

Youth Work and Schools Partnership

*Attitude
Attendance
& Achievement*

September 1998 - March 2000

A commentary and analysis based on the formative evaluation of the first eighteen months of the Youth Work and Schools Partnership Programme in Wales



Cyngor Ieuenctid Cymru
Wales Youth Agency

Attitude, Attendance & Achievement

© **Wales Youth Agency**

June 2000

ISBN 1 901850 01 3

The report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes provided that all extracts are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and the source and date thereof are stated.

Edited by Barry Doughty

Wales Youth Agency
Leslie Court
Lôn y Llyn
Caerphilly
CF83 1BQ
Tel 029 20 855700
Fax 029 20 855701
E-mail wya@wya.org.uk
Website www.wya.org.uk

£7.50

Attitude, Attendance & Achievement

Contents

1 Introduction	1
2 Background	4
3 Action by Wales Youth Agency	7
4 Structure and control	8
Approaches	9
Outcome for schools	10
Other outcomes and findings	10
5 Staffing and programme delivery	12
6 Impact and considerations	14
7 Developments in youth work practice	16
8 Expectations, timescales and outcomes	19
9 Overview and perceptions of the projects	21
Practice issues	22
Accreditation of learning	22
Overload	22
10 Conclusions	24
Appendix: Project aims, purposes and objectives	27
Pen-y-Dre School (Fresh Start) Merthyr Tydfil	28
City & County of Cardiff (Looked-after Project)	31
Rhondda Cynon Taff	34
Carmarthe nshire	36
Newport (Living Proof) Voluntary Organisation	38
Denbighshire	41
Gwynedd School's Liaison Project	43
Powys - Acorn Project	47
Glossary of terms	49
References	50

1 Introduction

In the Government's Green Paper, *Learning Is For Everyone (LIFE)*, the Welsh Office set aside £300,000 in the first year to fund projects. These projects were designed to demonstrate how youth work approaches in partnership with schools, might be effective in influencing young people in raising their levels of achievement, attendance, motivation and improving their attitude towards learning.

This report considers these factors after the first eighteen months of the initial projects, following a series of visits made by staff of the Wales Youth Agency. The staff were responsible for the monitoring and evaluation of the eight initial projects, which received funding. Also included, are comments made by projects in their own recordings and through their attendance at seminars and workshops.

The Wales Youth Agency commissioned another report, using the expertise of a well-respected and leading academic in the field of youth work and social policy based at the University of Wales, Dr Howard Williamson. His valuable insight and commentary have been incorporated into this document.

Between 1992 and 1995, permanent exclusions from school rose four-fold (Parsons 1995). Since the election of the Labour government in 1997, there has been significant policy concern about the disengagement of young people from 'mainstream provision'.

The evidence shows that those who leave school prematurely for whatever reason, and who fail to gain basic educational qualifications, are more likely to commit crime and be involved in drug misuse as well as becoming alienated or socially excluded from traditional activities frequented by the majority of their peers.

The first report of the Social Exclusion Unit was concerned with truancy and exclusion (Social Exclusion Unit 1998a). As a recent White Paper on post-16 learning points out (Department for Education and Employment 1999b), retention and achievement in education is the best guarantee of young people making successful transitions to mainstream adulthood.

It was against this background and compelling evidence that the then Welsh Office Minister Peter Hain MP, at the launch of the Welsh version of the Green Paper on Lifelong Learning in April 1998, announced additional resources for the Wales Youth Agency to administer eight initial projects throughout Wales.

The projects chosen included urban as well as rural locations. Some of the projects were managed by voluntary organisations, some by local authorities. Looked-after children in Cardiff were also included.

Some projects they were self-standing, others linked into partnership and existing programmes to maximise use of resources.

Youth work practices were well received in many of the projects, but much seemed to depend on the charisma and commitment of the youth workers involved.

In the findings, of the report it was highlighted that youth work methodology and practice provided useful and complementary ways of working with this particular target group in a positive and constructive manner. Others visiting the projects welcomed and praised those, which maximised the achievements of young people through alternative accreditation schemes.

The skilful interaction between youth workers and schools to ensure that these young people were included in the various accredited programmes, which were then recognised in their records of achievement, was encouraged. These approaches helped all the various agencies involved to improve their understanding and mutual respect for each other.

As an innovative and experimental initiative, which has now been extended to all but two counties in Wales, the Youth Work and Schools Partnership generates more questions than answers, but it is at least an important experiment in collaboration.

This report only covers the first eighteen months of the project, but it does provide important indicators of some of the pitfalls and ways forward in tackling the issues surrounding young people and social exclusion.

The suggestions and recommendations in this report highlight that where commitment from all parties to overcoming difficulties was made, a much more effective response to the needs of the target groups of young people was achieved.

The finding of this report emphasises the need for a whole-school approach to social exclusion to produce positive results. Involvement of parents, mutual respect of practitioners and careful thought about curriculum issues all contributed to examples of success.

Strategically, it was suggested that future projects would need to pay more attention to a range of 'framework' issues that can be converted into effective practice on the ground.

It is the intention of the Wales Youth Agency to run a series of workshops with practitioners to share methods of delivering alternative curriculum programmes and to produce 'toolkits'.

Practitioners will then be able to use these toolkits in their own projects, thereby improving the quality of product being delivered.

Another factor which needs to be addressed at a national level for both the teaching and youth service professions are ways in which both can clearly see the way in which their two roles complement each other.

By so doing, it may dispel some of the myths about the different approaches, philosophies and methodologies that each adopts in its work with young people.

The conclusions given on page 24 of this report give informative ways forward for future projects. These conclusions should act as signposts for government thinking, for further discussions and for policy makers in determining a strategic approach for work with those young people who are disengaged from mainstream education.

What has to be done and not dismissed by those in the education service and the complementary professions is our responsibility to keep young people as close to learning as possible.

2 Background

The Purpose of Youth Work

The purpose of Youth Work is ‘To facilitate and support young people’s growth through dependence to interdependence, by encouraging their personal and social education and helping them to take a positive role in the development of their communities and society.’ DfEE (1997)

The purposes of youth work in Wales are:

- to promote equality of opportunity for all young people in order that they may fulfil their potential as empowered individuals and as members of groups and communities;
- to support young people in their transition to adulthood;
- to assist young people to develop attitude and skills which enable them to make purposeful use of their personal resources and time.

Youth work thus offers young people opportunities, which are:

- **EDUCATIVE** – enabling young people to gain the skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to identify, advocate and pursue their rights and responsibilities as individuals and as members of groups and communities, locally, nationally and internationally;
- **PARTICIPATIVE** – through voluntary relationships in which young people are partners in the learning processes and decision making structures which affect their own and other people’s lives and environments;
- **EMPOWERING** – enabling young people to understand and act on the personal, social and political issues, which affect their lives, the lives of others and the communities of which they are a part;
- **EXPRESSIVE** – encouraging and enabling young people to express their thoughts, emotions, aspirations and cultural identity through creative and challenging activities, particularly those which increase their understanding of the bilingualism, heritage and cultures of Wales.

Youth work has, historically, taken many forms (Jefferies 1979, Smith 1988), although the Ministerial Conferences at the end of the 1980s and in the early 1990s sought to be specific about its common characteristics (National Youth Bureau 1990, National Youth Agency 1992). These, however, were pitched at the level of principle, which could still accommodate enormous diversity of practice. Thus, 'youth work' was conceived of as operating on the above principles.

The above opportunities should be designed to promote equality for all through the challenging of oppression and inequity, from the acceptance of differences which spring from race, sexual identity, gender, disability, age and recognition of the diversity of culture and language in Wales.

Between 1992 and 1995, permanent exclusions from school rose four-fold (Parsons 1995). Since the election of the Labour Government in 1997, there has been significant policy concern about 'youth disaffection' or 'youth disengagement'. The first report of the **Social Exclusion Unit** was concerned with **truancy and exclusion** (Social Exclusion Unit 1998b). The recent Government White Paper on post-16 learning (Department of Education and Employment 1999b) points out that **retention and achievement in education** is the best guarantee that young people will make successful transitions to mainstream adulthood.

Young people **in care**, young people from **poor neighbourhoods**, young people from **reconstituted families**, among others, are least likely to sustain their attendance and achievement in education. As the Education and Employment Select Committee report on 'Disaffected Children' (1998) argued, **'it is crucial that these young people remain as close to education as possible'**.

In the context of some of the issues highlighted above, the Welsh Office Minister at the time, Peter Hain, at the launch of the Green Paper Learning Is For Everyone (LIFE) in April 1998, announced additional resources of **£300,000** be allocated to the Wales Youth Agency. This money was to be used to fund eight projects. The funding was designed **to demonstrate** how **youth work approaches in partnership with schools**, might be effective in influencing young people in raising their levels of **achievement, attendance and motivation** and **improving their attitude towards learning**.

The political interest in considering youth work approaches to working with young people recognised that for many, educational attainment in the formal setting was not always achievable in existing structures. However maintaining engagement with those who have been excluded or who have dropped out needed an **individual action programme** or alternative curriculum in order to bring them closer to continue learning and education. Peter Hain MP also stated at the Green Paper launch that:

'The Youth Service and associated Voluntary Sector Organisations are critically important in the drive towards a learning country. They make a substantial contribution by helping young people either to maintain their interest in learning or to return to learning... By 2002 we want the Youth Service to have a much higher profile and be better equipped to support young people into the next century.'

