

Interim Youth Work Board for Wales

Time to deliver for young people in Wales

Achieving a sustainable delivery model
for youth work services in Wales

Final report

Please contact us for more information or to tell us your experience of youth services.

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Time to Deliver for Young People in Wales

Foreword

When we began our work as a Board the task we were set by Welsh Government was to develop a sustainable delivery model for youth work services in Wales. The policy remit was clear and our first decision was to work in a collaborative way with young people and the youth work sector.

We remain extremely grateful to everyone who has made a contribution. The recommendations we outline here are shaped by all the voices that took part.

Of course we had no idea as we set about our task that the pandemic would demand more of us. We strove, with Welsh Government officials, to support the youth work sector in Wales. I want to pay tribute to my fellow Board members for their dedication and commitment to young people and to youth work.

Everyone on the Board already knew that the youth work sector, working as it does from a local authority and voluntary sector base, really does make a positive difference to the lives of young people. Throughout the Covid crisis the youth work response, supporting young people through huge challenges, has been exemplary. It really has showcased the contribution that youth work makes in Wales.

And yet the legislative and funding base for youth work is weak and problematic. As a result we have seen a steady decline in the availability of youth work services. Just imagine what youth work could achieve for young people in Wales if its foundational base was strong.

Our hope is that these recommendations will be implemented and that an action plan will be put in place to progress them. It really is now all about change and delivery. That is going to require new ways of working. Change can be challenging but if we keep our focus on meeting the needs of young people in Wales the youth work sector will thrive.

The recommendations we outline here are achievable. We have established some real momentum for change and the young people of Wales deserve a youth work offer that meets their needs.

Keith Towler

Chair – Interim Youth Work Board for Wales

Executive Summary

This final report presents the recommendations made by the Interim Youth Work Board. It builds on the draft report published at the beginning of 2021, as well as the extensive feedback provided by individuals and organisations on the draft recommendations made within it.

It is clear that youth work services have much to offer the young people of Wales, the communities in which they live, as well as Welsh society more broadly. But it is equally clear that they are operating in an unsustainable way at present. The recommendations made in this report identify practical and achievable ways of creating a sustainable model for youth work services in Wales.

The recommendations are separated into two sections. The first set of recommendations relate to governance issues and the second focus more on the delivery of effective youth work services. In terms of governance, we recommend the following:

1. Welsh Government should establish a young people led governance structure for youth work services in Wales so that it listens to young people and acts on their views as it develops services for them.
2. Welsh Government should strengthen or establish a new legislative basis for youth work services in Wales.
3. Welsh Government should appoint a Minister for Children and Young People within Cabinet with a portfolio dedicated to youth work services. The Minister should lead a process of creating a vision for young people in Wales.
4. Welsh Government should ask the Auditor General for Wales to undertake an independent review into the sufficiency, transparency, accountability and effectiveness of funding and expenditure on youth work services across Welsh Government, local authorities and voluntary organisations, in order to assess the delivery of outcomes and impact for young people.
5. Welsh Government should establish a national body for youth work services in Wales.
6. Welsh Government should establish regional delivery partnerships supporting local delivery.
7. Welsh Government should establish a framework to support innovation within youth work services in Wales in order to improve standards within the sector.
8. Welsh Government should strengthen the current Education Workforce Council (EWC) legislation so that the gaps in registration criteria are closed.

In terms of delivery, we recommend the following:

9. Welsh Government should work with the sector to commission an information exchange for Wales as part of a digital youth work offer to young people.
10. Welsh Government should launch a Young Person's Entitlement Scheme.
11. Welsh Government and the youth work sector should work together to promote equality, inclusion and diversity, both in terms of access to youth work services in Wales, and in relation to the role that youth work services can play in proactively challenging discriminatory attitudes and behaviours within society.

12. Welsh Government should increase the availability of youth work services through the medium of Welsh. It should also ensure that one of the key priorities of the National Body will be to promote youth work services through the medium of Welsh.
13. Welsh Government needs to build on its commitment to support and develop the youth work profession with a career structure offering progression.
14. Welsh Government should establish a youth work services in Wales brand and a resource to co-ordinate and promote communication within the sector and between the sector and its partners.

There is an urgent need to implement these recommendations as a way of creating a more sustainable model of youth work services for the young people of Wales. Some of the recommendations will take more time but it is also important to maintain the momentum with these. There will inevitably be a cost associated with implementing these recommendations but it is a price worth paying, we believe, given the invaluable contribution that youth work services make to the lives of the young people of Wales.

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1 Introduction

Youth work services demonstrate their value and the difference that they make to the lives of young people every day. Youth work services provide or facilitate:

- safe spaces, relationships and activities within which young people can thrive and enjoy themselves, feel secure, supported and valued, learn to take greater control of their lives, and be informed and supported to make positive choices;
- a range of different educational opportunities and experiences, which challenge both the institutions and young people themselves to enhance their personal, social and political development;
- access to relevant and trusted advice and information on rights, entitlements and opportunities, thus enabling young people to become advocates of positive change for other young people, their communities and Wales.

Good youth work services provide all young people with opportunities, can support them through significant developments in their lives, assist them to understand their rights and encourages them to develop knowledge as individuals. Youth work services also provide critical support, safeguarding and help for young people when they need it the most.

As well as being important and valuable in their own right, effective youth work services help the Welsh Government to deliver on some of its broader policy goals, most notably:

- *The Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015)*. Supporting youth work services helps the Welsh Government to further its seven well-being goals: ‘a prosperous Wales’ as a result of supporting young people to develop and enhance their skills; ‘a resilient Wales’ by encouraging young people in Wales to become more resilient as individuals and to contribute to the resilience of Welsh society more generally; ‘a healthier Wales’ by giving opportunities for young people in Wales to engage in sport, physical and outdoor activities; ‘a more equal Wales’ by giving new opportunities to marginalised and under-represented groups of young people, and by promoting equality and diversity; ‘a Wales of cohesive communities’ by bringing together disparate groups of young people into youth work settings; ‘a Wales of vibrant culture and Welsh language’ by providing opportunities for young people to develop new cultural skills and to use the Welsh language in social contexts; ‘a globally responsible Wales’ by developing ideas of active and global citizenship among young people.
- *The Children Act (2004)*, the *Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011* and the *Social Services Wellbeing (Wales) Act*. These Acts and Measures refer in different ways to the need to ensure that young people have a clear voice in the decision-making processes affecting them. Youth work services have the potential to take the lead with respect to this agenda by demonstrating to the public, voluntary and private sectors how young people can be placed right at the heart of decision-making;
- *The Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010*. Section 11 of the Measure – the Play Sufficiency Duty – places a duty on local authorities to assess and secure sufficient play opportunities for children and young people in their area. The Ministerial Review of Play is likely to reinforce this commitment. Youth work services

have the potential to play an integral role in helping local authorities to achieve this goal;

- Its commitment to promoting the Welsh language, as evidenced in *Cymraeg 2050*. Welsh-medium youth work services have an important role to play in helping the Welsh Government achieve two aims contained in *Cymraeg 2050*, namely to increase the number of Welsh speakers to one million by the year 2050, and to increase the everyday use of the Welsh language. Creating opportunities for young people to use Welsh outside of schools is critical for these two aims and Welsh-medium youth work services have a crucial role to play in this regard;
- Its commitment to *The United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC). The UNCRC protects the rights of children up to the age of 18. It recognises not only their basic human rights but gives them additional rights to protect them from harm as one of the most vulnerable groups in society. These rights have come to be known as falling into three themes: protection, provision and participation rights. Youth work services play an important role in supporting specific rights within the Convention including a right to non-discrimination (article 2), a commitment to the best interests of the child (article 3), a right to life, survival and development (article 6), a right to access information (article 17) and a right to be heard (article 12). Creating a sustainable rights based model for youth work services in Wales will help to underpin the Welsh Government's commitment to the various articles contained within the Convention.

