

Meeting of:	Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	Thursday, 11 November 2021
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Learning and Culture
Report Title:	Youth Service Update
Purpose of Report:	To make members aware of the progress made by the Youth Service this year.
Report Owner:	Rhys Jones and Tara Reddy - Youth Service Managers
Responsible Officer:	Paula Ham, Director of Learning and Skills
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	Councillor Kathryn McCaffer Morwen Hudson, Head of Standards and Provision Martin Dacey, Lead Officers for Social Inclusion and Wellbeing
Policy Framework:	The recommendations of this report are within existing policy framework and budget.
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <p>Since the last report to Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee in the autumn of 2020 the Youth Service has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renewed their Bronze Youth Work Quality Mark, showing evidence of good practice in performance management, quality of youth work, young people’s learning and development and legal requirements. Adapted significantly in response to the Covid pandemic but has done so with a significant emphasis on innovation and responding to the needs of young people. Covid recovery plans are in place, but the pandemic and its impact continue to affect the provision we can provide. Developed a new participation structure maintaining the Youth Cabinet but introducing a new youth led forum that will underpin the cabinet and support more young people to participate. Ensured European Social Fund (ESF) programmes Inspire to Achieve (I2A) and Inspire to Work (I2W), both continue to operate across the Vale, supporting young people not in education, employment, or training (NEET). I2W continues to support the progress for post 16 learners in the Vale of Glamorgan and has already exceeded its targets for the remaining 2 years of the 	

project. During the Covid pandemic we have seen a significant rise in referrals to I2W due to higher levels of unemployment in young people.

- Continued to deliver the Personal and Social Education (PSE) curriculum as part of the newly formed Centre of Learning and Wellbeing's (formerly Y Daith) wellbeing provision. This has been undertaken by the Youth Engagement Project (YEP). During the Covid pandemic this service has been key to supporting those more vulnerable students alongside the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU).
- Utilised additional £516,422.00 of grant funding aimed at targeting youth homelessness and enhancing youth health and wellbeing.
- Performed well in terms of delivery of accredited outcomes to ensure young people engaged with the Youth Service achieve accredited outcomes.
- Established a new pupil engagement team following proposals being ratified. The discharging of functions related to the EOTAS (Education other than at School) framework now resides within the remit of the Youth Service rather than Y Daith Pupil Referral Unit.
- Began planning for the withdrawal of European Social Fund (ESF) and the impact of the developments for the Centre for Learning and Wellbeing (CLW) in Dec 2022.

Recommendations

1. That Members consider the progress made by the Youth Service in the last 12 months and recognise the on-going developments and increase in provision made while recognising the impact of the Covid pandemic.
2. That Scrutiny Committee (Learning and Culture) receives a further progress update report in 12 months (November 2022) about on-going delivery, alongside awareness of grants and European funding and the risks this poses.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. The Council has a strategic responsibility for implementing the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework to reduce the number of young people Not in Education Employment or Training (NEETs). This is impacted by projects including YEP, I2A, I2W, Youth Homelessness and Youth Destination data, in all of which the Youth Service plays a key role.
2. To ensure that Members of the Scrutiny Committee (Learning and Culture) continue to have oversight of the Youth Service.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Youth Service delivers services for young people (11–25-year-olds) in the Vale of Glamorgan. This has been embedded via a range of open-access and targeted interventions with a youth-led focus on the needs of young people in each area of the Vale of Glamorgan.
- 1.2 This report seeks to make elected members aware of the progress made in the Vale of Glamorgan and milestones achieved despite the Covid pandemic, and the impact the restrictions may have on the most vulnerable young people in our communities.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1 The annual statistical release from National Audit Statistics reports that the number of young people registered and engaged with the Youth Service as a percentage of the youth population for the Vale of Glamorgan for 2019/20 was 10%, a little under the national average of 15%. Due to the impact of the Covid pandemic, these figures have reduced quite significantly 2020/21 to 4%. 2020/21 official National statistics are yet to be published. The number of young people receiving a national accreditation as a result of involvement with the service in 2019/20 is at 34% which is significantly higher than the national average of 10%.

This indicates that although we have fewer young people accessing services, those that do achieve more quality outcomes.

