, for the purpose of analysis, the decision was taken to consider the three separate themes of 'social skills', 'informal learning' and 'key skills' as being contained within a general theme of 'skills' development. As a consequence of this decision, it is possible from the information supplied to conclude that the generic term 'personal skills development' was identified by 456 respondents as being a planned outcome, described as *"better communication", "improved self esteem", "better decision making", "working in a team" and "improved organisation skill"*. These direct quotes indicate clearly the clear level of understanding maintained Youth Service workers have of the appropriate skills young people were able to develop through the range of programme activities described in Table 1.

A number of respondents, 10.7% (65), also identified 'practical skills' as an outcome, which included *"improved IT skills", "art and craft skills", "sporting skills"* and *"climbing skills"*.

The evidence obtained from the questionnaire survey is supported by the comments of Estyn Inspections, which recognised that the value of the contact young people had with the maintained Youth Service was linked to them *"gaining skills in ICT, arts and crafts and sports"* (Estyn 2001a:3). Similar comments were made (Estyn 2002a:3) which claimed the Gwynedd Youth Service was enabling young people to *"make progress in developing important skills"*. This position was also recognised in Neath and Port Talbot (Estyn 2002b:8), where it was recognised that young people through their involvement in the maintained Youth Service were demonstrating *"enhanced self esteem, growing maturity, decision making and presentation skills"*.

In addition to the development of personal and practical skills, 17.8% (108) of respondents claimed to be offering recognised qualifications to the young people with whom they were involved through their work with the maintained Youth Service. These skills included qualifications primarily within the Open College Network (OCN)

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framework and National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) for a variety of achievements including Senior Member Training, Food Hygiene, and Care Awards such as babysitting.

A wide range of planned outcomes which could not be categorised was identified by 15.13% (92) of respondents. These 'other responses' included *"stopping young people smoking so much", "encouraging young people to go to church", "young people attending youth club on a regular basis", "more respect from young people to adult workers", "less bad language", "less violence and damage to the centre"* and *"stopping young people watching so much television"*. This section of the questionnaire provided similar comments related to a wide range of outcomes and suggests that too many of those working within the maintained Youth Service have not been introduced either to the purposes, principles and values of their work or to the philosophical position underpinning non-formal community-based education.

Intended outcomes – Youth Work in Wales Excellence Awards

An analysis of the Youth Work in Wales Excellence Awards (Table 5) identified planned outcomes similar to those identified by the questionnaire survey. These outcomes were focused on the development of a range of skills most often through participation in activities such as sport, art and outdoor activities.

The range of skills identified can be sub-classified as personal and practical**.** Personal skills identified included improved communication, team working and problem solving, the achievement of which was described as leading to an increase in confidence, self-esteem, and knowledge. Practical skills are obtained through a diverse range of activities including camp craft, canoeing, guitar playing, drama, story telling, carpentry, welding, catering, Internet, library use, film making, photography and choreography.

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Table 5 Planned outcomes identified from the Youth Work in Wales Excellence Award applications

Type of Outcome	Number
Skills Development	182
Improved Confidence	95
Increased Knowledge	76
Community Links	60
Improved Communication	39
Education Attainment	38
Improved Self-Esteem	32
Improved Team Working	29

Intended outcomes – interview responses

For the majority of workers interviewed, the question on the intended outcomes of their work elicited a range of responses similar to those identified in the questionnaire survey. These included the development of social and personal skills, informal learning and a wide range of practical skills related to young people's involvement in sport, art, and IT.

A small number of Principal Youth Officers and full-time workers identified their role as developing in young people a range of practical 'attributes' including communication, team working and problem solving skills. They also identified the skill required by workers to deliver a programme of activities that was of interest to young people and which could be used by them to achieve outcomes linked to the attainment of the full range of practical attributes. These managers and full-time workers identified, in an unambiguous way, a process of work with young people that used programme activities including sport, art, outdoor activities, and performing arts as a vehicle for obtaining relevant outcomes for young people such as those described as practical attributes. There was a clear recognition by a number of those involved in the interview process that young people who developed the full range of practical attributes were, as a consequence, more able to succeed in both their working and non-working lives.

