

WORKING IN COLLABORATION

YOUTH WORK METHODOLOGY HANDBOOK

“Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success.” Henry Ford.

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OVERVIEW

The intention behind the writing of this handbook is to introduce, explain, or expand on existing knowledge with regard to working in collaboration or partnership within the youth and community sector and the role of individual organisations within these settings.

In developing this handbook, experienced partners have explored this subject on several levels, resulting in some practical support and ideas to help practitioners work effectively as part of a partnership and take the lead on a programme that involves key partners to achieve a set of outcomes effectively.

Not all the information in this handbook may be directly relevant to all Youth Work Practitioners and projects, however it is important that across Wales all Youth Work Practitioners and those working within the Youth and Community sector have knowledge that their work is part of a cohesive service. This handbook should allow you to understand and acknowledge the potential of developing collaborative work, whilst at the same time contribute to the positive development of young active citizens and the further development of individuals engaging the young people they work with as active citizens.

The ideas and opinions expressed within this handbook are not intended to be a prescriptive way of establishing collaborative working, but rather seen as suggested methods and approaches when considering such work.

This document is part of a library of Good Practice Methodology Handbooks for Youth Work in Wales. We wish you well as you seek to provide increased and better opportunities in collaborative working in order to benefit the lives of young people.

INTRODUCTION

Working in collaboration is playing an increasingly important role in effective youth work activity. To do this, we need to make sure that we are doing the right things, in the right way, at the right time for the right people in an open, honest and accountable manner.

The benefits of 'Collaborative Working' have been the focus for many public, private, voluntary and community organisations recently and the Youth Service within Wales has in the past, played a lead role in establishing and developing partnerships. In order to ensure effective youth work practice, this handbook will provide a consistent and rigorous approach to partnership working, so that we can get the full benefits from it. Clear processes and procedures are necessary to enable us to deliver services to our young people efficiently, effectively and properly with our partners.

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What is Working in Collaboration?

"We could learn a lot from crayons: some are sharp, some are pretty, some are dull, while others are bright, some have weird names, but we have to learn to live in the same box." - Anonymous

Collaboration is two or more people working together toward a common goal. Effective collaboration often involves persons truly committed to achieving a goal and to successfully completing a project. Furthermore, all share equally the consequences of both success and failure (shared risk). Collaboration can also be called teamwork, however teams may be more formal, isolated to a particular location and may be comprised of members who specialise in different aspects of a project.

Collaboration can help you by decreasing the labour associated with a project, exposing you to the knowledge and experience of your collaborators and helping you learn how to accommodate different personality types. Collaboration is common within the Youth Work field and projects are realising the value of collaboration in project development.

Understanding the benefits of collaboration and your role in the process is largely determined by how you define "collaboration," i.e.

- Partnership working
- Team working
- Task and finish groups
- Clustering
- Focus groups

Collaboration requires members to be individually responsible for their portion of a project. Thus, you may not be constantly at work with a collaborator, but you will carry your own load and do your share of the work. Depending on how you and your partners choose to divide the work for a project, you may not see your group members every day. Your group may choose to meet each week, make all decisions together, and share all aspects of the project. Having said that, collaboration still occurs when one person does the research, one person drafts the copy, and one person designs the document. For your initial projects, you may want to begin by sharing duties equally and making informed decisions as a group.

When working with young people and volunteers, your collaborative experiences may take place with people locally, regionally, nationally or even on the other side of the globe and with different areas of expertise. Your collaborative experiences may last for only brief periods of time. Your experience may be limited in providing you with experience in some of these environments. Still, knowing how to work well with others is an important lesson in all areas of study and in all workplace environments.

BENEFITS OF COLLABORATIVE WORKING

'Together people can make a difference, and working in partnership is a good way to bring people together to reach common goals.' (Frank & Smith, 2000)¹



Shared Objectives and Goals

As partnerships develop the collaborative working between partners can ensure that views are heard and accounted for. It is then that the partnership can begin to work towards a common goal or project. Partnerships may identify through joint research and discussion that there is a gap in provision or a need within the community. Partners will share a desire to work together because of a common goal.

Shared Resources and Knowledge

Working collaboratively can also ensure that resources and knowledge are shared. An organisation alone may not be able to or have the resources available to initiate a project alone, however working collaboratively means that the project could commence with wider resources available from different partners and a wider knowledge base to access.

¹ Frank, F & Smith, A., 2000, The Partnership Handbook

Focus

Working in partnership means that a focussed approach to issues can be taken. A partnership with many people brings a wide variety of skills, resources and knowledge and whilst individually organisations may have many focuses or 'irons in the fire', the partnership allows direction on particular issues by bringing these people and resources together.