The Welsh Government has committed to a universal youth work offer for all young people between the ages of 11 and 25 living in Wales. That commitment is welcome and shows the value that the Welsh Government places on youth work services and, by extension, the young people of Wales.

However, the sector faces fundamental challenges at present. The impact of austerity has been devastating for the sector. A report by the National Assembly for Wales' Children, Young People and Education Committee shows that the total amount of budgeted expenditure for youth work services by local authorities reduced by almost 25% between 2012 and 2016.¹ More recent figures show contradictory patterns of spend. Spend in some local authority areas recovered between 2016 and 2020 but still falls short of what is required to deliver a comprehensive youth work service in partnership with the voluntary sector. Other local authority areas witnessed a further decline in spend on youth work services over the same period.² These variations have led to major inconsistencies in the kinds of youth work service available to young people in different parts of Wales. And in general, these trends have created a youth work service that is overly dependent on the goodwill of volunteers and practitioners and one that is, in some cases, fragile.

¹ National Assembly for Wales' Children, Young People and Education Committee, *What Type of Youth Service does Wales Want? Report of the Inquiry into Youth Work* (Cardiff, 2016) p. 5.

² <https://statswales.gov.wales/v/J-FG>, accessed 26.7.21.

Recent research shows that the pandemic has created additional challenges for voluntary sector youth work services.³ In some local authorities, youth work staff have been re-deployed to other duties. In the voluntary sector the need to furlough staff and maintain levels of funding has demonstrated fragility. And there has also been a need to develop new skills, particularly in relation to digital youth work, as a way of maintaining connections with young people.

These challenges point to a need for a radical change in the way we support and develop youth work services in Wales. We need to move away from a weak and frail operating environment to one that is strong and resilient so that all young people in Wales can access or be offered youth work services. The recommendations made in this report identify practical and achievable ways of creating a sustainable model for both the governance and delivery of youth work services in Wales.

Moreover, the sustainable model for youth work services in Wales advocated in this report would reflect and promote the five new ways of working described in the *Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015)*. It is a model that will:

- support the development of the young people of Wales over the *long term*, as well as a youth work sector that can thrive over the *long term*;
- recognise and promote the role of youth work services in promoting well-being in an *integrated* manner;
- *involve* different stakeholders, most notably young people, in decisions around the governance and delivery of youth work services;
- be based on extensive *collaboration*, such as between the maintained and voluntary sectors, and between the Welsh Government and various youth service organisations operating in Wales, as well as other allied sectors working with young people, such as schools, youth justice services and policing;
- effectively support the long-standing role played by youth work services in *preventing* problems amongst young people.

It is clear that youth work services have much to offer the young people of Wales, the communities in which they live, as well as Welsh society more broadly. If we are serious about protecting and developing youth work services for the young people of Wales, we must act now to secure its future by creating a sustainable model for its governance and delivery. In short, it is ‘time to deliver for young people in Wales’.

³ Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services, *CWVYS Report on the Impact of Covid-19 on the Voluntary Youth Work Sector in Wales* (Cardiff, 2020).

2 Recommendations

In terms of governance, we recommend the following:

1. Welsh Government should establish a young people led governance structure for youth work services in Wales so that it listens to young people and acts on their views as it develops services for them.
2. Welsh Government should strengthen or establish a new legislative basis for youth work services in Wales.
3. Welsh Government should appoint a Minister for Children and Young People within Cabinet with a portfolio dedicated to youth work services. The Minister should lead a process of creating a vision for young people in Wales.
4. Welsh Government should ask the Auditor General for Wales to undertake an independent review into the sufficiency, transparency, accountability and effectiveness of funding and expenditure on youth work services across Welsh Government, local authorities and voluntary organisations, in order to assess the delivery of outcomes and impact for young people.
5. Welsh Government should establish a national body for youth work services in Wales.
6. Welsh Government should establish regional delivery partnerships supporting local delivery.
7. Welsh Government should establish a framework to support innovation within youth work services in Wales in order to improve standards within the sector.
8. Welsh Government should strengthen the current Education Workforce Council (EWC) legislation so that the gaps in registration criteria are closed.

In terms of delivery, we recommend the following:

9. Welsh Government should work with the sector to commission an information exchange for Wales as part of a digital youth work offer to young people.
10. Welsh Government should launch a Young Person's Entitlement Scheme for all 11 to 25 year olds in Wales.
11. Welsh Government and the youth work sector should work together to promote equality, inclusion and diversity, both in terms of access to youth work services in Wales, and in relation to the role that youth work services can play in proactively challenging discriminatory attitudes and behaviours within society.
12. Welsh Government should increase the availability of youth work services through the medium of Welsh. It should also ensure that one of the key priorities of the National Body will be to promote youth work services through the medium of Welsh.
13. Welsh Government needs to build on its commitment to support and develop the youth work profession with a career structure offering progression.
14. Welsh Government should establish a youth work services in Wales brand and a resource to co-ordinate and promote communication within the sector and between the sector and its partners.

2.1 Governance

Recommendation 1: Welsh Government should establish a young people led governance structure for youth work services in Wales so that it listens to young people and acts on their views as it develops services for them.

There have been important strides to improve participation structures for young people in Wales in recent years, such as the formation of the Youth Parliament. However, the inclusion of young people in youth work governance structures is still uneven. While there have been some recent positive developments in this area, such as the creation of the Young Person's Committee to work alongside the Interim Youth Work Board and evidence of the involvement of young people in developing youth work services as part of the Quality Mark Silver Level, these participation structures are fragile and unevenly implemented. There are instances in which young people do not have a say in how their local services are provided. In other cases, the inclusion of young people in governance structures is tokenistic, where young people have very little real input into the design and delivery of youth work services.

We recommend a change in how young people are included in youth work governance structures in Wales by making them active and equal partners with adults in governing youth work services.

Specific actions to implement the recommendation could include the following:

1. Young people's voice would need to be heard clearly and acted upon in the proposed National Body for youth work services in Wales (and in any interim Youth Work Services Wales Implementation Board) (recommendation 5). Doing so would allow young people to help set the strategic direction for youth work services in Wales and to be involved in the planning and implementation of specific initiatives.
2. The procedures put in place to include young people in the governance of the National Body would need to be inclusive, supportive and promote diversity. Young people would need to be part of the Management Board of this body and the precise manner of their involvement would need to be defined by young people themselves.
3. Second, young people would be members of the regional partnerships proposed in this document (recommendation 6). Doing so would allow them to help set priorities in relation to the local delivery of youth work services in Wales.
4. Third, the National Body would encourage all other youth work services operating in Wales to include young people in their governance structures. It would also recognise and celebrate instances where youth participation is done well, either through organisations, in a locality or in some examples of regional participation. These instances of good practice would be mainstreamed through the whole of the youth work sector.
5. Finally, the National Body would provide training and support for young people and adults alike, so that the goal of achieving a young people led governance structure for youth work services in Wales can be implemented in an effective and meaningful way, through recruitment, mentoring and shadowing opportunities.

Implementing this recommendation will:

- Improve the quality and relevance of youth work services. Evidence shows that involving young people in the governance of youth work services improves the quality of youth work by making it more accountable to those using the service.
- Respond to the demands of young people. Young people themselves repeatedly call to be included on national bodies and to have a say in how their local services are provided.
- Enable the Welsh Government and all public bodies to create a national approach to youth work services that reflects current legislation operating in Wales, such as the *Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010*, the *Children Act (2004)*, the *Children and Young Person's Wales Measure 2011*, the *Social Services Wellbeing (Wales) Act* and Article 12 of the UNCRC. All of these highlight the requirement to include young people in decisions affecting them.

Recommendation 2: Welsh Government should strengthen or establish a new legislative basis for youth work services in Wales.