The first six partnership projects worked with the Education/Community Education/Youth Service departments, and were related to a partnership between one, two or three schools. One project worked with looked-after children across a county area. Another was a partnership with a voluntary organisation in conjunction with the local authority and a school. This voluntary organisation had already started to help education and social services to tackle social exclusion.

Since the inception of the Youth Work and Schools Partnership Programme (YWSPP), a joint report by the National Youth Agency and the Department for Education and Employment has restated the contribution to be made by youth work. This report highlighted youth work in **raising the achievement of young people and promoting their social inclusion** (Department for Education and Employment 1999a).

That report followed a number of analyses and commentaries on the **'missing'** young people who have dropped out of formal learning (Merton 1998; Pearce and Hillman 1998). **All testify to the need for greater informal support for more 'disaffected' young people and more flexible programmes to secure their re-engagement.** Such arguments have been reinforced more recently in the work of the government research think-tank DEMOS (Bentley and Gurusurthy 1999) and in the current work of the Social Exclusion Unit's Policy Action Team on young people.

Indeed, the post-16 White Paper proposed the establishment of a new support service for young people aged 13-19 **to increase** the proportions of young people remaining in education beyond the **minimum school leaving age**. It is a tough challenge, particularly in relation to young men, many of whom still often see no value in learning and are keen to leave at the earliest opportunity (McGivney 1999).

The Youth Work and Schools Partnership Programme is very much an experimental initiative. Methodologies more usually associated with youth work and informal education have the means to enable young people to achieve success and participate in **a curriculum which differs from the framework of the National Curriculum**. The initiative builds upon the innovative work which offers young people **recognition for their achievements** and experience as participants in youth service activity.

Building upon recent programmes that have been developed by the Wales Youth Agency and others such as Open College Networks, Welsh Joint Education Committee, ASDAN awards Number and Word Power Certificates, RSA CLAIT awards, OCN accredited units, GNVQ foundation in Manufacturing, Engineering and Construction and many more. Many young people have **gained recognition for their achievements** outside the **formal educational structure**. All the above records provide evidence and formative material, which can be used in the young person's **record of achievement portfolio**.

Summary

The Youth Work in Schools Partnership Programme has begun to demonstrate how youth work approaches in particular with schools might be effective in influencing young people in raising their levels of:

- achievement
- motivation
- attainment
- attendance

by moving forward in meeting government's goal of becoming once again a learning country.

3

Action by Wales Youth Agency

In June 1998, having been allocated the resources to take the Youth Work and Schools Partnership Programme forward, the Wales Youth Agency **invited local education authorities and voluntary youth organisations** to prepare and submit bids for funding. Project bids were expected to provide a brief outline of the methodologies which would be employed, details of the target group, and the **partnership arrangements** which would be developed in order to facilitate the project and the anticipated outcomes for project participants.

The timetable for this part of the programme was tight. Project bids were received in early **July 1998**. Assessors considered bids independently before a final decision was made. The successful projects were informed and a meeting arranged at the **end of July 1998**, to make arrangements for taking projects forward, prior to schools breaking up for the summer, with projects due to start in the September.

INITIAL PROJECTS

PROJECT	AUTHORITY
• Pen-y-Dre High School (Fresh Start)	Merthyr Tydfil
• Supportive Learning Programme 'Looked - after Children'	Cardiff
• Ferndale Comprehensive School/Youth Work Partnership	Rhondda Cynon Taff
• School and Youth Work Partnership Project	Carmarthenshire
• Living Proof (Voluntary Organisation)	Newport
• Youth Work and Schools Partnership	Denbighshire
• Youth Work and School Partnership Meirionnydd	Gwynedd
• Youth Work and School Partnership (Acorn Project)	Powys

Appendix A. Aims, Objectives and Targets, submitted by the above projects in their applications for funding

4 Structure and control

Some schools exercised much more control over the activities of the projects than others, both directly (by defining the parameters of the project's task) and indirectly (by managing access to the school and targeted pupils).

This raised broader questions about the underpinning agenda of the programme as a whole:

was it about how youth work could support a formal schooling agenda?

was it about how schools could 'translate' a youth work agenda into their objectives and priorities?

was it about how schools and youth work together might develop better support systems for young people on the margins of learning?

These broad questions are not, however, pertinent here. What is pertinent is whether or not the **youth work/schools relationship** was one of partnership or subordination.

Schools often remain islands in their own communities, despite renewed suggestions that they should function at the heart of those communities (Ball 1998) or transmute into 'neighbourhood learning centres' (Bentley 1999).

Their relationships with exponents of 'informal learning', quasi youth workers, are likely to be - despite all the warm words - somewhat tense.

A project worker in Gwynedd stated, **'from a youth work perspective what may look like a structured approach probably, still looks rather unstructured from the point of view of a school'**.

Recurrent frustrations were expressed by a number of project workers about the (usually unintended, but sometimes intended) obstacles presented by the school. In-school project activity was clearly perceived, **by at least some teachers, as something of a 'soft option' at best, and perhaps even 'subversive' at worst.**

The project worker in North Denbighshire, pointed out that her youth work methodology 'did not go down too well at first', but that teachers were slowly won over by her commitment and the obvious engagement of participating pupils. Some project workers did not, however, get this chance to impress.

Youth workers are not accustomed to working in formal institutional settings such as schools (and also hospitals, remand centre, children's homes). The projects rapidly **learned that they had to sensitise themselves to the ethos, and customs and practices, of different schools**, because this would affect the kinds of connections they would strike with them in relation to pupils participating in the projects.

While programmes were negotiated between the projects and participating schools, in very different ways, youth work practice is not about pressing forward with such a programme ‘come hell or high water’.

Many of the projects talked of the need for **flexibility, negotiation and concession** in return for commitment. This, it was argued, enables them to ‘hold the line’, **which schools had often failed to do** with the young people in question. However, the line held was very likely to be different and might not be acceptable to (some) schools.

It is this inherent tension in youth work and schools partnership projects which reinforces **the need for establishing clear agreements about access, direction and programme** prior to a project commencing, without compromising the youth work approach.

For much of the first year of the Youth Work and Schools Partnership Programme, such issues had to be addressed ‘on the hoof’ and not always to the satisfaction of either party.

Approaches

The projects differed considerably in the ways in which they established contact with **‘targeted’ young people**. Project workers generally appeared keen to avoid having young people ‘sent’ to them, preferring to seek them out in contexts outside school. Hence the work by Living Proof Newport in pupils’ homes, and the Rhondda Cynon Taff project’s community-based approach.

The Cardiff project had no choice but to call in on residential units. Likewise, the Denbighshire project was often pointed in the direction of young people whom the school hoped the project would be able to support.

In Gwynedd and Powys, specific young people were clearly referred to the project, partly against their wishes.

Some firm, but sensitive, communication was required to establish the distinctive identity of project workers as youth workers and not simply as adjunct to the teaching profession.

The intentions of different projects, as expressed in the outline proposals and as activated in initial activity, **sometimes demanded re-appraisal.**

The best examples are from Merthyr, where the ‘classroom approach’ adopted at first with the FreshStart 3 programme was clearly not going to prove successful, and Living Proof, which had initially not considered working with Year 9 pupils but subsequently revised this decision.

Outcomes for schools

• Classroom management and pupil behaviour

In one project for example, effective working relationships between school staff, especially pastoral staff, EWO's and project workers have developed. A welcome outcome in two projects is that teaching staff has noticed that with the disruptive **pupils productively engaged elsewhere**, or with the additional support of project workers within the classroom, they are able to **give more attention** to other marginal pupils.

One teacher gave the example of a pupil requiring an average of 15 minutes close attention in a lesson lasting 50 minutes, time that she could now spread among the others.

It was also observed that the behaviour of some teaching groups has improved dramatically and has contributed to improved standards for pupils in their work. This effect has been noticed with problems all along the line.

• Changes in schools

In some cases, schools have demonstrated a firm commitment to change and development to become more responsive to the needs of young people experiencing difficulties.

In one case, a whole-school strategy to address disaffection has been put in place, but in some others, much remains to be done to ensure that the culture and ethos of schools gives sufficient priority to projects that have demonstrated what needs to be done to change attitudes.

In another case, in spite of some difficulties, non-target groups became engaged in activities outside school hours (frequently alongside individuals who had built a bridge between the youth service and the school, with an increase in participation in youth work from the target group). The head expressed his opinion that the school needs to become a true 'community school', and that the project is enhancing the process by which this will happen.

In the case of the looked-after children project, it was noted that certain schools would not at that time even discuss the possibility of admitting those looked-after young people into 'their', schools, although others were more accommodating. The project leader made it his task to visit every secondary school in the authority, beginning in the autumn term, to speak to each headteacher about re-integration programmes.

However, the reluctance of certain secondary schools to contemplate re-integration is an obstacle to success in certain cases.

Other outcomes and findings

• Involvement of parents

In three of the projects, particular efforts were made to involve the parents of disaffected young people. Whilst these efforts have had varying degrees of success, there are good examples of **parental support, co-operation and increased understanding of the issues** facing young people and greater practical support for their children.

