

Youth work

YW providers

We carried out 4 core youth work inspections, including one of a larger voluntary sector organisation, and we undertook our first themed inspection of 4 smaller voluntary sector organisations.

We also piloted producing young person's versions of our inspection reports for example: [YMCA Swansea Youth Report](#)

Numbers of young people

There were **81,293** registered members of statutory youth work provision in **2023-2024**. However, there are many thousands more young people who take part in activities run by the voluntary sector.

Source: [Youth work | GOV.WALES](#)

Provision

Youth work is delivered in a wide range of settings and places across Wales, driven by the needs and interests of young people and the skills of youth workers. Estyn inspects youth work provision in publicly funded settings run by the voluntary sector and local authorities.

Inspection activity	Case studies	Follow-up Data
No. of core inspections: 4	No. of case studies: only spotlights used	No providers placed into follow-up
3 local authorities	18 spotlights	
Inspection report leuenctid Casnewydd - Newport Youth 2024		
Inspection report Gwasanaeth leuenctid Integredig Powys - Powys Integrated Youth Service 2025		
Inspection report leuenctid Castell Nedd Neath Port Talbot Youth 2025		
1 voluntary body		

1 Themed inspection of four voluntary youth work bodies on the theme of healthy relationships

Summary

How does youth work help young people achieve their potential?

Overall, young people developed a wide range of skills and deepened their understanding of issues that affect their own and other young people's lives. They grew in confidence and maturity, which in turn assisted them to fulfil their individual potential.

Through targeted provision, many providers offered young people valuable opportunities to follow structured accredited learning pathways. However, a very few young people did not benefit from further opportunities to achieve accreditation for their formal learning activities to help them progress to the next steps of their learning journey and prepare them for adult life.

In informal open access sessions, young people developed a strong understanding of personal relationships and social issues whilst taking part in enjoyable creative arts activities or playing sports and games. They learned to work well with their peers and learned to respect the opinions of others.

Most young people participated enthusiastically in both structured and more informal sessions. A few young people were highly effective in developing their roles as advocates for other young people in forums such as youth councils. In the best examples, young people scrutinised the work of elected officials diligently and assisted in holding them to account. A few young people progressed to leadership and volunteering roles within providers. These young people, some of whom previously demonstrated challenging behaviour, matured into young adults who then acted as positive role models for other young people.

Many young people gained valuable knowledge and understanding of issues faced by others such as young LGBTQ+ people, young carers and asylum seekers. They grew in empathy and maturity. Many young people gained in confidence and felt empowered to take pride in themselves as individuals.

Spotlight: Clwb Ni: Powys

An LGBTQ+ club for young people was set up in Ysgol Bro Hyddgen by the youth worker after a need was identified. This club evolved to cover wider diversity and equality issues, becoming 'Clwb Ni'. The young people attending this club were keen to do more for their school and wanted to inform their peers about equality issues. With support from the youth worker, young people developed and delivered a 'unity workshop' for every young person in the school. The workshop included a 'unity pledge', which was adopted by the whole school, expressing everyone's commitment to treating people equally and with kindness.

The young people delivering the workshop gained confidence, improved resilience and developed their public speaking skills. The project demonstrated a range of youth work principles, and the levels of participation were exceptional. Young people taking ownership of and delivering workshops to other young people had a notable positive impact across the whole school community.

Over time, many young people developed the skills and attitudes required to make progress in both formal and informal learning, as well as growing as individuals.

What young people can expect from youth work provision

Nearly all youth workers were highly motivated and enthusiastic in their determination to assist young people in becoming the best that they can be and fulfil their individual potential. They provided safe spaces for young people to meet with trusted adults and socialise with their peers. Youth workers successfully built strong relationships with young people, ensuring that provision is focused on their needs. They provided positive role models to young people, which on occasions were the only reliable role models that they had, helping them to understand the nature of healthy relationships. This in turn helped them to lead healthier and safer lives.

West Rhyl Young People's Project (WRYPP)

Beyond the role: youth workers as trusted adults

Youth workers at WRYPP play a vital role in the lives of the young people who access their services. The relationships they build are rooted in care and compassion, while maintaining clear professional boundaries. To many young people, these youth workers become trusted adults and positive role models, often filling a gap left by the absence of such figures in their lives.

Vulnerable young people with complex needs, those navigating the care system, homelessness, or experiences of exploitation, often find sanctuary at WRYPP. It is regarded as a psychologically safe space. Young people describe the Pixel drop-in sessions not as a youth group, but as a family. This supportive environment empowers them to overcome adversity and provides space to grow, build confidence, and re-establish themselves in society.

The relational behaviours modelled by youth workers set a positive tone, encouraging young people to form new friendships, participate in a wide range of activities, and engage in accredited opportunities that prepare them for their next steps.

From offering emotional support and steering young people away from risky behaviours, to helping them engage with educational and personal development activities, and even accompanying them to medical appointments, the staff at WRYPP demonstrate the pivotal role youth workers play in the lives of the young people they serve.

Most providers offered regular valuable opportunities for young people to express their opinions and influence the provision offer. This provision was often led by the young people and co-created with youth workers. However, a very few providers did not publicise the services they offer to young people effectively enough.

Many providers offered highly beneficial targeted support through activities for vulnerable groups of young people as well as through formal learning activities, including in school settings. In addition, a few local authority providers assisted electively home educated (EHE) young people to access English classes, coaching, careers guidance and college application support.