The current legislative basis for youth work services in Wales is weak and open to interpretation. As noted by a recent Estyn report, there is a lack of a consistent definition of youth work services within current legislation affecting young people in Wales, which means that different organisations and stakeholders operating within the sector lack a clear and united understanding of the meaning and scope of youth work services.⁴ Moreover, the current legislation does not define youth work services as a statutory function of local authorities, which can lead to a situation in which local authorities view youth work services as a luxury rather than an essential service for young people. In a related context, the weak legislative base places youth work services at risk of budget cuts in the context of ongoing austerity and does a disservice to the profession across the maintained and voluntary sector.⁵

We recommend a strong and coherent legislative base for youth work services in Wales, which would enable a universal offer for all 11-25 year olds to be realised.

Specific actions to implement the recommendation could include the following:

1. Youth work services in Wales need protection and would be secured through a Senedd Act introduced by the Welsh Government; The Youth Work (Wales) Act. The Senedd Act would clearly define the meaning and scope of youth work services in Wales.
2. The legislation would clearly define the rights based and entitlement approach to youth work in Wales, namely that it is an entitlement for all young people aged 11-25. It would also put in place a structure that would deliver youth work services of an excellent quality in Wales.
3. Any new legislation would pay due regard to current legislation (e.g. Social Service and Well-being (Wales) Act, Children and Families Wales Measure, Education and

⁴ Estyn, *Youth Support Services in Wales: The Value of Youth Work* (Cardiff, 2018) p. 3.

⁵ For a helpful review of the policy context for youth work in Wales, see *Context of Youth Work in Wales, 2020* prepared for the Wales Leadership and Management Programme Steering Group.

Skills Act, Play Sufficiency Duty), would avoid duplication and would bring legislative clarity to the sector (including defining youth work services in a clear and consistent manner).

4. Legislation would better enable:
 - a. the establishment of a national body for youth work services in Wales;
 - b. the setting of an innovation and accountability framework to improve standards;
 - c. a commitment to a sustainable funding model, with effective financial support for the maintained and voluntary sectors;
 - d. the integration or establishment of regional partnerships to support local delivery;
 - e. the establishment of an information exchange and associated Young Person's Entitlement Scheme;
 - f. the provision for young people to be included in the governance of youth work services in Wales;
 - g. the provision of youth work services through the medium of Welsh.
5. Legislation would differentiate between national, regional and local functions, and would make clear the duties expected of local authorities and other maintained bodies engaging in youth work services, as well as other public bodies engaging in policy areas affecting young people. The legislation would also define, support and protect the equally important role played by the voluntary sector in delivering youth work services. It would define and promote the need for the maintained and voluntary sectors to work closely together in the development and delivery of youth work services.
6. Young people would help shape the themes addressed by the legislation.
7. The Welsh Government would need to examine ways of progressing the other recommendations outlined in this document, where possible, prior to the passing of the legislation, e.g. the creation of an Implementation Board to continue the good work of the Interim Youth Work Board and the Strategic Participation Groups (SPGs). It is important that the momentum generated over the past few years is not lost while legislation is progressed and during any interim period prior to the creation of the National Body. Progressing other recommendations outlined in this document prior to the legislation being passed would also be an effective way of preparing for and making easier the implementation of legislation.

Implementing this recommendation will:

- Create a coherent and consistent legislative understanding of youth work services and its value in Wales, bringing sustainability, stability, status and protection to the sector;
- Underpin the creation of a universal youth work offer for all young people aged 11-25 in Wales, thus building on the themes identified in *Extending Entitlement*;
- Create a youth work sector that is effective and efficient in the way it operates;
- Create a youth work sector that has an enhanced capacity to support young people;
- Lead to greater accountability within the youth work sector in Wales as a result of the greater clarity around statutory obligations;

- Lead to greater awareness and recognition of the contribution made by the youth work sector in providing vital services for young people to thrive in Wales, not least in relation to education, increased opportunities and safeguarding.

Recommendation 3: Welsh Government should appoint a Minister for Children and Young People within Cabinet with a portfolio dedicated to youth work services. The Minister should lead a process of creating a vision for young people in Wales.

At present, the Welsh Government does not possess a unified vision for children and young people in Wales. The Welsh Government does not define what it views as the rights, hopes and expectations of children and young people growing up in Wales. Nor is there currently a Cabinet Minister within Welsh Government specifically responsible for children and young people up to the age of 25. At best, this means that issues relating to young people appear across a number of Ministerial portfolios, which can make for an unnecessary challenging set of circumstances for delivering youth work services. At worst, it means that the voices of children and young people are not heard or represented consistently and at all levels within Welsh Government.

We recommend that the Welsh Government set a vision for the delivery of youth services and support to young people across all portfolios, strengthened further we believe by a ministerial appointment in the Cabinet; a Minister for Children and Young People.

Specific actions to implement the recommendation could include the following:

1. The appointment within the Cabinet of a Minister for Children and Young People at the earliest opportunity.
2. The Minister would be responsible for leading the creation of a vision of the rights of children and young people growing up in Wales. The Minister would do this in conjunction with children and young people and other stakeholders working and young people. The vision would also pay due regard to various forms of legislation affecting children and young people in Wales, and would link with the principles and goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act.
3. The vision would be used by the Minister to create a detailed action plan in order to enhance the well-being of children and young people in Wales.
4. The vision and action plan would relate closely to any new legislation concerning youth work services in Wales (recommendation 2).
5. As part of their role, the Minister would be tasked with championing issues relating to children and young people throughout the rest of Welsh Government.
6. The Minister would sponsor the National Body for youth work services in Wales and work closely with it, once it is established. Doing so would allow for a coherent and unified approach to supporting young people in Wales, in line with the new ways of working promoted by the Well-being of Future Generations Act.
7. The Minister would be supported by a sufficient team of officials in order to ensure that the Minister is able to discharge their duties effectively.

Implementing this recommendation will:

- Ensure that Wales possesses a coherent vision of the rights and responsibilities of children and young people aged 11 to 25. Doing so will give children and young people a heightened understanding of what it means to be a young person growing up in Wales, and their entitlements as a young Welsh person. It will also create a greater sense of a common purpose for all organisations working with children and young people in Wales;
- Help to create a greater legislative coherence in Wales relating to children and young people. The vision and associated action plan should reflect any existing and new legislation relating to children and young people in Wales. It should also highlight how the viewpoints of children and young people could feed into other important legislation, such as the Well-being of Future Generations Act, the Socio-economic Duty, action plans relating to equalities and Welsh Language Measures;
- Raise the profile of children and young people, the various issues that they face, and the positive contributions that they make to communities and Welsh society, within the Welsh Government;
- Allow for issues relating to children and young people to be mainstreamed across all departments, so that they are 'owned' by all those working within Welsh Government;
- Create a sufficient administrative resource to support the Minister and the promotion of issues relating to children and young people within Welsh Government.

Recommendation 4: Welsh Government should ask the Auditor General for Wales to undertake an independent review into the sufficiency, transparency, accountability and effectiveness of funding and expenditure on youth work services across Welsh Government, local authorities and voluntary organisations, in order to assess the delivery of outcomes and impact for young people.

The Board is firmly of the opinion that the current financial arrangements for the delivery of youth work services in Wales are inconsistent and new ones are required. The *status quo* is not an option. There is a need for an independent review of funding and expenditure on youth work services in Wales. The review would detail and evaluate current funding mechanisms and make recommendations concerning a sustainable, equitable and accountable funding model for supporting youth work services in Wales (taking into account the nature and quality of the services provided, the value for money in spending decisions, a cost benefit analysis of spending on youth work services). The implementation of the funding recommendations would be made at the earliest opportunity.

Welsh Government should ask the Auditor General for Wales to undertake an independent review into the sufficiency, transparency, accountability and effectiveness of funding and expenditure on youth work services in Wales in order to assess the delivery of outcomes and impact for young people. The review could draw upon expertise from the Interim Youth Work Board (and any successor Implementation Board), the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), the Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services (CWVYS) and other relevant organisations in the maintained and voluntary youth work sector, including the Young Person's Committee.