- 2.2** The service succeeded in renewing its Bronze Youth Work Quality Mark in April 2021. The process involved a review of the organisation's self-assessment and associated evidence, an observation of practice (online due to COVID restrictions), online virtual meetings with young people, staff, and partner organisations. The Bronze Quality mark focusses on the areas of performance management, quality of youth work practice, young people's learning and development and legal requirements. Feedback from the assessors was extremely positive and as a result, three Vale case studies will be available on the Education Workforce Council (EWC) website as examples of best practice in youth work. We are now working on our self-assessment for the Silver Quality Mark which we hope to apply for in early 2022.
- 2.3** The universal service supports young people through open-access opportunities and projects including youth clubs, participation groups and our mobile provision. The universal service has been significantly affected by the pandemic and as such, the team have developed new areas of work to comply with restrictions. Much of this in the early pandemic was focussed on increased social media offer to young people. This has progressed with the support of a Kickstart trainee who works with the team to upload content. The team are also working with young people to create content to allow this work to be led by young people. Digital youth clubs were regularly run throughout lockdowns with resources packs delivered to young people to allow them to join in with online activities. We continue to offer some sessions digitally, particularly our participation groups.
- 2.4** The staff team undertook Detached Level 3 training to enable them to deliver activities outdoors and on the street. They delivered detached and outreach sessions and provided 'pop up' youth club sessions in parks and open spaces across the Vale. These sessions have continued into this term, and the mobile provision is now beginning to be used again. 200 young people were consulted about their feelings on activities and issues affecting them. Key headlines were young people wanted 'more safe spaces to get together' and 'a mix of inside and outside provision'. This consultation drove the plans for the autumn term to ensure we provided opportunities for young people to meet safely.
- 2.5** A three-week summer activities programme was delivered during the school holidays allowing some young people their first opportunities to gather with their peers outside of school since the pandemic. 90% of young people who attended rated the sessions 4 or 5 out of 5 and fed back that they enjoyed meeting up with people and trying new things. The service also worked with the play team to source and support activities for the Summer of Fun initiative.
- 2.6** Covid has significantly impacted the number of young people accessing provision and projects, and although we maintained activity online and outside where possible, this has not worked for all young people. Part of our recovery from Covid planning is to maintain a consistent offer within guidelines and build up awareness of the service and opportunities available. The team have been able

to support more work with schools this term which will lead to further engagement over time. We remain limited to working with small groups which will continue to impact the numbers of young people we are able to work with. These small group sizes do however allow more in-depth work to be undertaken with young people, and we are working on new methods of accrediting the work undertaken including Youth achievement Awards.

- 2.7** Projects such as 'Gloves in the Gym' (supporting young people with confidence and self-esteem through physical fitness), I Am Me (Wellbeing group for LGBTQ young people and allies) and Youthy 18 plus (specialist older youth club) continue to develop. The team are also running pilot projects in secondary schools, working on schools' individual needs, and providing after school wellbeing activities.
- 2.8** The universal service supports participation projects including Penarth Youth Action (PYA), Llantwit Youth Council (LYC) and the Vale Youth Cabinet, offering young people opportunities to have a voice and work on community issues. These groups continued to meet digitally throughout the pandemic and worked on various projects and campaigns and supported national consultations such as Coronavirus and Me from the Children's Commissioner for Wales.
- 2.9** A significant area of ongoing participation work is the review and reshape of the Youth Cabinet structure. Proposals recently agreed by Cabinet will support the development of open access, youth led opportunities, that will feed into the Youth Cabinet to support more young people to be able to participate. It is envisaged that these changes will support widening participation by maximising inclusion from across youth groups, fora and communities across the Vale of Glamorgan including independent groups such as Urdd Cardiff and the Vale Youth Forum and special interest groups such as Vale Young Carers and Vale People First.
- 2.10** The Youth Service also facilitates the Rights Ambassadors project that teaches young people about children's rights and delivers workshops to children, young people, and adults across the Vale. The project also supports primary and secondary schools with the Super and Student Ambassadors schemes from the Children's Commissioner for Wales. Support is also given to school councils, for example, signposting of resources and training for teachers and governors. Work on the project continued throughout the pandemic digitally and is increasingly now undertaken face to face. The Youth Service signed up to the National Participation Standards Charter in the summer which demonstrates our commitment to maintaining opportunities to involve young people in all aspects of the service delivery. We hope to use this and the ongoing developments in participation work within the service to work towards achieving a Participation Kite Mark.
- 2.11** The service has a partnership with the Urdd to deliver Welsh language youth provision across the county. Covid restrictions had a significant impact on the provision provided, however the Urdd continued to offer support through online activity and since the summer term have begun face to face work again.