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The methods used for measuring the outcomes of the programmes offered

The questionnaire survey did not ask respondents to detail the methods they used to measure the **attainments** (measured against standard benchmarks of A Levels, Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, OCNs, NVQs) or the **achievements** (targets met by young people measured against non-standard benchmarks) of the planned outcomes for young people involved in the maintained Youth Service curriculum. It was the intention to explore this issue during both the examination of Estyn Inspection Reports and during the interview process.

The nature of the planned outcomes described previously in this paper such as personal skills development, for example, with planned outcomes of improved communication skills, team-working skills and problem-solving skills would require a range of sophisticated methods to measure the attainments and achievements. The methods used to measure the development of both personal and practical skills would also be required to fit into the philosophical position of the maintained Youth Service and would be concerned to enable young people take ownership of both their learning and its assessment. From the evidence obtained during this investigation, it is possible to conclude that the maintained Youth Service does not in general use a range of appropriate methods for measuring the planned outcomes of its work which reflect the philosophical position of non-formal education. This is not to suggest that there is a general lack of knowledge about the importance of measuring the outcomes of its work. Throughout the investigation, attempts were made by respondents to articulate what young people and the government could expect to have as a result of maintained Youth Service interventions. However, there was little unanimity between them, with the largest number of respondents claiming it was a task that could not be carried out and a significant minority of workers who claimed that the outcomes of the work of the maintained Youth Service could be achieved by using formal education methods in what a full-time worker described as 'a Youth Work way'. For a small number of workers, the task was seen to be contrary to the philosophical position of non-formal education with its requirement to locate the ownership of both the learning and the assessment of that learning with young people. The outcome of the work for this group was the development of a range of skills

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relevant to and owned by young individual young people, which enabled them to measure the distance they had travelled themselves.

What could be identified from the evidence provided were three specific reasons why those working in the maintained Youth Service were unable to collectively define both the methods used to measure the outcome and the type of outcome being measured. First, there was a lack of collective understanding of the 'essence' of Youth Work and the difficulties related to arriving at agreed definitions about what Youth Work 'does', how it 'does it' and what 'results' are planned and achieved. Achieving this collective understanding was identified, by the findings of the investigation, as being made more difficult for practitioners as a consequence of the conflicts they encounter between a professional code, which advocates attention to the expressed needs of individuals and groups, and bureaucratic pressure for increased efficiency and compliance to predetermined outcomes. This conflict is constantly exacerbated by the need for workers to maintain their levels of professional knowledge in a rapidly changing practice environment, which often challenges their philosophical and knowledge base. This situation can create circumstances where patterns of task and knowledge are inherently unstable.

Second, there is an historic difficulty in defining and measuring the outcomes of Youth Work practice; consequently, there are few appropriate models on which to build. The work of the Youth Service is also increasingly driven by a belief that effective programmes will develop in young people a wide range of what are described as 'soft skills' or 'enhanced emotional intelligence'. These soft skills include fostering attributes and skills such as an ability to communicate, work in teams, solve problems, and develop self-esteem or display initiative. The external monitoring and evaluation of the extent to which Youth Work interventions sponsor the acquisition of these characteristics is difficult if not impossible. For example, workers lack access both to the point that young people have reached prior to intervention and to the extent to which other, parallel learning experiences contribute to change. As a consequence, there is no credible 'scale' able to measure the 'distance travelled by young people'. Even if it were possible to develop the tools to measure progress, a problem would remain: the philosophical

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position of much Youth Work has located the ownership and assessment of learning with young people, which requires an approach that recognises the intrinsic value of learning managed through the development of the skills of action and reflection. However, such approaches have little credibility within an environment that perceives monitoring and evaluation as management tools whose primary function is to ensure that set objectives are achieved within the cost calculations imposed by policy makers.