The scope of the review could:

1. Determine the funding necessary to support key aspects of existing legislation and the legislation proposed for youth work services (recommendation 2), including the funding necessary to create a National Body for youth work services in Wales, along with the creation of an information exchange and associated Young Person's Entitlement Scheme.
2. Examine the value for money in current spending on youth work services in the maintained and voluntary sectors and identify how different local authorities make use of the youth work elements of their overall budgets. The review should highlight variations in spend between local authorities and the implications of such variations on the local delivery of youth work services. It could also identify good practice in relation to the funding of local youth work services, including instances where additional funds (charitable funds, private sector investment for example) are leveraged into youth work services.
3. Ensure that any new funding and expenditure models are integrated into an effective monitoring and outcomes framework (recommendation 7) and informed by a needs analysis of the 11-25 population in each local authority area.

Implementing this recommendation has the potential to:

- Lead to a more equitable funding for youth work services, and a more equitable access to youth work services for young people, in different parts of Wales. Doing so is essential as a way of creating a universal youth work services offer in Wales for young people aged 11-25 in Wales;
- Create far greater transparency and accountability in relation to public funding for youth work services in Wales;
- Put the local delivery of youth work services in Wales – in the maintained and voluntary sectors – on a firm, equal and sustainable financial footing, thus allowing it to contribute effectively to other Welsh Government policies and goals, such as the Socio-economic Duty, the Well-being of Future Generations Act, and action plans on equality;
- Enhance the relationship between the voluntary and maintained youth work sector;
- Lead to a sustainable funding model for key aspects of the legislation proposed for youth work services (recommendation 2).

Recommendation 5: Welsh Government should establish a national body for youth work services in Wales.

At present, no national organisation exists to lead, coordinate, champion and develop youth work services in Wales, with potential negative consequences for the quality of youth work services provided for young people. The lack of a national organisation means that the work of different organisations operating within the youth work sector in Wales lacks overall coordination, including in relation to marketing and communication. It also means that certain activities, such as research and international engagement, do not happen, given that they lie beyond the scope of individual organisations and local authorities. And the public profile of youth works services in Wales also suffers because of a lack of a national organisation to promote the value of youth work services to politicians and the public alike.

For the past three years, the Interim Youth Work Board has undertaken some of these roles. Feedback from the sector indicates that the Board has had a positive impact, leading to a more cohesive approach between the maintained and voluntary sectors, and an overall sense of positive momentum. However, the temporary nature of the Interim Youth Work Board, and the fact that the coordination of youth work services is beyond its remit, means that it is not suited to coordinate youth work services over the long term. There is a need to create a National Body, which can take on this important role, as soon as possible.

We recommend the creation of a National Body to co-ordinate, develop and provide support for youth work services in Wales.

Specific actions to implement the recommendation could include the following:

1. The creation of a National Body underpinned by legislation. It would operate under a remit letter, would possess a series of statutory functions, and would have a defined budget.
2. The National Body would take the lead in coordinating maintained and voluntary youth work services in Wales. It would help to set a vision and action plan for youth work services in Wales. This vision would need to complement the broader vision for children and young people developed by the new Minister for Children and Young People (recommendation 3);
3. The National Body would concentrate on functions that either cannot be undertaken locally or can be undertaken more efficiently at the national scale. These could include:
 - a. coordinating a training and accreditation framework for youth work services in Wales driven by a research evidence base;
 - b. supporting innovation and improvement in youth work services;
 - c. acting as an advocate to the youth work sector and contributing to policy development relating to youth work services;
 - d. coordinating the information exchange and related Young Person's Entitlement Scheme;
 - e. undertaking and commissioning research relating to youth work services;
 - f. championing youth work services within Wales and internationally;
 - g. promoting a Welsh brand of youth work services (recommendation 14).
4. The funding review of youth work services in Wales (recommendation 4) would decide on how the National Body would be funded and whether the National Body would become the funder of youth work services in Wales.
5. The size of the National Body, in terms of staffing and budget, would relate to the functions that it undertakes. However, it is recommended that the National Body would include, at the very least, a Chief Executive, a Policy Officer, a Media and Marketing Officer, a Training Coordinator, a Youth Participation and Engagement Officer, along with administrative and financial support.
6. Young people would be part of the Management Board of the National Body (recommendation 1) and the precise manner of their involvement would need to be defined by young people themselves.
7. Additional individuals would be appointed to the Management Board of the National Body. There would be an independent chair appointed by the Minister.

8. The National Body would integrate effectively with other strategic bodies operating nationally in the youth work sector in Wales, to avoid a duplication of roles and functions. The precise relationship between these other strategic bodies and the National Body would need to be defined in detail.
9. There is a need to create an interim Youth Work Services Wales Implementation Board while the legislation required to create the National Body is passed. The Implementation Board would sustain the momentum generated by the Interim Youth Work Board, support the implementation of recommendations in this report, which are not dependent on legislation, and contribute to the definition of the form and functions of the National Body.

Implementing this recommendation will:

- Help create, along with the proposed legislation, a strategic, common and united approach to youth work services in Wales;
- Support the development of more effective and innovative youth work provision in Wales as a result of the nationally coordinated training and development opportunities promoted by the National Body;
- Improve the quality of youth work services in Wales through the research and evidence functions of the National Body;
- Lead to more active and effective policy engagement within the youth work sector. Doing so will improve policies specifically related to young people and youth work services, and will support a more effective mainstreaming of issues relating to young people within other policy areas;
- Raise the profile of youth work services within Wales and also internationally.

Recommendation 6: Welsh Government should establish regional delivery partnerships supporting local delivery.

Two challenges exist in relation to the delivery of youth work services at the local and regional level. First, we are concerned that the voice of young people is not being heard and acted on consistently at a local and regional level, with negative consequences for service delivery. For instance, the establishment of Public Services Boards (PSBs) as part of the *Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015)* was supposed to improve joint working across all public services in each local authority area in Wales. However, we have not seen much evidence to suggest that the youth work sector contributes to the work of PSBs. Similarly, Wales' seven Regional Partnership Board (RPBs) bring together health boards, local authorities and the third sector to meet the care and support needs of people in their area. Again, the youth work sector rarely attends or contributes to discussions at RPBs.

Second, the delivery of youth work within twenty-two separate local authorities creates additional challenges. Services are duplicated within adjacent authorities, which means that opportunities for positive collaboration are lost. Again, there is a danger that young people lose out as a result of this approach. And additional challenges exist for voluntary bodies seeking to work across twenty-two local authorities, each with their distinctive approach to delivering youth work services.

We recommend establishing a unified regional approach to multi agency strategic planning and collaboration, with a key emphasis on young people.

Specific actions to implement the recommendation could include the following:

1. The Welsh Government would encourage PSBs and RPBs more proactively to include the viewpoints of young people in their decision-making. It would also consider whether there is a need to amend the statutory guidance provided for PSBs and RPBs in order to ensure a more effective representation of the voice of young people within these important local and regional fora.
2. Local authorities and the voluntary sector would be supported to create a regional structure, which would help to improve the delivery of youth work services in Wales. Different options exist for the regional footprint, but it is recommended that the regional structure should be based on the four regions of North Wales, South East Wales, Central South Wales, and South West and Mid Wales. These equate to education consortia, CWVYS regions and the regional structure employed by the Principal Youth Officers' Group.
3. The regional structure created would strengthen partnerships between the maintained and voluntary sectors within their regions, with a view to improving service delivery.
4. The regions would be supported to explore the benefits of collaboration in relation to the development of:
 - a. a more strategic and consistent delivery model within regions;
 - b. specialist youth work provision within regions, e.g. on healthcare for young people, international youth work;
 - c. regional approaches to skills and workforce development;
 - d. regional approaches to funding applications to support youth work services;
 - e. regional approaches to the delivery of Welsh-medium youth work services (recommendation 12);
 - f. regional facilities (e.g. residential centres) to support the work of youth work services within regions.
5. The regional structure put in place would integrate with the co-ordinating function of the National Body, to oversee and support local delivery arrangements.