- 2.12** Welsh Government (WG) recently awarded an additional £100k funding for wellbeing activities to be used in partnership with the voluntary sector and the service has produced a workplan to deliver on the grant. Partners include Boys' and Girls' Club Wales, Urdd, local organisations such as Motion Control Dance and Cardiff and Vale College. The grant will be used to provide additional wellbeing activities including wellbeing weekends, sports, fun and access to increased wellbeing support.
- 2.13** The youth homelessness project supported 39 young people at risk of homelessness in 2020/21. 13 young people completed achieving positive outcomes and the remaining 19 young people continued to receive support into 2021/22. The homelessness coordinator works closely with Vale Housing and Llamau Emphasis Project, identifying those most vulnerable and ensuring support is in place. During Covid, the team have supported in the distribution of wellbeing parcels, fitness packs, family food and cooking projects, supporting females with sanitary products, providing families with bedding and home basics, and in one instance supported a young person who did not have a bed.
- 2.14** The Wellbeing Service is funded by Families First and has been operational since April 2018. The service provides mentoring support to young people referred through the Families First Advice Line who have experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Its main aims are to improve social and emotional wellbeing, increase confidence and resilience, build capacity to consider risk and make reasoned decisions, develop positive attitudes, behaviour, and aspirations, and to manage personal and social relationships. The team provides one to one wellbeing interventions in schools although we also facilitate them in the community. The service received 53 referrals in 2020-21 but suspended incoming referrals for 6 months in order to continue providing wellbeing support during the various lockdowns for the young people already within our caseload. Since 1st April 2021, the team has received 79 new referrals. The team continued to work throughout the pandemic and offered mentoring via phone calls or digitally. Despite the Covid challenges, we have received positive feedback from young people and parents stating they have benefitted from our service, and they reported improved emotional wellbeing and resilience.
- 2.15** The I2A Programme continues to be successful across secondary schools in the Vale of Glamorgan. The project has recently undergone its third re-profile due to additional funding from the European Social Fund. This has enabled the team to support those most vulnerable across the year and who are identified as at risk of becoming Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). As a result of the interventions, the project is well on track.
- Number of enrolments: 570 enrolled = 101% against target
 - Further Education or Training Outcomes: 150 = 106% against target
 - Qualification outcomes: 162 claimed = 101% against target
 - Reduced risk of NEET outcomes: 304 claimed = 97% against target

- 2.16** We were delighted that two of our I2A staff received recognition for their hard work and contribution to youth work teaching in schools at the Professional Teaching Awards Cymru.
- 2.17** The I2W Programme also continues to be highly successful and the Vale is the highest performing local authority in the regional operation for those young people identified as not in education, employment, or training (NEET). The project will be undergoing a re-profile due to underperformance from Newport region, and the Vale have agreed to take these figures on alongside the additional funding due to the need within the Vale. As a result of the interventions the project is well above target.
- Number of enrolments: 288 enrolled = 128% against target
 - Further Education or Training Outcomes: 25 = 179% against target
 - Qualification outcomes: 102 claimed = 309% against target
 - Entered Employment: 106 claimed = 183% against target
- 2.18** All ESF projects are due to finish on 31st December 2022, yet there is no further information from UK or Welsh Governments regarding the community investment fund or the shared prosperity fund. It is unclear as to how these funding streams will support employability or the developments to support the wider Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) agenda. These funding streams should align to a strategic approach in addressing NEETs, which in Wales relates specifically to the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (YEPF). At present it remains unclear as to how the funding streams outlined will fulfil this function.
- 2.19** The percentage of year 11 leavers who were not in education, employment, or training (NEET) reduced from 1.40% in 2019 to 1.00% in 2020 which equates to 13 young people. The percentage of young people who left year 12 and who were categorised as NEET also reduced from 0.80% in 2019 to 0.62% in 2020. This equates to 5 young people, however the percentage of young people NEET who left school in year 13 increased from 1.55% in 2019 to 3.10% in 2020, this equates to 21 young people within year 13 leavers. The reason for the increase is due to young people facing significant barriers to engagement and therefore were not ready to enter education, training, or employment. However, since the destination survey took place on the 31st of October 2020, seven young people have entered employment, training or education and Careers Wales are working with a further five young people. Due to Covid, schools' Pupil Census and destination data was slightly delayed so there will be a delay in the 21-22 figures being released. In response to this, the team will increase their school-based work in order to reach out to those unknown young people currently without a destination.
- 2.20** The Youth Engagement Programme (YEP) based in Barry YMCA continues to support young people with a Personal and Social Education (PSE) curriculum as part of the Centre of Learning and Wellbeing's (formerly Y Daith) education offer. Alongside supporting 10 key stage 3 (KS3) or KS4 pupils each day, the team also provides wellbeing and nurture support for 3 to 4 learners each day as part of