In one project, much of the work has centred on providing residential breaks for the great majority of pupils in the year, each form group in turn being taken to a youth hostel either in Tenby or the Brecon Beacons for a few days during the week.

A strong feature of this operation has been the introductory visits made by project workers, **in pairs**, to pupils' homes to explain to parents the nature and objectives of the project for their child's year group. The project workers were able to explain that they would also be able to provide support to parents if that was acceptable.

In this particular case, the project is led by a voluntary organisation. It has succeeded in its approach because, perhaps, it is not perceived as being a part of any authoritarian or social control agency.

In some cases, however, in spite of a substantial programme of home visits, parental support is limited or absent. There have been problems in making contact with some parents and there is a need for a **positive strategy to engage with parents** who may not show interest. **A significant number of these parents collude with the absence of the young people** and are themselves hostile or disaffected. Many of these have alternative priorities for their children as earners, child or personal carers or in relation to domestic duties.

- **Inter-agency working on behalf of individual young people**

A particularly positive outcome from projects is the closer involvement of agencies in pupil review meetings. Examples have included EWOs, the youth service, social workers, schools, the police, voluntary organisations, the careers service, health promotion agencies, etc. In one case, each project participant was reviewed, with detailed discussions of those presenting particularly problematic behaviour.

Solutions offered varied according to the individual needs, with a strong emphasis on finding the best solution for that particular person. The headteacher and LEA officer subsequently confirmed that such liaison across services had not been achieved until this project began.

- **Support to young people**

All young people receive good support from project staff and others associated with the projects. This support is available in class or elsewhere (e.g. homework club). This includes key skills support, pastoral care and parental help. In one case, project staff have helped staff in the homework club and provided some home study support. Elsewhere, support has taken a very practical but no less significant form, for example transport from home to offsite activities.

- **Earlier intervention**

One project has recognised the need for earlier intervention in relation to disaffection and is currently negotiating access to **feeder primary schools** so that initiatives can be put in place before attitudes and attendance patterns of young people have been established.

5 Staffing and programme delivery

Staffing levels for the delivery of the programmes developed by the projects varied considerably. Many projects relied on the contribution of other initiatives. In this respect, project workers were acting as 'brokers' (see Bentley and Gurumurthy 1999) between young people and local opportunities for educative participation and development.

- The Cardiff project benefited from its links with an existing initiative, namely the Learning Outdoors project.
- The Community Autos Rhyl (CARS) project in Denbighshire provided an opportunity for at least one young person.
- The Powys project gained enormously from the involvement of the Health Promotion Unit.
- The Rhondda Cynon Taff project worked collaboratively with Fairbridge De Cymru in the personal development courses offered by the organisation.

Some such provision had costs attached and some did not, but its existence **was critical to the possibility of a broad-based and individually tailored programme** for the young people involved.

Without such links, projects had to rely on their own devices and resources. The Rhondda Cynon Taff project organised sessions around football training. In Gwynedd, the project worker put on a roller-blading competition. The Carmarthenshire worker and Living Proof organised residential experiences. Others made use of existing provision on this front, with mixed success!.

Direct delivery, which was often essential for young people under the age of 14 who could not access wider provision because of their age, did not prevent project workers from building links with other agencies and, indeed, with others in the local community.

The Powys project worker had to facilitate work experience placements. In Denbighshire, however, this role was allocated to the training and employment adviser, seconded from the careers service, who permitted the two project workers to remain focused on working more closely with young people both individually and in groups.

The careers service, indeed, played a significant role in some of the projects, providing direct intervention in the programme in Powys, and presenting an alternative package of opportunity (through Careers Plus) in Gwynedd.

In view of the very different kinds of young people who were involved in these projects, it is clearly not possible to suggest a ready-made programme design for combatting 'disaffection'. However, the different combinations of activity and opportunity made available through the projects do suggest that all such projects should consider a package, which includes:

- individual advice and support;
- personal development programmes;
- vocational orientation activity (work experience, careers);
- community-based activity;
- academic progression (if only developing basic skills).

Not all projects had the intention or the capacity to make such a menu of opportunity available, but **future projects should perhaps be required to make the case for omitting one or more of these components, if it is missing from their programme.**

6

Impact and considerations

All kinds of achievements have been proclaimed for these first eight projects, yet few have had much bearing on the toughest challenge that the Youth Work and Schools Partnership Programme presented:

- **To improve the levels of under-achieving in pupils ‘at the margins’.**

There may be more evidence of this later, when more projects have been operational, but **formal accredited certification has been limited**, even if that which has accrued to individuals on the projects has clearly instilled some sense of success and confidence.

Indeed, while there are still important questions to be asked about the wider currency of the many certificates which are now available, their value in conveying to young people who have routinely failed that **they are capable of some level of achievement** cannot be understated. It may be that **sense of achievement** which renews, albeit often modestly, **their commitment to learning** and is reflected in improved school attendance and behaviour.

The projects have perhaps suffered from inflated expectations about what they might achieve, and these were often compounded by the unrealistic aspirations.

- Young people re-engaged with school may still have limited potential for educational success, but their attitude may be more acceptable.
- This, in itself, may be a product of personal and social development activity in which they have been involved.

The broader impact, at both ends of this spectrum, must not be forgotten either. These projects may have resulted in more harmonious families, communities and schools, although cause and effect are difficult to confirm. Families of some pupils on the Powys project noted the changed attitude of their children.

Communities may be less ravaged by the excessive behaviour of some of these individuals. Schools certainly commented on the fact that the project’s focus on their more ‘difficult’ pupils **had led to greater cohesion within the school**, whether or not work had been done with ‘targeted’ pupils outside school.

• Progression

There was a lot of talk of ‘**tracking**’ individuals, which resonates with current government policy thinking (Department for Education and Employment 1999b). However, with some exceptions, there is little hard data on the level, duration or intensity of engagement by individual young people and where this has led.

It is accepted that starting points and wider pressures on individuals bedevil issues of progression. There is also the question of whether or not successful progression (if it is identified) can be confidently **attributed to the intervention of the project** in question.

• Resourcing the projects

Resources for each project were different, some with modest funding under the Youth Work and Schools Partnership Programme secured additional resources in cash or kind from other sources. It is impossible, therefore, even to quantify the exact per capita costs of the projects. Only the Powys project hinted at a likely per capita cost in its programme, and estimated a sum of £3,000 per participant.

There are a number of issues to be considered, therefore.

- First, there is the question of the funding source of such projects. In Powys, the pupils remained

There is an irrefutable case that young people, however tenuous their engagement with schooling may be, should still be able to access an educational entitlement for educational purposes.

on the school roll and their capitation did not follow them to the project.

- Second, in terms of a ‘compensatory’ agenda, it might be argued that additional educational resources should be committed to such pupils.
- Third, however, as noted above, not all positive outcomes may be educational and even if educational outcomes are conspicuous by their absence, others may have economic implications for the resourcing of such projects.

These relate both to the short term (psychosocial health, desistance from crime and drug misuse) and the longer term (homelessness, crime, ill health, psychosocial disorders and living on benefits).

Risk and protective factors on these fronts are relatively easy to establish but notoriously difficult to convert into persuasive and effective prevention programmes.

One critical risk factor is disengagement from education and the failure to make successful post-16 transitions.

‘There is an incontrovertible case for allocating sufficient funding, from educational sources and beyond, to build stronger fences at the top of cliffs rather than providing ambulances at the bottom.’

Nick Hardwick, when Chief Executive of Centrepoint.

7

Developments in youth work practice

• Is it 'youth work'?

The Youth Work and Schools Partnership Programme has been subjected to considerable attention within the youth work field.

Some commentators have expressed concern, asking whether youth work should be attached so closely to the specific policy agenda of school inclusion.

They have been equally forthright in asking whether youth workers should be funded by TECs to deliver a training agenda or those funded by Health Authorities to work on issues of sexual health or drug misuse.

These are all, of course, legitimate topics for youth work programmes and interventions; the concern is about when they are the explicit priority.

Other commentators have welcomed the programme on the grounds that it is a political act of faith in the contribution to be made by youth work to the lives and prospects of young people!

Yet reservations remain, and most would agree that the style and practice of the projects **is not youth work as it has been traditionally understood**.

Advocates of the programme maintain that **it is still youth work**, but 'not as we know it'. Critics have argued that, for different reasons, the projects may have elements of 'youth work' within them, but that it is not youth work but something else.

Some may say that youth work has, for too long, remained insulated from both the changing policies affecting young people and the changing social condition of young people in transition.

The fundamental difficulty for some is that there is no universal conception of 'traditional' youth work, against which the work of the projects can be judged.

Others have seen youth work as something which should be delivered by nationally qualified JNC youth and community workers, expressing a concern that only appropriately trained and qualified staff should deliver youth work. This view that may not be shared by some in other sections of youth work practice.

Further, it has been argued that it is not so much who is responsible for the delivery of the work, but **how it is done**. In other words, it is the evocation of youth work methodologies which is at issue, not the context of the work.

The Youth Work and Schools Partnership Programme throws all these issues into relief. Although most projects made some reference, implicitly if not explicitly, to **youth work curriculum principles**, these themselves have always remained ill-defined and in need of clarification.