Implementing this recommendation will:

- Lead to more effective collaboration between the maintained and voluntary youth work sectors within regions, with a positive impact on service delivery;
- Improve youth delivery within local authorities by allowing them to come together as regions, and in collaboration with the voluntary sector, to bid for additional funding, to develop youth work specialisms and to deliver effective Welsh-medium youth work services;
- Allow for a more effective workforce development, by supporting regional models of training and skills development (recommendation 13);
- Better represent the viewpoints of young people in local debates about well-being, for instance by helping to ensure that local discussions about well-being are more likely to include the viewpoints of future generations. More broadly, implementing this recommendation would also contribute to the development of a greater role for

young people within local and regional governance structures (linked to recommendation 1).

Recommendation 7: Welsh Government should establish a framework to support innovation within youth work services in Wales in order to improve standards within the sector.

There is no doubt that high quality youth work is taking place in Wales, with positive consequences for young people throughout the country. However, there are a number of issues that should be addressed in order to improve standards and outcomes for young people in Wales. First, there is a need for a clearer definition of the meaning of good quality youth work services and for that definition to be owned and applied consistently across the sector. Second, the sector needs to develop a clearer understanding of how it might measure the longer-term outcomes and impact of its work with young people. Third, there is a need to create more effective means of promoting professionalism, and sharing good practice and innovations throughout the sector. Finally, there is a need to develop effective and proportionate ways of evaluating and improving standards within the sector.

We recommend that the Welsh Government should establish a framework to support innovation within youth work services in Wales in order to improve standards within the sector.

Specific actions to implement the recommendation could include the following:

1. The National Body would be responsible for coordinating, in concert with the youth work sector, the development of an innovation and outcomes framework in order to:
 - a. Create agreed standards to define what is meant by good quality youth work services in Wales. The standards could draw on the Quality Mark and previous Estyn inspections of youth work services;
 - b. Devise means of understanding the short- and long-term impact of youth work services on young people;
 - c. Devise mechanisms for sharing good and innovative practice across the sector.
2. The National Body would work closely with Estyn in order to develop an effective, appropriate and proportionate way of evaluating and improving standards within youth work services. The means of evaluation should be sensitive to the different contexts within youth work services take place in Wales (maintained and voluntary, national organisations and small-scale, locally-based ones).
3. The innovations and outcomes framework, and the associated form of evaluation, would be underpinned by legislation (recommendation 2). The legislation should define the exact scope of the innovations and outcomes framework, and the associated form of evaluation.
4. Young people would be included in any proposed mechanisms for evaluating the quality of youth work services as Young Inspectors, so that youth work services become accountable to young people.

5. Those working in the youth work sector, particularly small-scale voluntary organisations, would be supported to prepare for and take part in the new forms of evaluation.
6. The National Body would clarify the relationship between new forms of evaluation and other forms of accreditation and quality control within the sector, most notably the Quality Mark.
7. Aspects of this recommendation would be implemented, as far as possible, prior to the legislation and the creation of the National Body. The Implementation Board, for instance, could work with Estyn to develop an appropriate, proportionate and supportive way of evaluating youth work services prior to any legislation being passed.

Implementing this recommendation will:

- Allow the youth work sector in Wales to have a clear definition and understanding of the meaning of good quality youth work, and supportive structures in place to help them achieve it. As a result, there should be measurable benefits for young people engaging with youth work services in Wales;
- Create a better understanding of the short- and long-term impact of youth work services on young people in Wales and of ways of measuring it, with clear benefits in terms of demonstrating 'value for money';
- Lead to more effective ways of sharing good practice and innovation within the youth work sector, with benefits for the quality of youth work services experienced by young people;
- Create effective ways of identifying unsatisfactory practice within the sector.

Recommendation 8: Welsh Government should strengthen the current Education Workforce Council (EWC) legislation so that the gaps in registration criteria are closed.

The legislation that underpins the current Education Workforce Council (EWC) registration of youth work staff has loopholes within it. In summary, there are workers undertaking youth work services on a paid basis in maintained and voluntary settings who are unregistered. There are also unregistered practitioners working in settings outside of the maintained and voluntary sectors, for example in housing associations, faith organisations and private settings. Clearly, there are safeguarding risks here for young people, and for parents, carers, guardians and the public.

We recommend that the Welsh Government should revise existing legislation to ensure that all those working in youth work services in Wales must register with the EWC.

Specific actions to implement the recommendation could include the following:

1. The Welsh Government would at the earliest opportunity tighten the legislation surround the registration of youth workers so that all individuals working with young people in youth work settings must register with the EWC. The Welsh Government would take the lead in identifying ways of expediting this process.
2. The Welsh Government would build on the current mapping research of the youth work services workforce, the ongoing work being undertaken by CWVYS for the

voluntary sector, and EWC's recent workforce mapping. Gaps in registration should be identified and further research undertaken as needed to address issues.

3. The National Body would use the mapping exercise as the basis for developing a workforce plan for the youth work sector (recommendation 13). This should build on the work that is already being undertaken by the Workforce Development Strategy Participation Group.

Implementing this recommendation will:

- Address a fundamental safeguarding issue arising in relation to youth work services, thus ensuring that all youth work in Wales takes place in safe and secure environments;
- Help to improve standards within the youth work sector by ensuring that all youth workers are registered and qualified to work with young people. Doing so will allow for the development of a baseline of quality expected of all youth work services and all youth workers in Wales.

2.2 Delivery

Recommendation 9: Welsh Government should work with the sector to commission an information exchange for Wales as part of a digital youth work offer to young people.

Wales does not have a space where young people can go for comprehensive and reliable information about youth work services and about other issues that are important to them. Young people have told us they struggle to find out what is available to them locally, across Wales and internationally. This lack of a national infrastructure for information and digital youth work severely hampered the efforts of the sector to respond to the challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic. More broadly, the absence of a national infrastructure for information and digital youth work undermines the Welsh Government's commitment to a universal and bilingual youth work offer.

Welsh Government should work with young people and the sector to design and deliver a national framework for digital youth work and a youth information exchange for Wales. This would enable all young people to access information about their rights and entitlements, the availability of youth work services and support, and any other issues that young people deem to be important for them. It would also empower them to find out about and access face to face youth work, and would enable youth workers to provide a service through digital media where this is the preferred option for young people.

Specific actions to implement the recommendation could include the following:

1. The National Body would be responsible for the digital youth work offer and the associated youth information exchange for Wales. It would either directly curate or commission another organisation to curate information that appears on the information exchange, in partnership with young people.
2. The National Body would decide on nationally agreed guidelines, standards, and ethical and safeguarding principles for digital youth work in Wales.
3. In line with the principles of service design, young people would take the lead in deciding on the format, content and scope of the information exchange, so that it is relevant to their needs. This would include deciding on its name.
4. The information exchange would be characterised by an exchange of information between young people, youth workers and policy-makers in Wales. A significant proportion of the information would be produced by young people. The information exchange would blend a local production of information with a more national curation of information.
5. The information exchange would recognise and promote the value of digital creativity as a means of youth work engagement in its own right (for example coding, graphic design, audio and film production).
6. The National Body would ensure that a digital youth work offer and an associated youth information exchange complements, reinforces and grows the delivery of face-to-face youth work in Wales, rather than detracting from it. For instance, the information exchange could be used to ask young people about the quality of face-to-face youth work services at the point of delivery.
7. The National Body would define the relationship between the information exchange and other providers of digital information for young people, including Meic.

8. The National Body would seek to minimize the impact of digital poverty on the digital youth work offer, especially given the latter's significant contribution to the Welsh Government's commitment to delivering a universal youth work offer.
9. The National Body would ensure that the information exchange promotes equality, accessibility and inclusivity. It would be fully bilingual (recommendation 12) and would be used to enable youth work services to reach and include diverse audiences (recommendation 11).
10. The National Body would consider the implications of the digital youth work offer for the training of youth workers, as well as for Higher Education (HE) and Further Education (FE) students. It would work with HE and FE institutions to provide ongoing training to enable an effective digital youth work offer to be created.
11. The information exchange would mesh effectively with the Young Person's Entitlement Scheme (recommendation 10). The Scheme would enable young people to access information that is contained in the information exchange.

