



EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

- 3RD JUNE 2025

SUBJECT: YOUTH SERVICE UPDATE

REPORT BY: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide Members with a status update of Caerphilly Youth Service in the context of national and professional change.
- 1.2 Caerphilly Youth Service will be inspected by Estyn in the short to medium term and will be required to evidence a sufficiency of delivery, challenges in this regard are being addressed as far as capacity allows.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 National arrangements for the governance and strategic direction of Youth Work are changing and Caerphilly is considering these whilst adapting to local and external funding conditions.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Members are asked to take note of the report and support the Youth Service in the delivery of its statutory education responsibilities and preparation for inspection.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 As a statutory education service, Caerphilly Youth Service must strive to provide an education offer sufficient to complement other forms of education (schools, colleges, adult and community learning *et al*), contributing to Caerphilly's current education strategy and consistent with professional

definitions of youth work and Estyn's Youth Work inspection guidance.

- 4.2 This year, a number of strategic requirements will be placed on Caerphilly Youth Service. Members are asked to be mindful and aware of these and to provide support and challenge as appropriate.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 Caerphilly Youth Service is a statutory education institution for all young people, delivering a variety of youth work in a wide variety of settings in multiple locations to over 10,000 young people, 11-25 years of age and also in a family context. The delivery profile is broad, typically 8AM-9PM most weekdays and often includes weekends, with the breadth of reach allowing the service to perform a significant safeguarding function at times when other services are not available. Youth Service delivery extends across the year and is not limited, for example, by school holiday periods. The service's curriculum is extensive, its content informed by arising need, societal trends and key youth work principles, most especially that of participation. 'Off site', peripatetic education is a key aspect of provision, and the service delivers around 1,000 sessions per year involving the transportation of young people to these in addition to centre and street-based activity.

- 5.2 The component parts of the Youth Service include open access provision (such as youth clubs), Democracy and Participation-based provision (Youth Forum), street-based crime reduction work, school alternative provision, the Engagement and Progression (NEETs) Framework, Youth Homelessness prevention, targeted family support and wellbeing-oriented work, all supported by curriculum, accreditation and data management structures. Though Youth Work is a form of education for all young people, engagement with those with protected and vulnerability-related characteristics is a key element, with the service operating the county's LGBTQ+ group for young people, for instance.

- 5.3 Current trends and items of significance

- **Reinforced definition of youth work and 5 year plans.** Welsh Government are in the process of republishing the national definition of Youth Work, once more placing Youth Work in the context of a framework for Youth Support Services. The revision will not be radically different from previously but reinforces the statutory requirement on local authorities to provide youth services. The provision of open access youth work and participation-based youth work, amongst others, remain specific statutory duties. The revised definition of youth work will be published within the context of a renewed national strategic approach which, among other things, will include a requirement for local authorities to produce 5-year strategic plans for Youth Work, incorporating approaches to the coordination of other Youth Support Services both statutory and voluntary in nature. The inference is that LA Youth Services will broker these discussions, significantly broadening the responsibility of Youth Services and implying a greater sharing of grant monies (used to support Youth Service posts) with external organisations.

- **Estyn.** Following a hiatus of 20 years, Youth Services are once again directly within the scope of Estyn inspection. Though the reintroduction of inspection had originally been designed to coincide with the Local Government Education Services (LGES) inspection cycle, which would mean the next inspections for Caerphilly would be in the 2027/8 academic year, indications are that a more flexible approach to the inspection of youth work will instead operate. Caerphilly Youth Service, therefore, could potentially be inspected from Autumn 2025 onwards.
- **Expectations of the service.** The Youth Service's educational approach is a nurturing and supportive one, based on the quality of relationship between the educator (Youth Worker) and the young person and informed by a broad curriculum, including a new and sector-leading Welsh language section. However, increasing demands on the youth service to provide a more targeted caring/interventionist approach to those with vulnerabilities predominate at present, whilst the service's ability to perform its main statutory educational duties, most particularly in the area of open access youth work, is diminishing due to a combination of ongoing savings requirements, revised qualification thresholds and overarching recruitment challenges. Whilst the quality of performance across all aspects of the service is demonstrably high, any perceived lack of sufficiency in statutory areas would be of note by Estyn and Welsh Government.
- **Funding and levels of sufficiency.** Internal funding via the Rate Support Grant (RSG) has reduced over a number of years, with the service also accommodating successive annual 10% savings in the current climate of austerity. External grant (now the predominant source of) funding, whilst being maintained to an adequate level for the moment, is also lessening in real terms. Though having an effect in terms of staffing capacity, the service is striving as far as possible to preserve the consistency of youth work delivery and is successfully pursuing a 'natural wastage' workforce savings model in the face of reduced employment ability, rather than via redundancy-based approaches. Whilst the service has to some degree offset loss of capacity via the development of volunteering and student placement options, together with efficiency-oriented delivery arrangements, the numbers of young people being engaged may reduce over time, as might the service's ability to respond to all demographic and geographic need. There is a direct correlation between levels of core funding/amount of open access provision and the ability to attract external grant funding, with the latter provided under strict delivery criteria and not always able to be used for open access purposes. Caerphilly Youth Service and others regularly lobbies Welsh Government, who have been conducting a youth work funding review, to also consider ways to evidence value for money that will prove persuasive at a public level. For example, the following link is to a report conducted in England in the immediate post-Covid period and demonstrates the value to the public purse of investment in the field -
<https://www.ukyouth.org/untapped/>
- **Service development.** The service has been in review for over a decade and in recent years has successfully transitioned to a (3) cluster structural

model of working, each geographic cluster able to respond to the young people in their area according to local need. However, ongoing financial challenge has not enabled all sections of the service to move to a fully year-round model of delivery as originally intentioned with regards to its open access, core funded forms of youth work.

Furthermore, the service's part-time staff have yet to be job-evaluated, though plans to do this are once more being made – this process will, over time, produce a saving. Otherwise, though management capacity has reduced, workforce development/professional learning remains a strong area, with professional qualification rates amongst the workforce high and access to topical training readily available.

- **Navigating the challenges.** The service is currently engaged in a Team Around the Service (TAS) developmental and critical analysis process, led by the Head of Service. All the considerations detailed in this report are subject to discussion and the TAS process coopts, as necessary, other CCBC officers (for example from Education Human Resources) to seek the best possible way forward. Additionally, resources and capacity across education services within the Youth and School Improvement sector are being blended and shared to maximise efficiency and enhance cooperation across Education.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

6.1 N/A

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 This report is informational only and therefore an integrated impact assessment is not required.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no financial implications with respect to this report.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no personnel implications with respect to this report.

10. CONSULTATIONS

10.1 All responses from the consultations have been incorporated in the report.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Learning and Skills Act (2000)

11.2 Extending Entitlement: Support for 11 to 25 year olds in Wales Direction and Guidance (2002)

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