Clearly all young people involved in the projects were taking part in some way or other, and so compliance with the participative principle could always be defended, but certainly in some projects the level of **consultation, negotiation and planning in partnership with young people was not readily apparent**.

In other words, participation in any full sense of the term was not happening. And the voluntaristic principle of engagement with youth work, which underpins processes of participants, **was not an option in some of the projects**.

Much of the contemporary policy agenda for young people (learning, desisting from crime, refraining from drug misuse) is critical if young people are to remain engaged within mainstream routes of transition. Youth work cannot escape that fact.

Youth work, therefore has a responsibility to align itself with other strands of professional intervention in the lives of young people.

Such alignment clearly demands a suspension of any ‘purist notions’ of what is ‘best’. It requires a willingness to respect the territory and priorities of others while seeking to identify common ground in terms of partnership whereby practice can be developed.

This has been the challenge for the Youth Work and Schools Partnership Programme.

Both youth work and formal education should have an unequivocal shared commitment to enable young people to remain in learning.

Working together demands some permeability in the boundaries between agencies, so that each can explore the **contribution made by others**.

In some projects, the schools certainly (if slowly) came to terms with the different thinking and methodologies which inform youth work practice. Most, however, needed to make concessions to the fact that it was working within a school environment or, in a sense, under ‘licence’ from the school.

Other schools saw projects largely as an extension solely of the **schools’ agenda and dictated, directed and framed by their work**.

There are real questions here about whether or not that work (or part of that work) could be considered to be youth work; it was more the opportunistic seizing of additional resources to deal, in more flexible and alternative ways, with young people who were causing difficulties for the school.

Youth work, on the other hand, focuses its priorities quite clearly on the needs of the individual. The formal educational agenda would be secondary to any wider expressed or identified needs.

Monitoring and evaluation of projects visited highlighted that the projects, which have used youth work methodologies and practice, have made significant contributions to the work with ‘disengaged’, young people. **Opportunities for the development of youth work approaches** to work with young people experiencing disaffection, have proved to be worthy of further consideration and works best where there is a close partnership with schools. The emphasis **where these approaches work best, skilled youth workers have:**

- successfully developed **innovative and effective** ways of working with young people;
- demonstrated **effective intervention** in potentially difficult situations;
- demonstrated the benefits to be gained where **non-authoritarian adults** work with young people experiencing disaffection and the **benefits of this approach** in relation to their motivation and self-esteem;
- identified a range of **alternative activities** where young people **can experience success and achievement**;
- **brought new perspectives** on work with disaffected young people into a school environment;
- worked **successfully in partnership** with other agencies; and
- **received good support** from school staff, other professionals and youth services.

8

Expectations, timescales and outcomes

The Youth Work and Schools Partnership Programme was subject to very different expectations. Politically, there were significant hopes that youth work intervention could make quite a difference in counteracting rates of school exclusion and underachievement.

Professionally, both project managers and workers, and schools acknowledged that such expectations were probably over-ambitious (although they were often enshrined in project proposals, see Appendix A). **The objectives were more focused on maintaining disaffected young people in school**, supporting improved attendance and behaviour, and perhaps offering constructive opportunity within or beyond school.

Young people themselves placed most emphasis on the latter: the projects provided 'something to do', although many young people admitted that **their involvement had given them greater confidence**, had made them proud of their achievements, and had helped them in their attitude and attendance at school.

It was not just the formal and more structured elements of projects' work which had benefited the young people (indeed, this was sometimes the aspects that some young people most disliked), but the more informal interventions - sometimes 'just a chat'. This dialogical process, in fact, lies at the heart of youth work (Jeffs and Smith 1996) but, from pupils' point of view, it was very important in enabling them to unload issues, talk them through and, as one young woman put, to 'get it all out of your head'.

In turn, the consequence of a youth work approach with the school was that young people who were routinely 'difficult', presented themselves in a calmer and more receptive manner.

Expectations have also to be linked to time. There are issues around the intensity and duration of interventions, as well as harder to judge questions about the degree to which young people are receptive to those interventions.

It is a complex picture that more problematic young people do not necessarily require proportionately more support.

It would be foolish to attach grandiose aspirations to short-term projects (**which has become commonplace, but is too often paper merry-go-round with little evidence from substantiated practice**), it is also risky to argue that longer-term strategies would guarantee the delivery of higher expectations. Of course they would stand more chance - but there would still be no guarantees.

Without some form of measuring success, everything is defensible or, conversely, unjustifiable.

The question is what proportion of young people involved in these project should be expected to progress - and how far should they be expected to progress in terms of attitude, attendance and achievement? An analogy might be drawn with youth justice projects, which do not always ensure complete desistance from offending behaviour but may secure important reductions in offending behaviour, both in terms of the severity of crimes committed and in the frequency of offending.

Another question for schools-focused youth work initiatives is what counts as an ‘alternative curriculum’?

The term is much used and, as a result, its meaning has become muddled. The Education and Employment Select Committee (1998) report talked of the value of developing an ‘**alternative curricular offer**’ which might include more vocational study (perhaps within a further education college), work experience and some personal development or community-based activity.

Beyond an elementary - though still often important – ‘**harm reduction**’ argument, on the grounds that purposeful activity produces, at minimum, diversion from more self-harming or community-harming activity, evidence of the longer-term impact of such intervention remains elusive.

On the Youth Work and Schools Partnership Programme, **it also remains elusive**, despite anecdotal accounts - from schools, young people and the projects themselves - that the projects had had some beneficial results, on a spectrum of criteria.

Some of the ‘alternative curricula’ delivered by the projects particularly in Gwynedd and Powys adopted and used a ‘carrot-and-stick’ approach to encourage participation by the targeted group of young people.

- The Cardiff and Merthyr (FreshStart 3) projects were also about retaining a modicum of engagement in learning, when otherwise there would have been none.
- Denbighshire, Newport and Carmarthenshire were often more about bolstering up a commitment to mainstream schooling on the part of young people at risk of slipping off the edge.
- The Rhondda Cynon Taff project, which was probably closest to a ‘traditional’ youth work project (though it was admittedly more targeted and more intense), saw positive schooling effects almost as a by-product of its community-based interventions.

However, it cannot be considered an ‘alternative curriculum’ offer: the participating young people were involved in much of the project’s work whether or not they attended school. The mainstream school curriculum was still the daytime requirement (although there was some flexibility); no real alternative curriculum was on offer.

What counts as appropriate and acceptable alternative curricula has still to be resolved. This needs to be done in the context both of some young people’s **alienation from the constraints of the National Curriculum** but also of the fact that mainstream academic qualifications remain the most powerful passport to, and predictor of, successful transitions to adulthood.

9

Overview and perceptions of the projects

- The parties involved interpreted the programme very differently, whatever formal objectives the Youth Work and Schools Partnership Programme had determined (as set out broadly by the minister when he announced the funding package in 1998).
- Some schools, for example, used the projects as useful repositories for their ‘problem’ pupils (the ‘dumping ground’ syndrome) while others also ‘dumped’ the bad kids on the projects but for more commendable reasons.
- Such ‘**compensatory**’ provisions were acknowledged and **resented** by some teachers.
- Many saw the projects as offering ‘**treats for the bad kids**’, partly on the grounds of scarce resources being consumed by ‘**no-hopers**’. Some teachers said resources ought to be used elsewhere to improve the performance of more committed young people, and partly because of a legitimate concern that the projects would worsen in-school behaviour by borderline young people who wished to be referred to them.
- The ‘ghetto-ization’ of those disengaged from education in alternative ‘youth work’ projects are risks to be avoided.
- Linked to this point is the question of an ‘**inclusive**’ or ‘**exclusive**’ framework for action by the youth work projects.
- Where the focus of a project’s activity was often away from school - with individuals, families and communities - the connections between the ‘**attitude, attendance, and achievement**’ objectives and the everyday practice of the projects appeared to be rather tenuous.
- The most notable concern was whether it was appropriate for such projects to have a **narrowly defined educational agenda**, or whether their role should be **to address a wider conception of social inclusion**.
- Nominally, the Youth Work and Schools Partnership Project, might equally have been a youth work and/or crimes project, or a youth work and social welfare project. Attached as it was to a schools agenda, it risked ‘falling between two stools’ - failing apparently to support the progression of young people towards schooling.
- No credit for the interventions on other fronts (such as family mediation, combating drug misuse, promoting fitness) which it appeared to be making successfully needs to be addressed.
- Such **joined-up practice** needs to be reflected in joined-up policy formulation and development and is, indeed, part of the recent proposals for a new youth support service (see Social Exclusion Unit 1999b).

Practice issues

‘Working in partnership effectively is contingent on trust, mutual respect and understanding, recognition of boundaries and a strong sense of complementary roles.’

However tightly defined, partnership working invariably rests on a ‘precarious equilibrium’ which is constantly **subjected to institutional, professional and individual pressures** (Williamson and Weatherspoon 1985).

It was clear that **some** of the schools’ youth workers **did not feel that they were working in partnership**, but were **subordinated** to the requirements of the school.

There were, of course, schools which either placed the youth work project on an equal footing with other school activity or at least were prepared to give time to a project to ‘prove’ itself.