Supporting this recommendation will:

- Allow young people throughout Wales to access information about youth work services and about any other issues that are important for them, so that they are better able to exercise their rights, make the most of opportunities on offer and contribute more effectively to their communities and to Welsh society in general;
- Enable the Welsh Government to achieve its goal of achieving a universal and bilingual youth work offer in Wales. The information exchange will enable the sector to offer a 'baseline' service to all young people in Wales;
- Help the Welsh Government to make youth work services accountable to young people by making young people active contributors to the digital youth work offer;
- Enable the Welsh Government and other bodies to engage directly with young people through online surveys. For instance, the information exchange could be used by PSBs to canvas the opinions of young people about local understandings of well-being;
- Allow the Welsh Government to demonstrate its commitment to the UNCRC, where it has been specified that young people should have the right to access information (article 17).

Recommendation 10: Welsh Government should launch a Young Person's Entitlement Scheme.

Recently published statistics illustrate the fact that young people in Wales still suffer from poverty and deprivation.⁶ Serious consequences arise in relation to the ability of certain groups of young people to access the services, goods and opportunities that are taken for granted by those young people not living in poverty. Some groups of young people, for instance, are not able to access education and training effectively, to take advantage of opportunities for employment, or to participate effectively and responsibly in the life of their communities.

⁶ D Hirsch and J Stone, *Local Indicators of Child Poverty after Housing Costs, 2019/20* (Centre for Research in Social Policy, Loughborough, 2021).

In other jurisdictions, practical means have been devised to support young people to access services, goods and opportunities. For instance, the Young Scot Card allows young people between 11 and 26 years of age in Scotland to access discounts on various services (such as travel, and other cultural and sporting activities), and to collect rewards for engaging in positive activities within the community and online. The card also acts as an accredited proof of age for young people in Scotland.

We recommend that the Welsh Government establish a Young Person's Entitlement Scheme, which would be free of charge to all 11 – 25 year olds living in Wales. The Scheme would support all young people in Wales to access services, information and opportunities, thus enabling them to become active members of their communities and of Welsh society.

Specific actions to implement the recommendation could include the following:

1. The Scheme would operate as an accredited proof of age and would outline the services that are available to young people in their local authority area, across Wales and internationally (in conjunction with the information exchange).
2. Additional benefits associated with the Scheme would be designed in conjunction with young people but might include the Scheme being used for:
 - a. discounted and free travel concessions;
 - b. school lunches;
 - c. discounts with partner retailers and leisure providers;
 - d. accessing a rewards programme;
 - e. accruing learning points;
 - f. giving access to courses, libraries, webinars and online learning resources.
3. Young people would inform any decision about the specific format taken by the Scheme, for instance, whether it should be a physical card, an app or both. Care should be taken to ensure that the Scheme – and the services it supports – is as accessible and inclusive as possible. Young people would also help decide on the name used for the Scheme.
4. A young person's panel, linked to the National Body, would sense-check the Scheme on an ongoing basis to ensure that it remains relevant to, and useful for, young people.
5. The Scheme would be the joint responsibility of the new Minister for Children and Young People (recommendation 3) and the National Body (recommendation 5). The establishment of the Scheme would lead to ongoing conversations between the Minister and other government departments, as access to additional rights and experiences are negotiated on behalf of young people.
6. The Welsh Government would consider whether there is a potential for the Scheme to integrate with other cards and apps used by young people in Wales, e.g. transport cards, NUS card, fingerprint recognition for free school meals etc.
7. The Scheme would be linked closely to the information exchange (recommendation 9), so that that the Scheme can help young people to understand the youth work services that are available to them in Wales.

Supporting this recommendation will:

- Help the Welsh Government to create a more level playing field to support young people in Wales to access services, experiences and opportunities. Doing so will

enable it to support its commitment to reducing the impact of child poverty on the life experiences of young people in Wales. It will also help to address aspects of the Socio-economic Duty relating to young people.

- Allow the Welsh Government to support young people in Wales to access information about youth work services more efficiently. Doing so will enable it to support its commitment to a universal youth work offer.
- Enable the Welsh Government to support the well-being of young people in relation to a number of well-being goals, such as ‘a Wales of vibrant culture’, ‘a more equal Wales’ and a ‘Wales of cohesive communities’.

Recommendation 11: Welsh Government and the youth work sector should work together to promote equality, inclusion and diversity, both in terms of access to youth work services in Wales, and in relation to the role that youth work services can play in proactively challenging discriminatory attitudes and behaviours within society.

The youth work sector has prided itself on being open and inclusive to all young people in Wales. *Youth Work: Its Principles and Purposes* states that ‘fundamental to youth work are the principles of equality and inclusion’.⁷ However, there is a need for all youth work services to reflect on how their work either helps or hinders the promotion of equality and diversity. First, there is a need to consider whether youth work services are as accessible to under-represented groups as they claim to be. Barriers, sometimes hidden ones, make it difficult for under-represented groups to access youth work services. The Accessibility and Inclusive SPG is undertaking important work to understand these barriers and there is a need to build on this work. Second, there is a need to define and develop the role that youth work services can play in helping young people to make sense of their own identities, the identities of other people, and how those differing identities can lead to inequalities, exclusion and oppression. In this second context, there is an important role that youth work services can play in proactively challenging discriminatory attitudes and behaviours within society.

We recommend that the Welsh Government and the youth work sector should work together to promote equality, inclusion and diversity, both in terms of access to youth work services in Wales, and in relation to the role that youth work services can play in proactively challenging discriminatory attitudes and behaviours within society.

Specific actions to implement the recommendation could include the following:

1. The Welsh Government should commission a survey of young people in Wales, with a view to identifying any barriers to accessing youth work services. Care would need to be taken to ensure that young people – and particularly those from under-represented groups – are able to input freely and effectively into the survey. The survey should be conducted in close collaboration with youth work services sector.
2. Findings from the survey would be used by the National Body to create an annual equalities action plan, which would address any barriers to accessing youth work services and actively promote youth work services among under-represented

⁷ *Youth Work: Its Principles and Purposes*, p. 4.

groups. The equalities action plan would need to mesh effectively with other relevant action plans such as the Race Equality Action Plan, the Socio-economic Duty, the Action on Disability and the upcoming LGBTQ+ Action Plan:

- a. The equalities action plan should focus on practical means of promoting accessible and inclusive youth work services, where young people feel welcome, secure, comfortable and can celebrate all aspects of their identity. Relevant factors could include improving diversity in terms of the leadership of youth work services, the profile of those attending youth work services, along with the development of additional bespoke services for under-represented groups. The National Body should support other youth work service organisations to understand their responsibilities and develop their own equalities action plans.
 - b. The National Body would use the equalities action plan to identify practical means of promoting youth work as a career or voluntary role for individuals from all backgrounds. The work being undertaken by the EWC in relation to Educators Wales could provide some guidance here.
 - c. The implementation of the equality action plan would be held to account by an independent body (e.g. the Equality and Human Rights Commission) and should be updated in light of the success or otherwise of previous equality action plans.
3. The National Body would support youth work services in their role in proactively challenging discriminatory attitudes and behaviours within communities and society. It would also support youth work services to enable young people to take action and to become advocates for change themselves.
 4. Funding should be provided for HEs, FEs and other training providers to provide training and support for those in the youth work services sector (paid and unpaid) to enable them to facilitate discussions with young people about identity, diversity, equalities and inclusion, thus allowing them to become active agents of positive change.
 5. The National Body would promote and publicise more broadly the valuable role played by youth work services in addressing inequalities of different kinds in Wales.
 6. The National Body would ensure that the information exchange and digital youth work offer helps to address any hidden barriers to accessing youth work services. It would also promote inclusivity at all times and be an active voice for responding to equality issues.