Third is the increasing plagiarising of models more appropriate to other areas of work, including formal school and college-based education. The consequence of this is all too obvious. A significant amount of evidence was found during the investigation of a growing trend amongst those working in the maintained Youth Service to measure the outcomes of their work through the use of formal education methods. The Estyn Inspection of Neath and Port Talbot stated that "*substantial numbers of young people gain formal accreditation for their achievements*" (Estyn 2002b:7). The importance of these sorts of qualifications was reinforced by the Estyn Inspection of Caerphilly, which claimed "*many of the activities undertaken by young people lead to national certification*" (Estyn 2001a:5). Evidence was also found during the interview process to suggest that the use of formal methods of measuring achievement was becoming more usual, with a focus group of full-time workers concluding that the maintained Youth Service was "*becoming like school in the evenings*" in that it was increasingly being directed into forms of work that were only seen to be of value if they were certificated by well-tried accreditation methods. This approach appears from the evidence obtained to be a growing trend to involve young people in a range of activities that lend themselves to monitoring and evaluation processes linked to outcomes measured by external sources. Open College Networks (OCNs), National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), Youth Achievement Awards and their like are proliferating within a new Youth Service environment driven by political dogma. There are inherent dangers in this practice, including the loss of the special contribution of the maintained Youth Service within a new landscape of managerialism and accountability.

This main reason for adopting the position of increasingly using formal methods of measuring outcomes appears to be the continuing failure of the maintained Youth Service

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to be able to determine the outcomes of its work in an appropriate way and to promote them with confidence to those with the responsibility for allocating resources. Instead, the outcomes of effective Youth Service provision appear to be treated with disdain or as mysterious by the significant majority of those involved in the investigation, who claimed in a variety of different ways that determining Youth Service outcomes required many years of distillation before becoming pure enough for consideration. A full-time worker involved in the interviews summed up a widely held view articulated throughout the investigation by stating:

> *"what young people really get from the Youth Service is almost impossible to measure at the time of their involvement. But what makes me believe in the importance of the Youth Service is meeting with young people 10 years after they've left the youth club who tell me how great it was and how much the learned from whatever experience they were involved in. Getting on with people, making decisions about things that affected them in the club, being part of a team, all the things that the government seems to be talking about now and giving other organisations money for."*

Underpinning this position was an almost total disregard of a non-formal education approach concerned to enable young people to become responsible for their own learning and for its assessment. Only a small amount of evidence was available from the research to suggest that young people were made aware of the non-formal education approach of the maintained Youth Service and their individual role within it. What could be identified was a well-established philanthropic approach within which young people were most often relegated to the role of 'user' of pre-determined programmes.

Despite these overall negative comments about the ability of those involved in the maintained Youth Service to identify the methods they use to determine the outcomes of their work, it was possible from the evidence made available to determine four different models that were claimed to be in use. These included self-assessment, observation and reflection, peer assessment, and formal accreditation.

It was identified by the findings of the investigation that the first three methods were often used together to provide a more reliable and valid method for determining the

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outcomes of maintained Youth Service programmes. Self-assessment was described, by a small number of predominantly full-time workers, as a process within which young people were enabled to recognise and accept ownership of both their learning and its assessment. It was not a process dependent on formal externally validated tests (as is the case with formal education) but a process dependent on developing a range of individual skills, which were identified by workers across the occupational strands as *"reflection, communication (talking and listening), negotiation, compromise, being able to work with others and developing an enhanced ability to learn"*. For those workers using this model, the distance travelled by young people as a result of their learning in a wide variety of settings including school, community and work would be determined by young people, for their own use. The role of the maintained Youth Service in this process was described by some respondents as being to contribute to the development of the skills that would enable young people do this effectively.

Worker observation and reflection was described by a small minority of workers as a key method for determining the outcomes of their work. It was a method described as requiring both an agreed purpose and agreed outcomes. An example was given during the interview process by a full-time worker who identified the purpose of a project as:

> *"to develop communication, team building and problem solving skills in a group of 13 to 15 year olds who had a history of truanting from school and being involved in anti-social behaviour."*

The process for achieving this outcome was a weekend residential activity involving a planned programme of outdoor activities. The prime methods of evaluating the outcomes of the programme measured against its purpose were observation and reflection. This, it was claimed, was a participative process with the active involvement of the young people, who would be encouraged to assess their own performance through a process of reflection and by recording their actions and achievements.