There were some excellent examples of complementary practice, with for example, the non-statutory school youth workers being supported in their work by the education welfare service or by Careers Plus. Critics might see this as a dilution of distinctive youth work practice or raise time-honoured questions about ‘social control’, but the project workers themselves reflect positively on such experiences and do not indicate that this undermined their credibility with young people.

The accreditation of learning

There is a contemporary obsession with the accreditation of learning, despite well-established concerns about both ‘qualification inflation’ and the currency of certification beyond mainstream academic qualifications.

Considerable emphasis was placed on the projects which comprised the Youth Work and Schools Partnership Programme to **‘maximise’ the achievements of young people** through accredited certification. Indeed, most project proposals gave much space to the different potential sources of such accreditation.

Project workers were concerned about the **pressures placed upon them to confer certificates at every turn**, with almost the implication that non-certificate activity lacked purpose and value.

A broader canvas of **what participation and achievement means**, and the ways, in which it might be rewarded, is required.

Overload

Most projects expressed concern about the **range and levels of responsibilities** vested in the project workers and the lack of definition of parameters of work. For example, the majority were expected to explore alternative curriculum activities, ensure avenues for accreditation of learning, liaise and negotiate with partner schools, establish and/or develop inter-agency links, organise a programme of intervention with targeted young people, and engage directly with the young people concerned.

These were almost minimum requirements in provisional job descriptions. In addition to all this, project workers were required to maintain regular and detailed records of contact with, and progress of, young people targeted by the project.

The projects, by and large, forged contact with the majority of their target groups (which varied in numbers from twelve to a few hundred!).

Accredited learning opportunities, at times, and (broad-based) inter-agency links, most of the time, did not figure in most projects' priorities.

Furthermore, rigorous record keeping and monitoring of progress - at least not in any form which would lend itself to systematic analysis - was not consistently tackled. France and Wiles (1996), in their evaluation of the youth work and crime prevention Youth Action Schemes, were **highly critical of the failure of youth workers to generate data** which would assist internal reflection on practice and external evaluation.

10 Conclusions

Strategic and Policy Issues

At a more strategic level, future projects will need to pay more careful attention to **a range of 'framework' issues** that can be converted into effective practice on the ground. Some of the schools youth work activity was necessarily ad hoc and incremental, largely because some fundamental questions about the **relationships and expectations of the two central players** in these arrangements had been poorly thought out.

Ultimately, however, both have **a responsibility to keep young people as close to learning as possible**, since this is the best guarantee for their successful futures. Both the teaching and youth work professions know that this is the case and a whole-hearted commitment from all parties to overcome difficulties is required by making more effective responses **to the needs of young people experiencing disaffection**.

The interaction between youth workers and teachers was patchy in this review of the eight projects however establishing professional dialogue, **mutual respect and trust is essential** if this kind of intervention is to be effective.

The **involvement of parents** has to be welcomed and in the cases where this did occur positive outcomes enhanced the work of the project.

Appropriate plans to develop future work, e.g. to extend even further the range of educational provision was also welcome.

Inter-agency co-operation is also an essential ingredient to the positive relationships between the providers of services to young people, as was the careful tracking of young people, which included photographic **records of participation and achievement** to support the **evidence**, which will benefit future initiatives and policy.

Curriculum Issues

Where projects had planned and worked in a truly partnership model there was an improved **mutual understanding and recognition** of each other's discrete but complimentary roles in the delivery of the curriculum. If young people are to be enabled to make the best of their potential, even in difficult circumstances, when there are so many competing pressures then the partnerships have to be transparent and with 'give and take', by all partners.

Good practice was identified where programmes **meet individual needs**. It is important that programmes are started as early as possible and that staff undertake self-evaluation with regard to their outcomes.

It is important that there are a variety of programmes developed and that **SMART Targets** (see page 49) are pursued in meeting objectives where possible and that these are accredited to improve young peoples self-esteem.

Schools

Evidence gained by visiting the projects and through recordings, highlighted good practice in the youth work and schools partnerships where a number of positive features occurred. For example, where ownership of the project was **closely embedded into whole school policy** through good school leadership all partners were clear about their role. This was particularly essential as young people experiencing disaffection were made to feel inclusive of the school policy and not just as a bolt-on group.

The benefits gained by other pupils in terms of their progress and standards resulted by the above approaches has many positive outcomes.

The ethos and **commitment of a school together with other agencies** in developing a whole school policy in addressing the issues of disaffection is also to be congratulated.

Youth Work

It was very apparent that work of this nature needs **well-qualified and experienced youth workers** who understand the opportunities and constraints in what they are trying to do so that they can effect and implement action. They do however need to be **well supported** with adequate and regular supervision sessions.

Youth workers were observed encouraging young people to **develop their key skills** in literacy, numeracy, IT, problem solving, personal and social development.

It was noticeable that positive relationships existed between project workers and individual young people and their **enthusiasm and commitment** was **crucial** in the success of the projects.

Young People

There were many positive outcomes for individual young people. There were clearly **improvements in their attitude and self-esteem**, which helped them in adjusting back into the school community and **credibility with their peers**. There was also evidence of an improvement in attendance and achievements and young people appreciated the support they received.

It was also noticeable that **their involvement** through dialogue in determining future school policy was welcomed.

Progression and the development around the issues of attitude were difficult to measure however attendance and achievements have been recorded with some striking **examples of effective and positive interventions** with some of the young people.

Staff Development and Training

In the process of joint planning, **mutual respect** is clearly a key to the success of the projects. It is vital that staff development and training is implicit in such projects. It is no good leaving things to chance. **In-service and specialist training** should be given as a right to all those involved so that standards and the quality of provision is maintained and improved.

Training, particularly in mentoring skills, may well be appropriate for those working in this context.

At the **national level**, both the **teaching profession** and the **youth service** need to be clearer about the ways in which their two roles complement each other in relation to 'disaffection' from school. Some teachers remain unsure of youth work philosophy and methodology, while some youth workers are not yet attached either to one particular policy priority or one particular institutional context.

Appendix

Projects' aims, purposes and objectives

PROJECT	AUTHORITY
• Pen-y-Dre High School (Fresh Start)	Merthyr Tydfil
• Supportive Learning Programme 'Looked - after Children'	Cardiff
• Ferndale Comprehensive School/Youth Work Partnership	Rhondda Cynon Taff
• School and Youth Work Partnership Project	Carmarthenshire
• Living Proof (Voluntary Organisation)	Newport
• Youth Work and Schools Partnership	Denbighshire
• Youth Work and School Partnership Meirionnydd	Gwynedd
• Youth Work and School Partnership (Acorn Project)	Powys

MERTHYR TYDFIL

BACKGROUND

Pen-y-Dre (**Fresh Start**) school is situated in Merthyr Tydfil and its catchment area is from the Gurnos, an estate that has been described as the most deprived and disadvantaged area in the UK.

PURPOSES OF THE PROJECT

On the basis of aptitude and inclination, pupils targeted were year 10 pupils (14–15 year-olds) 1998/1999 assigned to two groups:

- one group following GCSE courses, Personal and Social Education (PSE) with GNVQ Manufacturing;
- second group following GCSE Technology, Maths, Science, PSE programmes and courses with the Open College Network - (Giving Young People Credit).

Throughout the course a youth worker supported the above groups. The youth worker had a multifunctional role, but the key element was built upon **relationships with individual young people** in order to provide them with emotional and intellectual support in a non-judgemental fashion.

The youth worker acted as an **advocate, mentor, counsellor and leader, a trusted adult for reflective support** whilst seeking, to boost young people's confidence, self-esteem and worth, using youth work techniques.

The youth workers also **worked with the parents** of this group, providing support and encouragement for them to participate in educational opportunities.

The youth worker was to be the school link, and the link with outside agencies working with this particular group of young people at the school.

The work considered had to **link into the existing core values** deriving from the schools' mission to:

- raise achievement
- raise attendance
- raise self-esteem

Those values are:

- respect for others
- respect for self
- hard work
- intellectual curiosity

Action plans were already in place for all pupils at the school. Behaviour and work codes (based on the above) are **tracked weekly** and effected.

The project was also to link closely with other strategies and development plans already operational involving a variety of agencies, colleges and groups operating in and around Merthyr.

The project specifically addressed the needs of:

- low achievers
- the disengaged
- those for whom school was becoming increasingly irrelevant

TARGETS

- 90% of the participants of the course to achieve GCSE or Certificates of Education grades in three subject areas;
- 90% of the participants on the courses to achieve grades D-G in five subject areas or GNVQ equivalent;
- 85% attendance by course participants;
- 90% progression to some other form of training, further education or employment;
- attitudinal shift identified at the beginning of Year 10 (14-15 year-olds) up to the end of Year 11 (15-16 year-olds).

EVALUATION PROCESS

- interviews with course participants
- interviews with course teachers and other providers
- interviews with parents
- peer-led observation
- interviews with line managers
- pupil tracking through pupil destination codes

The entire **programme is conducted off-site**. Both the groups indicated follow a core programme of studies, which includes **enhanced access** to word processing facilities, studying key skills through the medium of IT, undertaking residential experiences, but above all the **benefits of access to the support worker**.