Supporting this recommendation will:

- Demonstrate and reinforce the commitment made by the youth work sector in *Youth Work in Wales: Principles and Practices* to be inclusive and open to all young people of Wales;
- Demonstrate and reinforce the role to be played by the youth work sector in supporting the Welsh Government's commitment to addressing inequalities of different kinds in Wales (e.g. in relation to the Race Equality Action Plan, the Socio-economic Duty, the upcoming LGBTQ+ Action Plan, the Action on Disability and the promotion of a 'Wales of cohesive communities' as part of the Well-being of Future Generations Act);

- Ensuring youth work services are as accessible and inclusive as possible to all young people in Wales supports specific aspects of the UNCRC, including young people's right to an identity (article 8) and to equality and non-discrimination (article 2);
- Demonstrate and reinforce the effective role that youth work services can play in promoting positive and inclusive attitudes and behaviours among young people in Wales.

Recommendation 12: Welsh Government should increase the availability of youth work services through the medium of Welsh. It should also ensure that one of the key priorities of the National Body will be to promote youth work services through the medium of Welsh.

Beyond the activities of some voluntary organisations, and activities in some local authority areas, equal opportunities for young people to access youth work services through the medium of Welsh are at present limited throughout much of Wales. Recognising language preference and providing Welsh language youth work services is a necessity for a youth centred and inclusive approach to youth work services in Wales. Young people have the right to be able to access youth work services through the medium of Welsh.

We recommend that the Welsh Government should recognise young people's right to use the Welsh language and should increase the availability of youth work services through the medium of Welsh. It should ensure that one of the key priorities of the National Body, and of any other youth work service providers, should be to offer and promote youth work services through the medium of Welsh.

Specific actions to implement the recommendation could include the following:

1. The proposed legislation underpinning youth work services in Wales would stipulate a necessity to increase the availability of youth work services through the medium of Welsh.
2. As part of the legislation, the National Body would be tasked with setting out a strategic plan detailing how it would increase the availability of youth work services through the medium of Welsh.
3. The National Body, in conjunction with the youth work sector, would ascertain the need for Welsh-medium youth work services and respond to that need. Proxy indicators of need could be used, including the percentage of young Welsh speakers, or the percentage of young people attending Welsh-medium schools, within a local authority area. Moreover, the National Body should proactively seek to promote a demand for Welsh-medium youth work services among young people.
4. The National Body, in conjunction with the youth work sector, would build on the mapping work being undertaken to establish a baseline of Welsh-medium youth work provision, as well as Welsh-language skills within the youth work sector, so that areas of strength and weakness are identified. A plan would be developed to respond to the findings of the mapping. As part of its strategic planning in this area, the National Body, in conjunction with the youth work sector, would need to allocate sufficient funding to support youth work services through the medium of Welsh in

order to ensure that all young people in Wales have equality of access to youth work services in Welsh regardless of where they live.

5. The National Body, in conjunction with the youth work sector, should ensure that Welsh-language issues are included in its workforce development plans for the existing workforce and in relation to future recruitment (recommendation 13). It would also liaise with training and education providers to ensure that Welsh-medium skills, as well as issues relating to bilingual youth work delivery, are addressed within relevant curricula.
6. The National Body, in conjunction with the youth work sector, could explore the potential of using regional ways of working (recommendation 6) as a way of increasing the availability of Welsh-medium youth work services, and as a way of addressing any potential lack of language capacity within the workforce.
7. Any bodies receiving funding covered by the *Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011* would need to follow any guidance given by the Welsh Language Commissioner as part of the Measure, particularly its Promotion Standards, to inform their planning and provision of Welsh medium youth work services, whether delivered or commissioned.
8. The Welsh Government could use the findings of the pilot project it has supported in this area in order to help inform its future development of Welsh-medium youth work services. The guidance produced through the pilot could be used in any interim period, especially in relation to planning and funding issues.
9. The Welsh Government and the National Body would need to commit to a fully bilingual information exchange and related Young Persons' Entitlement Scheme (recommendations 9 and 10).
10. The Welsh Government would need to examine ways of fast-tracking its support of Welsh-medium youth work services so that it is not delayed by legislative timetables and the creation of the National Body.

Supporting this recommendation will:

- Allow young people to exercise their right to access youth work services in Welsh, reflecting Wales' status as a bilingual nation and its commitment to the UNCRC. Article 30 states that 'every child has the right to learn and use the language, customs and religion of their family, whether or not these are shared by the majority of the people in the country where they live';
- Create more linguistically inclusive youth work services in Wales; something that reflects the overall ethos of youth work, as reflected in *Youth Work in Wales: Principles and Purposes*;
- Enable youth work services to help the Welsh Government meet its strategic aims in relation to Welsh language ability and use. Both *Cymraeg 2050* and the *Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015)* set out ambitious targets in relation to increasing the numbers of Welsh speakers and to increasing the everyday use of Welsh. Youth work services have an important part to play in achieving those aims;
- Enable bodies to meet their commitments in relation to the *Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011*. The Measure sets out a legal framework for imposing a duty on organisations to comply with one or more standards relating to the Welsh language, including the obligation to promote or facilitate the use of the Welsh language more

widely. Promoting Welsh-medium youth work services enables bodies to help meet their commitments in relation to the promotion of the Welsh language.

Recommendation 13: Welsh Government needs to build on its commitment to support and develop the youth work profession with a career structure offering progression.

A number of issues need to be addressed in order to improve the sustainability of the youth work workforce. First, and in general terms, there is no clear understanding of the scale of the youth work workforce and how it is deployed in different parts of Wales. Second, there is a lack of a workforce development plan for the whole of the youth work sector. The lack of strategic planning in relation to workforce development impacts negatively on retention within the workforce. Feedback gathered from the sector suggests that whilst there is a clear route to becoming a qualified youth worker, opportunities for career development beyond that are limited, with many qualified youth workers seeking alternative employment in other service sectors. Third, funding is insufficient to support youth work training across local authorities, the voluntary sector and for volunteers. There is also little opportunity for continuous professional development (CPD). Taken together, the sector needs to move away from an approach to workforce development and training that is piecemeal and opportunistic towards one that is systematic, progressive and sustainable.

We recommend that the Welsh Government commits to supporting and developing the youth work profession by defining and supporting a career structure that provides coherence for the sector and offers opportunities for progression for individual workers.

Specific actions to implement the recommendation could include the following:

1. The Welsh Government would conduct or commission a comprehensive mapping exercise of the scale and reach of the youth work sector. The mapping exercise would be based on a comprehensive definition of youth work, developed in conjunction with the sector, and as reflected in the proposed legislation (recommendation 2). It would contain an audit of the skills that exist in the youth work sector. It would also be informed by the work that the EWC is progressing in relation to the registered youth work workforce, the work that CWVYS is about to commence on the voluntary youth work sector workforce, and current work being undertaken by the Workforce Development SPG.
2. On the basis of the mapping exercise, the Welsh Government would develop, in conjunction with the sector, a youth work workforce development plan. The workforce development plan would:
 - a. identify any issues relating to workforce recruitment and retention (e.g. recruitment, induction, promotion and career development) as well as practical ways of addressing them;
 - b. identify and seek to reduce any disparities in the experiences and opportunities available to youth workers operating in the maintained and voluntary sectors;
 - c. reflect the changing skills requirements within the sector, particularly in light of the proposed information exchange and digital youth work offer, and in

light of the commitment to increase the availability of youth work services through the medium of Welsh.

- d. focus on raising standards in the sector. It would integrate effectively with current forms of quality assurance in the sector, including the Quality Mark, and the proposed innovation and outcomes framework for youth work services in Wales (recommendation 7).
3. The Welsh Government would further develop qualifications and CPD opportunities within the youth work sector, and publicise and promote these widely. Qualifications and CPD opportunities would reflect the needs identified in the workforce development plan.
4. The Welsh Government would, in conjunction with the sector, explore the level of funding required for youth work training and professional development, both for paid staff and valued volunteers.
5. The Welsh Government would, in conjunction with the sector, work with training and education providers to ensure that training and professional development opportunities are appropriate and accessible to those working in the youth work sector. It would work with the sector and with the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to ensure that there are adequate training and education opportunities available through the medium of Welsh.
6. The Welsh Government would, in conjunction with the sector, examine the potential for the proposed regional structure for youth work services (recommendation 6) to play an important role in supporting training and career development, for instance by allowing youth workers to become regional 'experts' in specialist aspects of youth work services. At the same time, this regional approach would not hinder attempts to address more local training needs.
7. The Welsh Government would work with key groups and partners, notably Educators Wales, to promote youth work as a career. There are important links here with recommendation 14, which focuses on the need to establish a youth work in Wales brand.

