

Youth Work

Youth work providers

We piloted our new arrangements in two providers, one national voluntary sector provider and a local authority provider.

Numbers of young people

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

Provision

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

Core inspections

No. of inspections: 2 pilot core inspections were held during 2023-2024.

One local authority: [Inspection report The Vale of Glamorgan Youth Service 2024 \(gov.wales\)](#)

One national voluntary body: [Inspection report The Boys and Girls Clubs of Wales 2024 \(gov.wales\)](#)

Case studies

No. of case studies: 0

Follow-up

None in follow-up

Summary

Youth work providers offer educational and pastoral support to a broad range of young people. Provision varies greatly, from targeted sessions in formal education settings to community youth clubs and from street-based work where young people gather to take part in sports to activity-based clubs. The common thread is that all these activities are young person centred, with the needs and views of young people central to the provision offer and planning.

Provision and learning

In the sessions visited, youth workers assisted and guided young people in targeted and open sessions to become more resilient and gain the skills, knowledge and attitudes to support their own personal and educational development. Young people contributed positively to activities and benefited from diverse opportunities, such as crafts and sporting activities, to develop their personal and creative potential while learning to express themselves.

Gloves in the gym project

'It's not just for the boys which is good'

Gloves in the gym is a physical activity-based project with the aims of increasing health and well-being through engaging in positive sporting activities, challenging negative behaviours and building confidence and self-esteem, along with raising awareness of being an active member of their community. The project runs seven bespoke sessions a week across various schools and community settings in the Vale of Glamorgan. The team of staff deliver referral-based sessions in mainstream schools, through the medium of Welsh and English, to the Resource Base at Whitmore for young people with additional learning needs, and a Wellbeing After-School Club and community-based open access sessions for positive leisure time in the evenings. In addition to this, the Gloves in the Gym project delivers activities at all community events run by the Vale Youth Service, along with offering targeted support within the education directorate whether these are one-to-one or group-based sessions.

Many young people learnt the importance of positive participation within society. Through valuable political activities, such as youth fora, they developed as active and conscientious citizens. For example, the 'Raise your Voice' project supported marginalised young people well to build their confidence and co-develop a website with information about how young people can get involved in democratic processes.

Across the providers inspected, young people improved their understanding of the importance of mutual respect and tolerance and developed the social skills to interact successfully with others.

New Dragons

The New Dragons speech and language club provides a safe and appropriate environment for young people with a range of speech, language and communication needs, autistic spectrum disorder or other additional learning needs. Once a week, young people access a range of carefully planned and appropriately stimulating activities, including a range of expressive arts and crafts and games opportunities. Young people access social interaction and learning that they may find challenging elsewhere. As a result, they develop their communication skills and social confidence as well as forming friendships.

In a number of targeted projects visited, many young people became more confident in expressing their views and taking greater responsibility for their own personal choices. In the Her Voice Wales project, young women developed as champions for equality and advocates for girls in their community. The project developed helpful guidance and resources to promote young women's awareness of issues that may impact on their safety and well-being.

Youth workers in both providers were dedicated and enthusiastic and provided valuable support for a wide demographic of young people, including those who were vulnerable and required extra support. Staff engaged young people well in activities that were beneficial to their personal and educational development and well-being. This helped the young people to develop the interpersonal skills that enabled them to enjoy and benefit from their interactions with peers and adults. The quality and range of provision were good in both providers. However, overall, access to Welsh-medium provision was limited and Welsh speaking staff lacked confidence or strategic direction from leaders and managers in how best to use their Welsh language skills with young people.

Everyone Loves the Bus

The V-Pod is the Vale of Glamorgan's mobile provision and is a positive and engaging experience for young people, which allows youth workers to adapt their approach based on immediate needs and interests of the community they are visiting. The bus helps to maintain the youth service's profile across the local authority. Staff are adept at identifying and negotiating the best locations to park and at using the space on board to maximum effect. The bus carries a variety of equipment including gazebos for pop-up events, sports, arts and music equipment. The provision offers flexibility in reaching young people who may not have access to a youth club or service due to geographical, social, or economic barriers. The mobile unit ensures inclusivity and enables isolated young people to access activities. For example, one young person receiving palliative care is enabled to attend sessions with the support of her carer and the youth workers, addressing the barrier presented to participation.

Leadership and improvement

Leaders and managers in both providers ensured that young people were central to their strategic planning. They had a clear vision of how to support young people to become active members of society who could participate constructively in their communities. Overall, leaders provided valuable and relevant continuous professional development to workers, which in turn helped to attract and retain a professionally qualified workforce. However, in one provider, information on the quality of direct provision and staff development needs was not gathered systematically enough to inform priorities, training and support.

Follow up

No providers required follow up.

Overview of recommendations from inspections

- Both providers received recommendations regarding the need to strategically develop Welsh-medium and bilingual youth work provision.

- One provider received a recommendation to ensure more systematic use of information between the central provider and affiliated clubs to better support arising issues and training needs.