CARDIFF

BACKGROUND

The project in Cardiff was aimed specifically at **'looked-after young people'** of whom 50% had significant learning difficulties.

PURPOSE OF PROJECT AND STATEMENT OF INTENT

Through the provision of an alternative strategy, which incorporated the principles of the Youth Work Curriculum Statement for Wales, the project offered a variety of learning programmes. Each specific programme was designed to encourage an **increase in motivation** amongst the participants to **reintegrate into mainstream education** and/or training opportunities during and after their period in care. It was expected that this innovative scheme would create the desired ethos, in that the **provision of educational opportunities had a high profile within residential care** situations.

TARGET GROUP

Looked-after young people within Cardiff County who:

- are on the point of permanent exclusion;
- have been excluded and for whom part-time education placements are in place;
- refuse to attend formal placements.

The project aims to work with looked-after young people who were resident **within six residential units** in Cardiff.

This would be achieved through the provision of **individually negotiated**, targeted programmes of work, offered in a variety of settings, which could include:

basic education, ICT, issue-based work, life and social skills, outdoor education, specialist activities e.g. arts, sports, work experience – utilising community education establishments, other county departments as well as local businesses and industry.

- opportunities to participate in a range of **accredited courses**;
- possible involvement in existing successful **alternative learning programmes**;
- a project staff team to include project co-ordinator and mentor team – a **mentor for each participant** offering on-going counselling support.
- Project personnel worked in **partnership** with **care workers, teachers, other youth workers, education welfare officers, community-based groups, local businesses** and other agencies to ensure that the experiences offered were appropriate and facilitate the reintegration process.

- The project co-ordinator and mentor team regularly reviewed individuals' progress. The project was **supported and monitored** by a panel of county departmental officers.

ALTERNATIVE LEARNING PROGRAMMES FOR SOME OF CARDIFF COUNTY'S LOOKED-AFTER CHILDREN

AIM

Through an alternative strategy increase the motivation of some young people in residential care in order to re-engage them in the learning process.

OBJECTIVES

- negotiate **individually-targeted realistic learning programmes** to include a range of formal and informal educational opportunities;
- encourage an involvement in a range of **accredited courses**;
- establish **records of achievement** portfolios for each participant;
- according to need, **provide** appropriate and **meaningful work experience placements**;
- at all times offer to young people of school age, particularly at Key Stage 3, the **opportunity to re-enter mainstream** provision;
- offer ongoing **support and guidance** to enable participants to increase their **self-esteem** and give them **confidence** to attain additional **knowledge** and **new skills**;
- provide opportunities for participants to **take responsibility** for formulating aspects of their learning programmes;
- encourage participants **to develop** their own interests;
- liaise with schools, other council departments and agencies, local businesses and community groups to **establish a resources network** for the duration of the project;
- establish an **effective** system to **evaluate** the ongoing development of the project;
- **maintain contact** with eighteen young people identified at the beginning of the project who left care provision;
- ensure **progress** is maintained and developed with these young people.

This number of participants increased as other young people presenting educational problems replaced those that left residential care. **Contact is maintained with those who leave.**

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Project workers adopted the following procedures:

- **reviewed daily** individuals' attendance at an agreed learning venue;
- carried out **weekly interviews** with each young person to **assess progress**, plan schedule and discuss portfolio development;
- made regular contact with tutorial team, specialist tutors and/or work placement supervisors;
- submitted **weekly reports** to County Community Education Officer on project development;
- held **monthly meetings** with residential **care managers**.

Monthly meetings of the **local steering group** were held to assess progress and consider strategy.

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- negotiated **targeted learning programmes** to be provided for **all participants**;
- **50%** of the targeted group to participate in **accredited courses**;
- **record of achievement** portfolios to be provided for **all participants**;
- work experience programmes **to be provided** for all that are eligible;
- **full attendance** to be **achieved** at each negotiated programme;
- **self-evaluation** forms to be completed following conclusion of each learning unit;
- **support sessions to be provided** weekly, for the young people in care who have been identified and fortnightly for those who have left care provision.

RHONDDA CYNON TAFF

BACKGROUND AND LOCATION OF THE PROJECT

The project targeted young people attending Ferndale Comprehensive School, whose pupils are drawn from the communities in the Rhondda Fach. The communities of Penrhys, Tylorstown and Maerdy, all with **low socio-economic status** and with many of the difficulties associated with '**deprived communities**', send their children to the school.

Other factors leading to the identification of this school/community as the focus for the programme were as follows:

- Ferndale Comprehensive School has, '**a below average attendance rate**', when compared with other secondary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taff.
- The **headteacher** is a practising **senior youth worker** in one of the authority's youth centres. He is, therefore, an advocate of youth service philosophies and techniques of working.
- Two major **voluntary organisations**, Blaenllechau Community Regeneration Strategy and the Arts Factory are active in the community and are in partnership with the school as partners in the Wales Youth Access Initiative.

ROLE OF THE YOUTH WORKER

- to work with **young people and their families** to help them overcome the perceived barriers to regular **attendance at school**;
- to **integrate** with, and personally **support**, the wider programme of additional opportunities available to the target group;
- to be part of the steering group for the programme;
- to address the **individual needs** of young people in the target group, which may be either expressed by the young people themselves, or observed as manifestations of attitude and behaviour;
- to **promote a community-based** 'Truancy Watch' scheme;
- to organise the **out-of-school learning** element of the activities programme.

MOTIVATION AND SELF-RELIANCE

Participants had access to the ‘Breakthrough’ **motivation and self-reliance programme** operated by the Pacific Institute. This video-based programme encourages young people to become more **self-reliant** by challenging them to **take responsibility** for their **own actions**, rather than by placing the blame for their – possible – anti-social behaviour on society’s lack of response to their needs.

This was an innovative and experimental programme, which provided the tools to allow these young people to **set their own goals** for personal improvement. Measuring movement towards these goals was used in evaluating the success, or otherwise, of this experimental approach. **Parents will be invited to undertake** the complementary ‘Steps to Excellence’, outlined in the Pacific Institute Programme.

The partnership group will also consider how to introduce a **peer-mentoring approach** within the school, to complement the existing mentoring scheme run by the staff of the school.

Each participant was provided with a **personal adviser** who channelled him/her towards the opportunities provided by the programme. The **choice of adviser** for the participant was **negotiable** and could include a teacher at the school, a youth worker, an EWO, or a member of staff from the partner voluntary organisations. Staff acted as advocates for their young people.

ACCREDITATION AND RECOGNITION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE’S INVOLVEMENT

It was anticipated that the programme would assist young people to **re-engage** with the school **learning process** and, as such, they would have access to the existing school-based accreditation opportunities. **Other accreditation/recognition systems** will also be available to the young people such as:

- the Duke of Edinburgh Award;
- youth work record of achievement;
- Open College Network accreditation;
- first aid /basic food hygiene certificates;
- celebrations of participants’ achievements (awards ceremonies, press and media reports).

CARMARTHENSHIRE

BACKGROUND

The project was established to work with three secondary schools in the Llanelli/Gwendraeth Valley area. The area, in which the schools are situated covers 11.5% of the total landmass of Wales however, it only accommodates 5.8% of the population of Wales. It is interesting to note that 65% of the inhabitants live in the south-east area of the county. 54.8% of the resident population in Carmarthenshire is Welsh-speaking. The language plays an important part of life in Carmarthenshire, especially in the rural part of the county.

The Llanelli area has historically been associated with the traditional heavy industries of coal-mining, steel and tinplate. With the decline of these industries, the area has been faced with problems. Studies have revealed **serious economic weakness** in this part of Carmarthenshire.

AIMS AND PURPOSE

To involve young people between the ages of 11-16 years of age from targeted schools who are **in danger of being, or who may be already excluded**, in processes designed to empower them to make decisions about their own learning and personal development.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

These programmes linked with initiatives already operational in the Amman Valley and the Carmarthen areas of the county. The programmes used and developed the experiences previously gained in these projects.

The initiatives already in place included two outreach workers and a school-focused co-ordinator, funded through ERDF and the Youth Access Initiative, who are currently involved in **working with disenfranchised young people** in the north and west of the county. The development of this initiative provided a similar service for young people in the east of the county, mainly concentrating around the large urban area of Llanelli, which would go some way in subscribing to a **strategic response** to the issue of disaffection amongst the young people of Carmarthenshire.

This project focused on working with three comprehensive schools in the area, **two in the urban area** and one in the **rural Gwendraeth valley**, which between them serve some 2,400 pupils in the 11-16 age range. There was also some involvement with the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) establishment.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

The Youth Work and school partnership programme aimed to assist identified schools with **supporting pupils who are disaffected** or who are **becoming disaffected**.

- establishing criteria for **selection of pupils needing support** and develop a system for identifying level of support (IAP);
- **establishing network** of school, pupil, parents and specialist agencies to **assess the individual needs**;
- assisting the **development of school councils**;
- developing an **accredited** peer-mentor scheme;
- facilitating the **involvement of local personalities** in school life;
- developing **curriculum flexibility** for the target group;
- promoting ‘**responsible parenting**’ through development of parent support groups;
- formulating and training a team of adult mentors to **support student mentors**;
- looking at **alternative teaching techniques** for the targeted cohort (in conjunction with Youth Access Initiative);
- investigating training opportunities for adult mentors in companies involved in work experience;
- working with the **targeted** disaffected youths to assess why they became disaffected and **involve them** in looking at ways to stop others becoming disaffected in the future;
- assisting in the **production of a directory of youth provision** for Carmarthenshire.