Supporting this recommendation will:

- Create a more effective workforce operating in the youth work sector in Wales, due to the increased emphasis on training, education and CPD provision. There will be positive consequences, as result, for the quality of the services that are provided for the young people of Wales;
- Create a sector that has a clear sense of its strategic workforce needs, both nationally and locally and within the maintained and voluntary sectors. The youth work sector as a result will be more resilient and sustainable;
- Create a workforce that is able to adapt more quickly to the changing demands of young people and changing external environments. The pandemic has demonstrated the need for youth work services to respond creatively to changing circumstances. Developing a more strategic approach to training and CPD will allow for the youth work sector to respond quickly and effectively to any future challenges;
- Create a workforce that feels more valued and supported in the work it does with young people. The recommendations detailed above will help to create a youth work workforce that is more professional in outlook and one that is more highly valued, both by external stakeholders and youth worker themselves. Again, there are likely

to be positive benefits here for young people experiencing youth work services, which are better valued.

Recommendation 14: Welsh Government should establish a youth work services in Wales brand and a resource to co-ordinate and promote communication within the sector and between the sector and its partners.

At present, there is a danger that the value of youth work services in Wales is under-appreciated by a range of stakeholders, with potential negative consequences for the overall level of support provided for the sector. Part of the problem is that youth work services in Wales does not possess an effective brand, which highlights what youth work does and its positive impact on young people, and communities and society more broadly. There is also a lack of effective communication more generally within the sector, which again leads to a poor understanding of the positive contributions made by youth work services and youth workers in different part of Wales. It also means that young people are not always aware of youth work services and the opportunities that they provide. In addition, poor communication within the sector hampers an effective sharing of good practice and leads to opportunities for collaboration being missed.

We recommend that the Welsh Government support the creation of a youth work services in Wales brand and that the brand supports more effective communication within the youth work sector and with other partners and stakeholders.

Specific actions to implement the recommendation could include the following:

1. The Welsh Government would support the National Body to develop a brand for youth work services in Wales. The brand would highlight the distinctive and positive contribution that youth work services make to the lives of young people, as well as to broader communities and society, in Wales.
2. The brand would highlight the significant contribution that youth work services make to enabling the Welsh Government to reach a range of other policy objectives, including the *Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015)*, the *Socio-economic Duty, Cymraeg 2050, Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010*, the *Children Act (2004)*, the *Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014* and the *Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure*.
3. The brand would be a part of a broader marketing and public relations function associated with the National Body. It would build on the experience of the marketing role being piloted at present within CWVYS and would also integrate with the Youth Work in Wales Marketing Plan.
4. The National Body would build on the work conducted as part of the CWVYS pilot to develop a communications strategy in order to improve communication with young people, with parents, carers and guardian, within the sector and between the sector and other partners. The communication strategy would highlight:
 - a. opportunities available to young people;
 - b. opportunities available to youth workers, e.g. in relation to training and joint initiatives;
 - c. examples of good and innovative practice within the sector;

- d. the broader value of the sector to communities across Wales and to Welsh society.
5. The National Body would integrate the marketing and communication strategies with the information exchange and the Young Person's Entitlement Scheme (recommendations 9 and 10).
6. The Welsh Government would support the National Body to ensure that the brand and any marketing and communications functions are funded effectively.
7. The National Body would examine broader ways of increasing the profile of youth work services to Welsh and international audiences, for instance by promoting a *Year of Young People* celebration during the course of this Senedd term.

Supporting this recommendation will:

- Raise the profile of youth work services among young people, leading to more young people accessing those services;
- Create a youth work sector that is better valued by partners and stakeholders in Wales, by highlighting the positive benefits that derive from youth work services. Emphasising the contribution that youth work services make to a range of Welsh Government policies will be especially important;
- Raise the profile of the youth work sector more broadly, which has the potential to attract additional funding. Additional funding will lead to benefits for youth work services and for young people using them;
- Raise the profile of youth work in Wales within the UK and on an international scale. Implementing this recommendation will allow the National Body to communicate more broadly the valuable and innovative work being done via youth work services in Wales. There are broader benefits here in terms of raising Wales' profile more broadly on an international scale, as has happened in relation to the Well-being of Future Generations Act;
- Improve opportunities for youth workers and young people alike by enhancing communication across the sector. Better communication within the sector has the potential to lead to new experiences for young people and youth workers, as well as new opportunities for collaboration.

2 Timetable and cost

2.1 Timetable

We urge the Minister to implement the recommendations contained in this report as quickly as possible. Doing so is crucial if we are to create a model for youth work services that is sustainable and able to respond creatively to the many challenges facing young people today, not least those linked to ongoing austerity and the post-pandemic recovery.

Some recommendations must be implemented as a matter of urgency. The strengthening of the current EWC legislation so that the gaps in registration criteria are closed (recommendation 8) is clearly something that should be implemented immediately, given the serious safeguarding issues. Similarly the independent review of current funding models for youth work services in Wales would need to be conducted as a matter of urgency, given the influence that such financial issues have on planning for a sustainable governance and delivery of youth work services (recommendation 4).

Other recommendations will take more time, in particular the establishment of a legislative basis for youth work services in Wales (recommendation 2) and the creation of the National Body (recommendation 5). In these cases, we request that the Minister begin implementing these recommendation as soon as possible, so that their full implementation can also happen in as timely a manner as possible.

The Board would also highlight two further points, both of which relate to the need to maintain momentum with respect to the creation of a sustainable model for youth work services in Wales:

- First, even in cases where the full implementation of a recommendation might take some time, we encourage the Minister to implement specific actions within those recommendations – those that are feasible to implement quickly – as soon as possible. Doing so will help to demonstrate to young people and to the sector more broadly that progress is being made.
- Second, while the National Body is something that would need to be underpinned by legislation and would therefore take some time, there is a need to create an interim Implementation Board to continue the good work of the Interim Youth Work Board (whose term of office ends in December 2021) and the SPGs. It is important that the momentum generated over the past few years is not lost while legislation is progressed and during any interim period prior to the creation of the National Body. Moreover, there is a need for an Implementation Board to act as the voice of the youth work sector over the short term as each of the recommendations are implemented.

2.2 Cost

A number of costs will inevitably arise in relation to implementing these recommendations. These can be broken down into different categories:

- One-off costs to commission surveys or audits in support recommendations, for instance in relation to: current funding provision for youth work services (recommendation 4); barriers to accessing youth work services (recommendation 11); the extent of and demand for Welsh-medium youth work services

(recommendation 12); the extent and skills base of the youth work service workforce (recommendation 13); establishing a brand for youth work services in Wales (recommendation 14).

- Recurring costs in relation to new forms of governance and new forms of provision, for instance: the creation of the National Body (recommendation 5); the information exchange (recommendation 9); the Young Person's Entitlement Scheme (recommendation 10); Welsh-medium youth work services (recommendation 12). There are opportunities to offset some of this additional investment, for instance by exploring the potential for regional collaboration so as to reduce any duplication of activity.
- Administrative costs associated with developing new forms of governance and new forms of provision. For instance, administrative time and energy will be required in order to: create a youth-led governance structure for youth work services (recommendation 1); progress the legislation to support youth work services (recommendation 2); creating a vision for the young people of Wales (recommendation 3). While some investment will be necessary over the short term, it is anticipated that this will lead to more effective and coherent ways of operating over the medium term, leading to greater administrative efficiency.