Shared Skills

With many people involved in a partnership it is likely that they will bring different skills. These skills can be utilised by the partnership and directed efficiently. Individuals may not possess all of the skills required for a particular project, however working collaboratively can mean that the pool of skills is widened and can be called upon when required.

Potential for Innovation

Many organisations fail at innovation because leaders may not understand that innovation is a four step process and fail to recognise the talents required at each step of the process are very different. So different in fact, that it is unlikely one individual will be strong on more than one of the four steps :Creating, Advancing, Refining and Executing. This means that for innovation to succeed, 'it needs to be a team-based process.' (Ayres, 2008)² Working in partnership therefore will bring together different people with various talents which can foster innovation.

Opportunities to access additional funding

Working in partnership may also increase the potential for attracting additional funding as a strong working partnership and proof of collaborative working will be attractive to funders, particularly where it can be evidenced that there is a joint focus on decreasing gaps in provision and preventing duplication. 'We believe that effective partnership working is an essential factor in securing successful projects and outcomes.' Thorlby & Hutchinson (2002).³

'Partnership working between different organisations in the public, private, voluntary and community sectors creates new opportunities, better services and helps to develop sustainability for the projects we fund'.

Develop working relationships

Relationships between organisations outside of a partnership may become strained or difficult if working towards the same goal, particularly if there is a duplication of services and provision to address that goal. Coming together in partnership allows organisations to overcome these issues and to work jointly towards the same goals. By developing positive working relationships, we are able to create better, wider opportunities and support networks for young people.

Tackle issues that would be difficult to deal with alone

One organisation alone may not have the time, resources, skills, knowledge or be able to provide the focus to deal with an issue or issues. Working in partnership will open up the amount and quality of these aspects, enabling an issue to be dealt with more efficiently and potentially at a higher quality than a lone organisation.

² Ayers, K. , 2008. Innovation Takes Teamwork, Entrepreneur, [online] Available at:<<http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/196598>> [Accessed 19 October 2011]

³ Thorlby, T & Hutchinson, J,. 2002, Working in partnership: A source book, New Opportunities Fund

Additional Support Networks

A partnership provides a wider support network to all organisations involved. Allowing them to air issues and seek advice and support from other partners who may have experienced the same issues or have more expertise in specific project delivery.

Prevention of duplication

Organisations operating within the same geographical area and towards similar goals may occasionally duplicate services or provision to meet the needs of young people. This can be problematic and lead to conflict between organisations. Working together in partnership can prevent this duplication and allow for good collaborative work on an issue, bringing together additional knowledge, resources and skills for the benefit of young people.

VALUES OF COLLABORATIVE WORKING

'Partnership working is about more than individual organisations meeting together and exchanging views. It is about operating in a way which includes the views and interests of partners in order to move the partnership towards its objective/s.' (Anon)⁴

Ideally partnerships should operate to think beyond simple interventions that can be tackled by individual organisations and identifying gaps in provision to add value to existing schemes.

What partnership working brings to:

Individuals

Individuals will gain from access to a wider knowledge base and support of the partnership. They will be able to avoid duplication of services and potentially gain additional funding through the partnership. Individuals may be closer to the core community and will be in a better position to inform partnerships, identified needs, gaps in provision or areas that need improvement and allow the partnership as a whole to tackle the real community issues. Individuals will benefit from shared learning and may become open to new ways of working to benefit both themselves and the wider community. This may including access to resources they may not have as individuals.

Organisations

Organisations will profit from much the same as individuals including gaining further insight into the needs and requirements of other organisations, individuals, groups or sectors, enabling them to focus resources and staff knowledge and skills in new and sometimes innovative way. Organisations will be able to demonstrate a commitment to cross-sector partnership working (Anon)⁵

The Value of partnership working overall is that it allows all those involved to tackle community issues, which if carried out sympathetically to community needs, will build a local reputation in which the partnership will be seen to be committed to the local community (Anon)⁶

⁴ Anon, Partnership Working, *Changes*, [online] Available at:<
<http://changesuk.net/themes/partnership-working>> [Accessed 19 October 2011]

⁵ Anon, Working in Partnership, *Volunteering England*, [online] Available at:<
<http://www.volunteering.org.uk/WhatWeDo/Projects+and+Initiatives/Employer+Supported+Volunteering/Brokers/Working+in+Partnership>> [Accessed 19 October 2011]

⁶ Anon, Working in Partnership, *Volunteering England*, [online] Available at:<
<http://www.volunteering.org.uk/WhatWeDo/Projects+and+Initiatives/Employer+Supported+Volunteering/Brokers/Working+in+Partnership>> [Accessed 19 October 2011]

LEADERSHIP

Genuine partnership working is based on the mutual recognition of different interests as legitimate whilst working together to achieve common interests and shared goals. It involves the open sharing of information, joint problem solving, and consultation. Effective partnerships involve managers, staff and elected representatives at all levels within the participating organisations; from the earliest stages of developing ideas, from the 'what' of proposals to the 'how' of implementation.