NEWPORT

BACKGROUND

Living Proof is a proven, successful and **high-quality youth and children's work and training provider** with an excellent reputation within all the communities of its work. Social services, schools (primary and secondary), other voluntary organisations and parents have acclaimed the work.

The project involves a direct link between Living Proof and Bettws Comprehensive School in Newport. The school draws children from catchment areas with high levels of social and economic problems.

The school can expect approximately 28% of pupils to gain five GCSE A-C grades by year 11 and 10-12% of students in Year 10 to be disaffected or partially disaffected due to a range of problems. However, on entering school in Year 7, there are already approximately 73% of pupils below the average reading age and the percentage of pupils who do not gain five or more GCSE A-C grades is 72%.

PROJECT AIM AND PURPOSE

Through a programme of informal education and pastoral care, in and out of school, disaffected young people and those at risk from disaffection will grow in confidence and self-esteem. Participants will be able to take an interest in learning and self-development and be empowered to reach and develop their full potential with respect to their social, behavioural, moral and educational attitude.

Specific aim No 1 (Year 7)

To prevent and reverse the downward social, behavioural, moral and educational trends of youngsters in Year 7 who initially entering high school are suffering from the difficulties below, and reconnect them with learning, school, home and community:

- neglect at home;
- failing to cope/integrate into school and with others;
- lack of social skills and key skills;
- bullying/peer pressure;
- general problems with motivation, confidence and self-esteem.

Objectives

- Take all form groups away in rotation, with relevant teaching staff, on a **residential break** in order to promote **teamwork** and deal with **bullying and peer pressure**.
- From these breaks and during the year to work alongside school staff to identify and provide for those individuals of all abilities needing attention in form of one to one work, in **key skill areas (e.g. literacy)**, home study support and/or encouragement to study and reach their full potential.

- To **develop home links with parents** in order for them to take a more active role with their own children. Work with local agencies to address issues of neglect, and inability to deal with the behaviour, growth and development of their teenager children and to explore the positive role they can take in the education in the child's development.
- To **mediate between parents and school** where relationships between children and teachers have broken down or there is lack of communication.

Specific Aim No 2 (Year 8)

To **prevent** and reverse the downward social, behavioural and educational trends of youngsters in Year 8 who have shown improvements but who are still on a downward curve and **continue to show no improvement** in confidence, self-esteem, behaviour and school work.

Objectives

- To continue to provide one to one or small group **basic key skills support** (e.g. literacy) and study support in and outside of the school environment to individuals who have shown improvements.
- To liaise with schools to **provide pastoral care and study support** for youngsters who are **still struggling** and are becoming disillusioned and disaffected. This would be addressed through one-to-one support, small group work, team-building and residential breaks.
- To continue establishing and **developing existing home links** in order to offer support and mediation to the parents and implement from these parental relationships an informal and informative parenting programme to educate parents in:
 - the pressures of being a teenager;
 - the importance of learning/achievement and education;
 - how they can help their children through school;
 - the importance of self worth and encouraging their children.

Specific Aim No 3 (Years 10 and 11)

To **stimulate self-esteem and self-belief** and a desire for personal growth and development in youngsters of Year 10 and 11 who have no confidence in their abilities or skills and for whom formal education provides little stimulation, interest or desire to achieve.

Objectives

- To encourage youngsters to identify any interests and then motivate them to **design and / or participate in community projects**, practical placements and training connected with their interests. Current training areas include: working with children, after school clubs, office skills/placement, environment projects, media/communication, first aid, practical community projects, visiting and helping the elderly and infirm.

- The projects/placements/training will further their gifts, skills and interests resulting in self worth, confidence, motivation and a **desire to learn, achieve and reach their full potential**.
- To encourage youngsters to use their gifts and skills for the benefit of themselves and others giving the **opportunity for personal growth and development** in a safe and stress free environment where mistakes can be made and confidence quickly restored.
- To provide opportunities/projects for accreditation, **certification and achievement** for those youngsters who would otherwise finish their formal school education **with no qualification or any record of achievement**.

Specific Aim No 4

To be continually identifying, developing and exploring new ideas and initiatives to reduce and **prevent the continuing disaffection** and the onset of disaffection, and to train workers to continue and develop the work.

Objectives

- to **continue to develop new programmes** to reach those youngsters who continue to be disaffected;
- to ensure a long-term **process of prevention** and restoration beyond year 8 through to the end of school;
- to work with **other agencies** in order to gain new ideas and **collaborative approach** to individuals;
- to **devise a training programme** in order to recruit and train workers to continue, widen and extend the provision to existing and new areas.

DENBIGHSHIRE

BACKGROUND

The County of Denbighshire extends from Rhyl in the North to Llangollen in the South. The coastline in the North is heavily populated with the main employment based around a seasonal tourism industry. The rural South is more sparsely populated with small village communities and the market towns of Denbigh, Ruthin, Corwen and Llangollen.

The county has a total resident population of over 90,000, with more than a quarter residing in Rhyl itself, and a transient population of over 1.5 million visitors stays a year. The proportion of 16-29 year old age group is 15%. Rhyl has high numbers of unemployed men (16.4%) and women (9.9%). Almost 2 1/2 times more than the county average. Rhyl has more than half of Denbighshire's lone parent population aged 16-24 years.

PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

The Youth Work and Schools Project was **integrated within the work undertaken by the Youth Access Initiative**. It was essential for the success of the operational plan that the project links with other policies, strategies and developments being pursued by the youth service and Education Department.

The project and budget was presented as a coherent package that reflected the convergence of different sources of funding. There are three schools involved in the project, which linked with the original youth access proposal and was jointly funded by the Wales Youth Agency/Welsh Office initiative, CELTEC, FE colleges and the County Education Department.

The **two schools which were targeted** were **Rhyl High School**, situated in an urban area with recognised pockets of deprivation, and **Brynhyfryd School, Ruthin**, which serves a largely rural community.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Strategic aim

To bring together and co-ordinate available services in order to make the **appropriate interventions with young people** at Key Stages 3 and 4 and to tackle the **causes of their disaffection**.

Objectives and methodology

- To bring together available services and **co-ordinate resources to tackle disaffection** by securing support from schools, careers companies, educational welfare services, the youth service, CELTEC, FE. Colleges and other organisations to ensure appropriate support from educational social workers, careers advisors, educational psychologists, education advisors.
- To be **involved in supporting** the emotional educational, health and social development of young people through:

- assessing the needs of identified young people and developing pupil profiles;
- offering informal educational opportunities, via activities, group work, peer learning and support;
- involving young people in extra-curricular activities including confidence-building exercises and using models such as:

The young people's programme
The youth link programme
The key issues/key skills programme
The implementation of a 'buddy-buddy' scheme

- To **improve the transition** of targeted young people into **work, further education** and **training** by:

Assisting young people to identify a career area, and supporting them with appropriate day release for work placements, college or other suitable training schemes, where the young person gains valuable practical experience and can obtain relevant qualifications e.g. Open college Network credits, NPRA. Key skills, NVQ, GNVQ. To involve adults rather than teachers as models and mentors

Performance indicators

- a **reduction** in the numbers of pupils **suspended or excluded**;
- a **reduction** in short term referrals to **pupils referral units**;
- an **improvement in attendance** levels;
- **evidence** from young people's tracking recordings e.g. examples of the **increased confidence of pupils**;
- the **level of participation** by young people in the activities of the programme e.g. extra- curricular activities, D of E Award, with their peers
- recorded **comments from other services** and those involved with the project;
- recorded **responses from targeted pupils**;
- selected use of profiling and **testing tools** e.g. morrisbury profiling;
- collated data provided by the **monitoring and recording system** developed by the project.

GWYNEDD

BACKGROUND

This project relates directly to the partnership between the youth service and three out of five secondary schools in the Meirionnydd area of Gwynedd. This area is mainly rural, with the Welsh language predominant. With a large influx of the population coming from England, particularly the Midlands, many are non-Welsh speakers. Although the area is rural in nature, it does have many other problems associated with urban conurbations. Rural isolation and high levels of unemployment exist in the area. The three main schools where the partnership operates are situated in the town of Dolgellau, Blaenau Ffestiniog and Bala.

AIMS

To work with young people from **targeted secondary schools** in Meirionnydd, who have become, or are in danger of **becoming disaffected** with education, to **re-engage them** in the **learning process**, and to **accept responsibility** for the control of their own learning and personal development.

OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

Providing pupils with individual learning packages

Key Tasks

- project leader to form a one-to-one relationship with each young person;
- compiling a personal profile for each young person;
- acting as a mentor/personal tutor for each young person;
- providing a customised learning package based on individual needs.

Forming links with parents or guardians

Key Tasks

- form a link with a parent or guardian;
- support for parent/parents to support young person in school;
- explore possible links with family learning schemes operated locally.

