



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

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# Youth work in Wales: delivering for young people (consultation document)

We want your views on a proposed new statutory framework for youth work.

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# Overview

We are seeking views on draft new statutory guidance and statutory directions for youth work in Wales. These proposals form a key part of work to develop and take forward a series of recommendations made by the Interim Youth Work Board in their final report, '[Time to deliver for young people in Wales](#)'.

## Introduction

The Interim Youth Work Board, in place from October 2018 to July 2022, was tasked with providing advice and guidance to the Welsh Government on a number of areas relating to youth work in Wales. This followed on from an [inquiry by the Children, Young People and Education Committee in 2016](#), a [review of 'Extending Entitlement'](#) in 2018, as well as [Estyn's survey of services for young people in Wales](#) in 2018.

The [Interim Youth Work Board's report](#), published in September 2021, set out 14 recommendations aimed at achieving a sustainable delivery model for youth work in Wales. One of those was to strengthen the legislative basis for youth work. Legislating for a new framework for youth services in Wales is a Programme for Government commitment.

Following detailed work with the [Youth Work Strategy Implementation Board](#), practitioners and other representatives from across the sector and beyond, as well as young people, we are now inviting responses to draft proposals for strengthening the legislative basis for youth work.

These proposals focus on the introduction of new statutory directions and statutory guidance for youth work in Wales, referred to in this document as the new statutory framework.

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This statutory framework incorporates the following key elements:

- a definition of youth work as part of wider youth support services
- the introduction of a new youth work entitlement for young people
- a revised strategic planning and reporting mechanism for youth work

Work continues on a number of the Interim Board's other recommendations, and further details on the current focus of this work can be found in a [statement made by the then Minister for Education and Welsh Language in December 2023](#).

## The need for a consistent definition of youth work within a legislative context

The status of youth work in Wales and the absence of a strong and consistent definition has been a central and recurring theme in recent policy deliberations.

For example, a thematic review undertaken by Estyn in 2018 concluded as follows.

“ There is a lack of clarity among service providers and policy makers about the terminology used when discussing services to support young people. The term ‘youth work’ is often confused with ‘work with young people’. ”

The need for a robust definition of youth work was highlighted in the Interim Board's final report.

“ The current legislative basis for youth work services in Wales is weak and open to interpretation... moreover, current legislation does not define youth work services as a statutory function of local authorities, which can

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lead to a situation in which local authorities view youth work services as a luxury rather than an essential service for young people. ”

This has also been echoed in our engagement with many stakeholders who have spoken of the need to protect youth work as a service so that its distinctiveness as an approach to working with young people is fully understood and appreciated.

To address these concerns, we propose that each local authority is directed to provide a distinct youth work service within the broader youth support services it provides for young people. To achieve this, we have enshrined a definition of youth work within legislation so that each local authority can be held accountable for its delivery.

Our proposal is that youth work is defined as:

“ ‘services provided within the youth support service using a distinct educational approach based on the voluntary engagement of young people delivered by persons holding a youth worker or youth support worker qualification’. ”

Youth worker qualification and youth support worker qualification in this context are those set out in Schedule 1 and 2 of the Education Workforce Council (Registration of Youth Workers, Youth Support Workers and Youth Based Learning Practitioners) Order 2016. The list of **youth worker** and **youth support worker** qualifications can also be found on the Education Workforce Council’s website.

This definition draws on the existing understanding of youth work as a key component of wider youth support services, driven by the voluntary engagement of young people. It also aims to protect youth work as a recognised profession

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and emphasises the value of recognised qualifications.

As well as delineating youth work in this way, we also acknowledge the important role played by a wider community of allied professionals as well as volunteers who support the delivery of youth work and enrich the quality of the provision for young people in Wales.

Q1. Do you feel that the proposed definition of youth work is clear and helps differentiate youth work from other services supporting young people?

Q2. Are there any unintended consequences in taking this approach?

## Youth work strategic plans

Effective planning of youth work is considered to help ensure provision is designed and delivered strategically, taking a longer-term view to addressing young people's needs rather than reacting to short-term problems and issues.

