

YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTNERSHIPS AND THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi Dros Addysg
A Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
For Education and Training in Wales

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Current position

1. All 22 Young People's Partnerships in Wales have complied with the statutory requirements for voluntary sector representation on the partnership, as set out in Extending Entitlement, and the Direction and Guidance, that the partnership should include:
 - the Director of Local Voluntary Council or senior nominee;
 - a CWVYS representative; and
 - 3 representatives of voluntary community-based organisations contributing significant provision to the partnership.
2. In the partnerships already inspected, we found that these representatives attend meetings regularly.

Young People's Partnership membership and representation issues for the voluntary sector.

3. Evidence from Young People's Partnerships inspections to date suggests that the local authorities have a positive and inclusive approach to the voluntary sector. This approach understandably tends to focus on representative bodies and high profile organisations.
4. Many voluntary sector representatives feel involved in the work of the Young People's Partnerships to some degree, but others feel outnumbered and excluded in the meetings. Also, through discussion with more local voluntary groups, a lack of knowledge about the partnership process is often highlighted. To some extent, this is because the local voluntary groups are being represented by large, national groups, local Voluntary Councils and local voluntary organisations. There are not always effective mechanisms in place to transfer information between Young People's Partnerships representatives and their constituent groups. Representatives do not always feed back to those they are there to represent. Consequently, some local voluntary sector providers do not have a clear understanding of their role or knowledge of partnership decisions.
5. Voluntary sector organisations often feel that they are not in a position to influence change. Even in cases where one of the voluntary sector representatives is the partnership Chair, this remains the case. In most of the Young People's Partnerships inspected so far, voluntary sector organisations have complained that all partnership meetings are held during the day. This makes it hard for them to attend. This is an example of their feeling unable to initiate change at even a relatively basic level.
6. Voluntary sector partners on the Young People's Partnerships sometimes find it difficult to understand the full implications of Extending Entitlement and the role of

the Young People's Partnerships. This lack of understanding is not confined to the voluntary sector. However, it does have implications for organisations delivering services against the Entitlement agenda and being clear about what they are providing, for whom, and how this fits into the provision overall in a local area. Too many providers have not yet made the change in mind-set from the promotion of organisational imperatives, to putting the young person first and co-operating with one another to achieve this aim. The fundamental shift in thinking, which is needed in order to enable true cooperation, creative thinking, and sharing of core resources has not yet taken place.

Welsh language issues

7. The majority of Welsh medium provision is delivered by the voluntary sector. However, Welsh language providers are under-represented on Young People's Partnerships.

Funding and resource issues

8. There is a difficulty across all the partnerships, including those partners from the voluntary sector, because too often, the people have not yet understood that attendance around the table is about more than the allocation of Cymorth money. The understanding that the agenda has moved on from making requests for funds, to the re-aligning of funds and resources to meet universal agendas and needs, has not yet been fully grasped.

Influence of the Young People's Partnership's on the work of the voluntary sector

9. The voluntary sector is clearly an important and integral part of the overall delivery of youth support services. Often, some of the most innovative work is being delivered by the sector within a partnership framework. However, representatives do not see the Young People's Partnerships as a key influence on their work, and there is too often little understanding that their work in providing youth support services is a significant part of the total provision within a local area.

The voluntary sector and inspection

10. Uniformed organisations at a national level such as the Scouts feel that if they do not receive funding locally, their work is outside the scope of the Young People's Partnerships. As a result of this perception, individuals at a national level consider that local groups should not be inspected as part of the partnership. However, there is clear guidance in Extending Entitlement on the need for such organisations to be included. Associated directions and guidance set out the framework for the provision of youth support services in Wales and the responsibilities of local authorities and others.
11. Where we have inspected local groups from the Scouts and Guides there has been an enthusiasm for the process and for the opportunity to demonstrate their good work and discuss it with people from outside their organisation. The Welsh

Assembly Government has recently clarified the position with the Chief Commissioner for Scouts, setting out the reasons why the scouts are being included in the inspection of Young People's Partnerships.

12. Some voluntary organisations are often in receipt of public funding from other sources such as the Welsh Language Board, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, the Young Farmers, the Mentrau and the Urdd. Other funding includes Communities First and NOF. This makes them eligible for inspection by Estyn. Too often, organisations are not fully aware of this. To overcome this issue, Estyn has run conferences and has attended meetings to explain the inspection process and its scope.

The voluntary sector and self-evaluation

13. The overall quality of self-evaluation reports (SERs) from Young People's Partnerships has not been good, and the voluntary sector's involvement in these reports has too often been peripheral. This suggests either that they have not been engaged enough in the process, or that they do not have the capacity to respond. Large national voluntary organisations such as the Guides, Scouts and Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, and some larger local organisations, for example Valley's Kids, have good quality assurance systems which will, when applied consistently, form a good basis for inspection. The partnerships do not take enough account of the possibility of adopting these methodologies or highlighting their use as good practice. Smaller voluntary groups tend to have little idea of quality monitoring or how to prepare for inspection. However, in areas where relationships with the voluntary sector are traditionally strong, smaller groups are often supported by the local authority youth service. In nearly every case, in inspections so far, voluntary providers said that they found the self-evaluation process painful at first, but then useful and rewarding.

Estyn peer-assessors and the voluntary sector

14. Voluntary sector staff are under-represented in the body of peer assessors that Estyn uses. This suggests that their range of experiences, knowledge and possibly their greater contribution with regard to the larger agenda and the quality assurance framework may not yet be being fully tapped. One barrier to the participation of the voluntary sector in becoming involved in inspection and training is the replacement costs for the employing organisation. This will be more of an issue within the voluntary sector than larger local authority agencies.
15. Generally, we have found that the voluntary sector is keen to take part in the Young People's Partnership agenda. Voluntary sector providers of all sizes have been positive about the inspection process and are keen to show inspectors the achievements of the young people who take part in their provision. Many of the most innovative work is provided by the voluntary sector.

The sectors that are too often not active enough, and are sometimes not represented on the partnerships are statutory:

- Schools;

- Further Education;
- Higher Education;
- Health;
- Housing; and
- Agencies dealing with local employment.

This is either because they do not have a seat on the partnerships, or because representatives do not attend meetings regularly.

Recommendations

Actions for the Welsh Assembly Government:

1. Review the guidance on membership of Young People's Partnerships.
2. Produce advice and guidance on involvement in Young People's Partnerships specifically for the voluntary sector.

Actions for the Welsh Assembly Government and Estyn:

3. Allocate time within Estyn's remit to;
 - a. prepare and feed back to each Young People's Partnerships and key voluntary sector organisation Estyn's information about the quality of delivery and contribution of voluntary organisations;
 - b. provide a joint Welsh Assembly Government and Estyn training / workshop day for the voluntary sector; and
 - c. carry out a thematic inspection of voluntary sector involvement in Young People's Partnerships.
4. Estyn to explore ways of feeding back to voluntary sector providers and other specific key players in the Young People's Partnerships after every inspection.
5. Estyn to review how voluntary sector representatives can be encouraged and enabled to act as peer assessors and advise the Welsh Assembly Government on possible financial consequences for voluntary organisations.

Suggested actions for Young People's Partnerships:

6. Strengthen and formalise the links between the voluntary sector and the Young People's Partnerships at strategic level through a written strategy, and at individual provider level through service level agreements.
7. Review of the contribution of each partner on the Young People's Partnership.