Work in conjunction with school to improve key skills

Key Tasks

- establish level of achievement in numeracy, literacy, ICT and to assist young person to improve where necessary;
- where viable, work with pupil in alternative educational setting;
- provide alternative learning programmes e.g. Headstart, Success Maker etc;
- improve motivation by raising self-esteem and confidence

Implementation of extra learning opportunities

Key Tasks

- establishing County Record of Achievement within youth work settings;
- promoting the scheme with leaders and highlighting the benefits;
- working towards record of achievement certificates awarded by Gwynedd;
- extra-curricular activities such as Life saving and D of E Award;
- identify out-of-school centres for learning e.g. IT courses, sports clubs;
- residential activities centred on group work;
- homework clubs;
- exploring setting up a project with the Young Enterprise scheme;
- identifying sources of funding to provide further development in this field, e.g. New Opportunities Fund etc.

Formalise links with school staff/school policies by:

- encouraging project co-ordinator to **establish relationships with school staff**;
- holding **regular** meetings with **heads of year**;
- using of **structured feedback strategies** for members of school staff who may have concerns about pupils' development;
- **rewarding** improvements in **attitude, attendance and behaviour**;
- introduce and **support young people** to attend a youth provision within the county.

Key Tasks

Identify a youth club/provision for each young person, which is **suitable to his or her needs** and interests where possible, within any of the following established organisations:

- statutory youth clubs
- Young Farmers' Clubs
- Aelwydydd yr Urdd
- youth sections of sports clubs
- any other recognised youth provision e.g. TA, Scouts, Guides

- provide young person with **support to access** the provision;
- liaise with club leaders, and provide support, in ensuring that the young person is provided with **learning opportunities within youth work setting**, and to **provide support** for young person and staff, if behavioural difficulties occur;
- where this is not possible, to **provide alternative** leisure time provision in a **group work**, team building setting;
- to work with school youth forums, and the established Meirionnydd youth forum to empower and **provide advocacy opportunities** for young people;
- to act as an '**honest broker**' on behalf of the young person to seek resolution to problems they encounter within schools, and youth work setting.

Key Tasks

- to meet each young person on a one-to-one basis weekly and discuss any problems they have, or problems that have been referred to the youth worker, and to agree with the young person on an action plan concerning these issues;
- to offer counselling and support to young persons on a personal level;
- to offer mentor training to youth work staff;
- to promote more positive relationships between pupils and school staff;
- enable young people to develop requisite skills, knowledge and personal qualities to prepare them for work.

Key Tasks

- working on CVs
- interview skills
- link with careers guidance, employment schemes etc.
- link with contracted agencies e.g. Compact Plus, GNVQ

POWYS

BACKGROUND

The county of Powys has the lowest density of population in (0.2 person per hectare), of any county in England and Wales.

There has been an increase in the population in recent years, principally by the effect of in-migration with a high percentage of retired people. The population of pensionable age is expected to grow by a further 40% in the next 15 years. There are limited employment, career and social opportunities, which exacerbate the problem of migration by young people from the area.

Brecon (a market town) is the administrative centre of the area, situated in the Brecon Beacons National Park. The project is situated in the Upper Swansea Valley around Ystradgynlais, the second largest town in the area. It was once a deep coal-mining area, which has suffered the consequent decline of many other Welsh mining valleys.

AIMS

The project aims to provide **alternative educational opportunities** to young people who are either impeded in gaining access to, or are unable to maintain themselves within mainstream education and training.

- They include pupils who **attend school on an irregular basis or not at all**, or who have been excluded, for a fixed term or permanently.
- The target group also includes those who attend school but have **'switched off'** from their **educational experience** – in school but outside learning.
- To provide a scheme which is aimed at **preventing disaffection** for the future and actively re-engaging those young people who are disaffected.
- To **give young people** the information they need to **make appropriate choices** about their future.
- To encourage **co-ordination and collaboration between agencies** and to maximise resources to address the issue.
- To **avoid duplication** and to dovetail into existing programmes such as vocational enhancement schemes, Youth Access Initiatives, GEST-sponsored projects and others such as LEA-supported schemes.
- To set up a multi-agency panel to **facilitate joint working**

TARGET GROUP

Initially to target **disaffected or excluded** pupils in the catchment area of Maesydderwen Comprehensive School and those excluded and referred from other schools in the Breckonshire area of Powys.

EDUCATIONAL GOALS

In **partnership with the school**, it is intended to offer opportunities to **re-engage** young people in the **education process**. It is also intended to broaden the educational range of options available to young people through offering:

- access courses leading to further education;
- career advice/work experience/visits/aspects of employability;
- self-esteem enhancement/self-confidence/presentation skills;
- practical courses offering Open College awards, NVQ and GNVQ;
- key skills – basic education and IT;
- Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme;
- Recognition of Achievement Scheme (Breckonshire Youth Service).
- health education and life skills.

Issues addressed with participants may include:

- drug and alcohol awareness
- sexuality/family planning
- relationships
- personal health issues
- finances/budgeting
- parenting skills

Glossary of Terms

CELTEC	-	Welsh Association of Training and Enterprise Councils
CLAIT	-	Computer Literacy and Information Technology
COE	-	Certificate of Education
CV	-	Curriculum Vitae
D of E	-	Duke of Edinburgh Award
DfEE	-	Department for Education and Employment
ERDF	-	European Regional Development Fund
ESTYN	-	Welsh Office of Her Majesties Inspector of Schools in Wales
EWO	-	Education Welfare Officer
FE	-	Further Education
GCSE	-	General Certificate of Education
GEST	-	General Education Support and Training
GNVQ	-	General National Vocational Qualifications
IAP	-	Individual Action Programme
ICT	-	Information and Communication Technology
IT	-	Information Technology
JNC	-	Joint Negotiating Council
LEA	-	Local Education Authority
NRA	-	National Records of Achievement
NVQ	-	National Vocational Qualification
OCN	-	Open College Network
PRU	-	Pupil Referral Unit
PSE	-	Personal and Social Education
SMART	-	Specific Measurable Achievable Realistic Time-limited
TEC	-	Training and Enterprise Council
WYA	-	Wales Youth Agency

References

Ball, M. (1998), *School Inclusion: The School, The Family, and The Community*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Bentley, T. (1999), *Learning Beyond the Classroom: Education for a Changing World*, London: Routledge/DEMOS

Bentley, T. and Gurumurthy, R. (1999), *Destinations Unknown: Engaging with the problems of marginalised youth*, London: DEMOS

Department for Education and Employment (1999a), *Moving on up: how youth work raises achievement and promotes social inclusion*, Sheffield: Department for Education and Employment

Department for Education and Employment (1999b), *Learning to Succeed: a new framework for post-16 learning*, Cm 4392, London: The Stationery Office

Education and Employment Select Committee (1998), *Disaffected Children*, 5th Report, London: The Stationery Office

France, A. and Wiles, P. (1996), *Evaluation of the Youth Action Scheme*, London: Department for Education and Employment

Hand, J. (1995), *Raising Standards in Schools: The Youth Work Contribution*, Leicester: Youth Work Press

Jeffs, A. (1979), *Young People and the Youth Service*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul

Jeffs, T. and Smith, M. (1996), *Informal Education – conversation, democracy and learning*, Derby: Education Now Publishing Co-operative

Kealy, L. (1996), *Giving People Credit: The Young People's Programme*, Caerphilly: Wales Youth Agency

Maychell, K. Pathak, S. and Cato, V. (1996), *Providing for Young People: Local Authority Youth Services in the 1990's*, Slough: National Foundation for Educational Research

McGivney, V. (1999), *Excluded Men: Men who are missing from education and training*, Leicester: NIACE

Merton, B. (1998), *Finding the missing: action-research into disaffection and the non-participation of young adults in education, training and employment in three areas of England and Wales*, Leicester: Youth Work Press

National Youth Agency (1992), *Report on the Third Ministerial Conference on the Youth Service*, Leicester: National Youth Agency

National Youth Bureau (1990), *Danger or Opportunity: Towards a Core Curriculum for the Youth Service?* Leicester: National Youth Bureau

Parsons, C. (1995), *National Survey of Local Education Authorities' policies and procedures for the identification of, and provision for, children who are out of school by reason of exclusion or otherwise*, London: Department for Education

Pearce, N. and Hillman, J. (1998), *Wasted Youth: raising achievement and tackling social exclusion*, London: Institute for Public Policy Research

Smith, C., Farrant, M. and Marchant, H. (1972), *The Wincroft Youth Project: a social work programme in a slum area*, London: Tavistock

Smith, M. (1998), *Developing Youth Work*, Milton Keynes: Open University Press

Social Exclusion Unit (1998a), *Truancy and School Exclusion*, London: The Stationery Office

Social Exclusion Unit (1999b), *Bridging the Gap: New Opportunities for 16-18 year olds Not in Education, Employment or Training*, London: The Stationery Office

Wales Youth Agency (1992), *The Youth Work Curriculum Statement for Wales*, Caerphilly: Wales Youth Agency

Wales Youth Agency (1998), *The Youth Work and Schools Partnership Programme: An Interim Report*, Caerphilly: Wales Youth Agency Newslines

Welsh Office (1998), *Learning is for everyone*, London: The Stationery Office

Williamson, H. and Weatherspoon, K. (1985), *Strategies for Intervention: an approach to youth and community work in an area of social deprivation*, University College Cardiff: Social Research Unit