The management and development of a shared, realistic vision of the partnership's work through the creation of common goals is one of the driving forces behind collaborative working.

'The UK Government is embarking on a long term drive to improve public services by making sure that they are joined up. This has led to two striking results; an increase in the number of partnership and collaborative arrangements between service providers and a rapid growth of integrated services' (FPM, 2007a)

There will be many models and driving forces of partnership and collaborative working at local, regional and national levels. For the purposes of this toolkit we will focus on the leadership and driving forces of collaborative working at a local level.

At a local level, partners come together for reasons that include pooled resources, mutual trust, shared goals and pooled budgets. By working together they are able to meet the needs of young people and offer extended opportunities, both of which they may not be able to achieve working alone .

CASE STUDY:

There are many examples of positive partnership working throughout Wales; the following is an example from Rhondda Cynon Taf:

Throughout Rhondda Cynon Taf, there are 12 cluster youth operational groups (CYOG's). They have been developing over time and are still developing today. Initial work started with 2 pilot groups in 2008.

The pilot work was brought about following the recommendations of a 2007 Cabinet report on '*Developing Youth Services that meets the needs of Young people, when, how and where it will be most effective*'. The report stated that youth work in Rhondda Cynon Taf would happen on a cluster basis (around the comprehensive school catchments area) working together in partnership to provide greater opportunities for young people.

The pilot work was supported to establish terms of reference, a cluster action plan and ensure key partners were around the table. These key elements to the pilot work success have been and are being established in the 10 remaining groups throughout Rhondda Cynon Taf.

The purpose of the CYOG's are to co-ordinate and improve the provision of services for young people within school cluster areas. This is being done through: joint planning and delivery, the sharing of resources, the marketing and promotion of services and the engagement of other services and organisations. This also includes realigning and integrating provision to reflect the demand and need of the young people involved in service design and delivery.

Each CYOG is at different stages, developing at a pace that the cluster can deal with. Each cluster is different; some have a variety of partners including a variety of services for young people, Communities First, voluntary sector and schools, whereas others groups are smaller as they may have no Communities First in their area, or voluntary providers that are currently part of the group. In some cases the CYOG has just added value to what has already been a strong partnership in the given cluster.

Key outcomes for the CYOG's have brought about a more co-ordinated approach to Youth provision with less duplication of services, better communication between agencies and improved information sharing. This has led to increased opportunities for young people to take part in Friday night and weekend provision with a more formalised approach to holiday provision ensuring a fair allocation of resources, inclusive of a percentage of targeted spaces from Children's Services and Looked after Children.

MISSION

"There are plenty of good ideas, if only they can be backed with power and brought into reality"

- Winston Churchill

Collaboration can not happen without an identified "Mission". This raises the question "What is a mission?"

Put simply, a mission is the fundamental purpose of group collaboration. When individuals, organisations or groups come together for collaborative working, they come together to bring skills, ideas, resources and ultimately the power to make their mission a reality. Creating a mission statement is often a good way of establishing the exact purpose of this joint working arrangement. Some reasons that groups or individuals may choose to work collaboratively are as follows:

- to share skills, knowledge and experience
- to maximise resources
- to avoid duplication
- to improve a service or services to children and young people
- to make or strengthen a funding bid or tender
- to follow or develop a best practice model
- as a box ticking exercise
- a requirement for audit purposes
- in order to be inclusive
- a shared agenda

A mission statement answers the question “**Why do we exist?**”

A mission statement explains the rationale of the collaboration’s purpose, both for those who are part of the joint working arrangement and for the wider public including those who may benefit.

One of the interesting challenges faced by those involved in collaborative working is finding a common agenda. For example, the Youth Offending Service and the Youth Service may be working together; one has at its core voluntary engagement, the other has enforced engagement. Whilst the philosophies of each partner may be divergent it is possible to find common ground and develop collaborative working arrangements that allow both parties to achieve their aims and allow each to retain their integrity. A mission statement allows this to happen and can, transform a *can of worms* culture into a *can do* culture.

Mission statements should be owned by all parties involved in the collaboration and need to be developed by all partners to ensure 'buy-in' and to avoid unhelpful assumptions and confusion.

In conclusion, a mission can be something relatively simple, for example, meeting regularly to network and share practice, or something more complex such as working together to improve services and resources available to young people in a given geographic area.

When establishing your mission remember the words of Marcus Aurelius, The Roman Emperor, which are as true now as they were two thousand years ago, “*If a thing is humanly possible, consider it to be within your reach.*”

VISION

"You can have the most beautiful dream in the world, but it takes people to build it." Walt Disney

Once a 'Mission' has been established and made manifest through a mission statement, the next step could be to create a "Vision".