on-going informal education, helping them to deal with the issues they face. All these students are at risk of becoming NEET and will have experienced multiple ACEs. During the pandemic, the delivery model changed to target those most vulnerable clients and the implementation of a distanced learning offer. The team continues with this delivery model, working with those more vulnerable young people.

- 2.21** The new Pupil Engagement team has been established in order to work directly with those most vulnerable students requiring a new and bespoke offer of education, working closely with other internal teams to collaboratively support learners in their lifelong learning journey. Aspects of this will include working towards the new Additional Learning Needs Act and ensuring the team identifies bespoke education offers that cater for the individual needs and level of the young people identified.

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

- 3.1** Reducing the percentage of young people from becoming NEET is set out in the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework and the Welsh Government Child Poverty Strategy. It helps support the national and local indicator of percentage of young people in education, employment, or training, under the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015.
- 3.2** The variety of provision continues to develop a wide range of offers from alternative education providers, vocational learning with progression routes, tailored support, and information and guidance. This should help learners explore their interests and realise their potential. We are proud to be offering a wide range of subject pathways through our partners that will help inspire young people to fulfil their potential.
- 3.3** Improving standards of alternative education provision is important to the Youth Service and we need to ensure that provision is quality assured through regular contracts management meetings with providers. The process ensures we monitor the progress of learners. Monitoring is undertaken to ensure both the Council and learners are receiving value for money and that provision has a positive impact on young people's education and wellbeing.
- 3.4** We work collaboratively with internal and external partners including agencies, education and training providers, Careers Wales, and Welsh Government, to help meet the wellbeing objective.

4. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 4.1** The Youth Service received £ 416,422.00 from Welsh Government's Youth Support Grant in 2021/22. An additional £100,000 was added to this grant in

October 2021 to support wellbeing activities. Confirmation on next year's grant is not expected until the end of the financial year.

- 4.2** European Social Fund (ESF) is confirmed until December 2022. ESF finances have increased since the start of the project in April 2016. As a result of 2 re-profiles, it has resulted in an increase from the total value of £1,760,638.43 to the new total value of £2,027,473; this is an increase of £266,835 to support the NEETS agenda.
- 4.3** Consideration will need to be given to the Shared Prosperity, Community Renewal Fund or post 16 employability in general from January 2023 onwards.
- 4.4** Families First Funding forms part of the wider Children and Communities Grant (CCG) and requires regular monitoring and performance reviews as part of results-based accountability (RBA) to ensure we continue to receive this to impact the wellbeing agenda.
- 4.5** The funding of the Youth Service is split between 45% grant funding and 55% core funding. The additional grant funding allocation from Welsh Government has resulted in a rise in provision but this is not guaranteed beyond the end of the current financial year which makes forward planning difficult. This is being utilised to enhance existing provision rather than creating projects which are not sustainable.

Employment

- 4.6** Grant funding makes up 49% of the youth service staffing costs.
- 4.7** Recruitment into the service has been a challenge locally and is consistent with the national situation. Work with Human Resources and the legal team is ongoing to consider options to recruit youth workers and also workforce development opportunities to encourage more volunteers and student placements into the service and training.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 4.8** The Vale of Glamorgan Youth Service's use of the ONE management information service ensures we monitor equality of access to open access and targeted intervention opportunities being delivered. We work closely with the equalities team to identify training for staff and volunteers in order to develop their awareness of working with these vulnerable groups.

5. Background Papers

None.