The third method, peer assessment, was identified as one which used groupwork techniques to determine the development of skills by young people. It was described as a

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method being used in a wide range of settings, often in partnership with worker observation.

Formal accreditation opportunities were also described as an appropriate method for measuring the outcomes for young people through their involvement in a range of maintained Youth Service programmes. The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme was seen as one example by a number of workers as was the attainment of a range of formal qualifications related to First Aid and Food Hygiene, which were both given as examples by a worker who involved young people in outdoor and residential activities.

Substantial levels of evidence were obtained during the interview process, which identified that a significant number of respondents were overly focused either on the process, which they described as an outcome, or on inappropriate outcomes when measured against the purposes and principles of the Youth Service. Taking part in a wide range of activities was described by a number of workers across the occupational strands as *"having participation"* as the outcome.

> *"actually getting the sorts of young people who we see in the Youth Service to do something is a mega achievement. Getting them involved in football or rounders or swimming is important because participation is what we are about and being involved is also empowering which is what we also do."*
>
> Part-time Focus Group

There was little evidence provided by the part-time worker strand and from a significant number of those employed in the full-time worker strand to suggest that attempts were being made to consider the use of participation in the sorts of activities being delivered by the maintained Youth Services a vehicle for developing planned outcomes that would meet the needs of young people and the requirements of government. The evidence that was available with regard to planned outcomes was primarily concerned with developing what could be described as a culture of success, within which young people were encouraged to take part in competitive activities with the single planned outcome of *"winning"*. It was an outcome that appeared unconcerned with any aspects of personal development for the young people taking part in competitive activities. Rather it was a

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focused approach adopted by many workers across the occupational strands and was summed up by a full-time worker who claimed:

> *"The job of the Youth Services to build the self-esteem and confidence of young people and being successful at competitive activities is the key contributor to both of those. Young people know that if they come to this club they will be successful and they will win things. For many it is the start of a change of attitude from thinking they are a failure to knowing they can win."*

Little attention appears to be given within this model of the potential to use competitive activities as a means of achieving planned outcomes such as team building, problem solving or communication, which are obviously important in competitive team activities such as basketball, football, or netball.

Summary

From the evidence identified during this chapter, it is possible to conclude that the maintained Youth Service does not have a collective ability across the occupational strands to contribute in a conscious way to young people developing the 'practical attributes' that enable them to operate effectively in their working and non-working lives. It should be recognised, however, that significant numbers of those working in the maintained Youth Service describe the outcomes of their work as being related to the development of the sorts of skills contained within the framework of 'practical attributes'. It should also be recognised that pockets of high quality practice reflecting the purposes and values of the maintained Youth Service could be also identified. What appears to be lacking is a coherent process across the organisation linking 'what the maintained Youth Service does' to how 'it does it' to what 'it achieves' linked to appropriate mechanisms to measure 'what has been achieved'.

A consequence of this lack of coherence is that most often the maintained Youth Service carries out its work as a predominantly informal education organisation, providing opportunities for potential learning for young people (that either is or is not useful within the context of their working or non-working lives) as a result of daily life activities

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similar to that related to work, family, or leisure. Within this context there is only limited structure in terms of learning objectives, time, or support offered. Sometimes learning in this informal environment may be purposeful but in most cases, it is not.

There is no intention when arriving at this conclusion to diminish the importance of the informal learning context of the maintained Youth Service, which has a long tradition of using its characteristics in its work with young people – based on voluntary association, debate, dialogue and negotiation – often as a means of developing positive relationships on which to encourage participation in non-formal education programmes. There is, however, a need to recognise that informal education is not discrete to the maintained Youth Service but a process that can happen wherever young people meet, including during school time with its predominantly formal education approach. The maintained Youth Service should, therefore, be concerned for most of its time with the non-formal learning of young people, delivered within the boundaries set by its organisational purposes and values.

John Rose 2017, taken from PhD research
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