The new statutory framework will require a local authority to develop a youth work strategic plan ('the strategic plan') with their partners. The strategic plan must include objectives for youth work aligned to the seven well-being goals for Wales as set out in the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).

The strategic plans will be submitted to the Welsh Government for approval. Each local authority will be required to publish monitoring reports annually, setting out progress made against the objectives in the strategic plan.

Q3. Do you feel that the requirement for a youth work strategic plan will help strengthen the design and delivery of youth work?

Q4. Do you feel the youth work strategic plan will provide an effective accountability structure for youth work?

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## Partnership working

The engagement with stakeholders to date has emphasised the value of collaboration in designing and delivering support for young people. The statutory framework places a duty on each local authority to engage and consult with partners to ensure provision is driven by the needs of young people.

Q5. The proposals are intended to ensure local authorities design and deliver youth work provision in a collaborative way according to local need. Is this a helpful approach or is there is a need to be more prescriptive?

Q6. Are the accountability arrangements proposed in the statutory framework sufficiently robust and clear?

## The youth work entitlement and youth work offer

The new statutory framework introduces a new youth work entitlement for young people, defining how Welsh Government require youth work to be designed and delivered.

The youth work offer is the local interpretation of that entitlement, tailored to what young people need and want in that area.

Q7. Does the proposed youth work entitlement clearly encapsulate how we collectively wish to see youth work designed and delivered?

## Youth participation structures

In our engagement to date, young people have told us of some of the barriers

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that may prevent them from accessing youth work, including lack of transport to reach a setting, lack of awareness of provision, or a feeling of intimidation relating to who else they may encounter at a setting. The active involvement of young people in the design and delivery of provision can help identify strategies to eliminate such barriers as well as to ensure clear pathways for discussions between young people if such challenges do emerge.

The statutory framework requires a local authority to ensure young people influence decisions about the design and delivery of youth work. They must also put arrangements in place so that young people can hold the local authority to account on progress made against the youth work strategic plan.

Q8. The statutory framework requires a local authority to ensure young people can participate in the design and delivery of youth work. The precise approach in achieving this would be determined by local need and structures. Is this a helpful approach or is there is a need to be more prescriptive?

## Consultation questions

### Question 1

Do you feel that the proposed definition of youth work is clear and helps differentiate youth work from other services supporting young people?

### Question 2

Are there any unintended consequences in taking this approach?



### **Question 3**

Do you feel that the requirement for a youth work strategic plan will help strengthen the design and delivery of youth work?

### **Question 4**

Do you feel the youth work strategic plan will provide an effective accountability structure for youth work?

### **Question 5**

The proposals are intended to enable local authorities to design partnership structures according to local need. Do you consider there is a need to be more prescriptive?

### **Question 6**

Are the accountability arrangements proposed in the statutory framework sufficiently robust and clear?

### **Question 7**

Does the proposed youth work entitlement clearly encapsulate how we collectively wish to see youth work designed and delivered?

## Question 8

The statutory framework requires a local authority to ensure young people can participate in the design and delivery of youth work. The precise approach in achieving this would be determined by local need and structures. Do you consider there is a need to be more prescriptive?

Please use the consultation response form to respond to the above questions.

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Any response you send us will be seen in full by Welsh Government staff dealing with the issues which this consultation is about or planning future consultations. In the case of joint consultations this may also include other public authorities. Where the Welsh Government undertakes further analysis of consultation responses then this work may be commissioned to be carried out by an accredited third party (e.g. a research organisation or a consultancy company). Any such work will only be undertaken under contract. Welsh Government's standard terms and conditions for such contracts set out strict requirements for the processing and safekeeping of personal data.

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In order to show that the consultation was carried out properly, the Welsh Government intends to publish a summary of the responses to this document. We may also publish responses in full. Normally, the name and address (or part of the address) of the person or organisation who sent the response are published with the response. If you do not want your name or address published, please tell us this in writing when you send your response. We will then redact them before publishing.

You should also be aware of our responsibilities under Freedom of Information legislation and that the Welsh Government may be under a legal obligation to disclose some information.

If your details are published as part of the consultation response then these published reports will be retained indefinitely. Any of your data held otherwise by Welsh Government will be kept for no more than three years.

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