Spotlight: Newport Youth and Play Service

A space where young people with additional learning needs can make friends and develop independence

In collaboration with the Disabled Children's Team, the youth and play service has established a specialist club for young people with additional learning needs (ALN). The supported youth club in Rogerstone runs weekly sessions for children and young people with ALN who are aged between seven and twenty-five years.

The aim of the club is to build trusted relationships with the young people and provide them with opportunities to make friendships. The club supports these young people successfully to develop their confidence, self-esteem and independence, with a view to enabling them to engage in mainstream youth provisions. The young people play, socialise and learn new skills. For example, they participate in sporting activities, arts and crafts, and gaming activities. There are opportunities for them to develop important independent life skills such as decision-making and money management.

The young people and their parents and carers are very positive about the impact of this provision on those who attend. They describe how the provision has enabled them to make sustainable friendships and improved their resilience when faced with new challenges. Young people say that the club gives the freedom to be themselves and to express themselves outside of more formal education settings. It enables them to make friends with other young people from across the city and to have a social life. This helps to prepare them for transitions into wider society.

A few providers offered meaningful and very valuable opportunities for young people to develop and use their Welsh language skills. However, overall, in many providers, there were limited opportunities for young people, whose language of choice was Welsh, to take part in Welsh-medium activities.

Spotlight: Welsh language

Neath Port Talbot (NPT) youth service has adopted a proactive approach in linking youth work and the authority's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan to promote and expand the use of the Welsh language. For example, all youth clubs are required to provide a Welsh language or culture themed activity each month. Youth workers hold highly engaging promotional activities during community events to promote the value of bilingualism.

The service collaborates effectively with the local Welsh language initiative, Menter Iaith NPT. Joint initiatives include:

- assisting English-medium secondary schools to establish Welsh language lunchtime youth clubs
- organising trips to Llangrannog where young people can gain accreditation on the Welsh language and customs through the medium of Welsh or English
- offering first aid courses through the medium of Welsh
- holding one bilingual youth club in Pontardawe and a Welsh-medium youth club in Trebanos as part of the service's open access offer

As a result, Welsh-medium provision and activities are an integral part of the mainstream offer.

Leading and improving

Overall, senior leaders had a clear understanding of youth work and how it can help young people develop and achieve their aims through their provision offer. They worked effectively with a wide range of partners, in the statutory and voluntary sectors, to plan provision and reach as many young people as they can.

Leaders in many providers planned effectively to alleviate the impact of poverty on young people, for example through providing warm spaces in the winter, distributing free food, providing food bank vouchers and personal hygiene products.

Most providers focused beneficially on providing meaningful professional development opportunities to staff and volunteers including regular safeguarding training. They ensured that staff obtain recognised professional qualifications, and this had a positive impact on the quality of provision.

Nearly all providers required extra grant funding to sustain their provision offer. This is particularly challenging for voluntary sector bodies who often relied on multiple, short-term funding sources, and leaders spent much of their time administering one-off grants.

Many providers did not self-evaluate and plan for improvement effectively enough with insufficient correlation between reflective practice and data analysis. Improvement planning did not always identify priorities with targets based on measurable indicators of success. In the few instances where self-evaluation was strong, providers combined various data, evidence and reflection effectively to adapt and develop provision.

Spotlight: Self-evaluation and improvement planning

Staff in YMCA Swansea use a variety of methods to capture and evaluate data to inform practice. Pivotal to this is the use of their management information system. Through this, leaders capture and collate key information ranging from young people's information, details and reflection of every provision session, distance travelled, and feedback from young people through surveys. The data from the system enables leaders to put effective evaluative reports together. The ability to track and monitor individual young people through the service ensures that staff can amend individual support or provision to best suit the needs of young people.

Overview of recommendations from inspections

There were four core inspections in the youth sector and one themed inspection of four voluntary organisations. During the core inspections, two providers had recommendations within inspection area 1 (**how does youth work help young people achieve their potential?**):

- Set out a clear strategy for the youth and play service by mapping youth work provision across the local authority area and develop a plan to co-ordinate the services across both internal and external partners in Newport to ensure that young people's needs are met
- Increase relevant opportunities for young people's learning to be accredited

One provider had a recommendation within inspection area 2 (**what young people can expect from youth work provision**):

- Strengthen the youth and play service's self-evaluation process to aid improvement planning and more accurately measure and evaluate the impact of youth work on young people

Three providers had a recommendation within inspection area 3 (**leading and improving**):

- Two were recommended to improve self-evaluation processes to enhance improvement or strategic planning
- One was given a recommendation to improve opportunities for young people to influence decisions that affect them at a county level
- One was recommended to increase participation in youth services so that more young people can access youth work opportunities

In addition, one provider was given a recommendation to develop a proactive offer to promote and facilitate services for young people whose language of choice is Welsh.

Following the themed inspection there was one recommendation within inspection area 2 (**what young people can expect from youth work provision**):

- Work with regional partners to improve accessibility to transport to enable young people from rural areas to benefit from services

There were three recommendations within inspection area 3 (**leading and improving**):

- Work with relevant national and regional partners to formulate a consistent professional learning offer, that is funded appropriately and provides the capacity for staff to attend
- Work with the Welsh Government and relevant partners to access consistent funding streams that ensure sustainability and allow for more in-depth strategic planning
- Work with regional and national partners to ensure that staff have access to suitable support for their mental health and well-being