So, what is a vision? A vision is the joint aspiration of all members for the future of the collaboration and it is a dream that everyone involved can buy into.

Again a vision can be expressed through a mutually agreed vision statement. This statement can be achieved through a simple exercise. Here is an example of a simple method of creating a vision statement taken from "The Great Leadership" website by Dan McCarthy.

www.greatleadershipbydan.com

"Cheshire Puss", asked Alice, "Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?" "That depends a good deal on where you want to go", said the Cat. "I don't much care where," said Alice. "Then it doesn't matter which way you go," said the Cat.

Charles "Lewis Carroll" Dodgson 1832-1898, English writer and mathematician, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland 1865

1. Get the right people

It all starts with getting the right people together, usually the project team members and other key stakeholders who might have good ideas to contribute and have a part to play in implementation of the vision.

2. Preparation

Schedule at least half a day, or a full day for larger, more complex scenarios. You want to minimize interruptions and get people away from their day-to-day environment in order to stimulate creativity. For dispersed teams, a live meeting is a must.

Consider the use of a neutral "facilitator". That is, someone trained in group process that has no biases or stake in the game. That way, everyone is able sit back and focus on being a participant and not have to worry about the mechanics of the meeting. Removing a single organisation as the focal point also helps open up the free flow of open dialogue.

Rule of thumb: for every hour of meeting time, double the amount of preparation needed.

3. Determine appropriate *input* to the vision.

Schedule the meeting far enough ahead of time to allow for preparation. Send out documents to review ahead of time, i.e. market research, survey results, or any other information needed to prepare the participants. Establish the expectation that preparation is a *must* in order to participate and follow-up to make sure people have done their pre-work. Following up may sound like baby-sitting, but it is also a good excuse to get a feel for where each participant is coming from, plant some seeds and create a little pre-meeting buzz.

Consider adding internal or external guest speakers to the early part of your agenda. For example, when I first took over my current team, I brought in senior leaders to discuss company strategy and leadership development implications, as well as an external consultant to review trends and best practices.

4. Set the stage.

At the start of the meeting, review the desired outcomes, process and ground rules. Take time here to check for understanding and agreement. This sets the stage for how the rest of the day will flow - you are modelling collaboration and consensus. Going slow here will allow you to go fast for the rest of the day.

5. Create and use a process that ensures full participation, openness, creativity, and efficiency.

A trained facilitator can help you with this, or you can design it yourself. The key is to have a plan and process – avoid the temptation to 'wing it'. Here is a process I have used:

- ❖ Explain to the team what a vision statement is and why they are important. You may want to show a few examples.
- ❖ Ask the group to imagine what this team, organization, or project could look like 3-5 years from now. What would success look like? What could you achieve? What would they love to achieve? If they were to pick up a newspaper 3-5 years from now, what would the headline say about what this group has accomplished?
- ❖ Either individually, in pairs, or in groups of 3-4, have people create those headlines on flip charts. Tell them to include pictures, phrases, or anything else to describe that desired future. Give them about 30 minutes.
- ❖ Ask each person or team report out to the larger group. If you are the leader, go last in order not to bias the rest of the group. This also gives you the opportunity to incorporate the ideas of others into your vision.
- ❖ The facilitator or leader should be listening for and recording on a flip chart key phrases that describe each vision. This is the time to listen and to ask clarifying questions, not to evaluate.
- ❖ Add up the number of phrases (n), divide by 3, and give everyone that many stickers to "vote" with (n/3). Explain it's not really a decision-making vote, it is simply a way to quickly take the temperature of the group and see how much agreement there is.
- ❖ Start with phrases which received a lot of votes, discuss, and check for agreement. Do the same thing for phrases that received no or few votes, and ask if those items can be crossed off. Work your way to the middle items using the same process and circle or cross off each item.
- ❖ If there are any issues where consensus can not be reached after everyone has had a chance to state their case, the leader needs to make the final decision.
- ❖ You end the meeting with a list of phrases that will form the vision statement.

6. Do the "grunt-work" out of the meeting

Group time should not be wasted creating the vision statement. Someone can do this off-line - ask for 1 or 2 volunteers to do it. I have even seen it done during lunch to present back to the team in the afternoon.

7. Talk to the outliers

If there was anyone who disagreed with the output, or whose favourite idea was not incorporated, talk to them privately to make see how they are committed to the vision. Explore ways to connect the vision to their interests and needs. In some cases they may need to be given the choice to leave. For example, if Art was really passionate about being the market leader in the veggie market and it was decided that you were only going to play in the fruit market, then Art might be better off joining the Green Giant team.

8. Re-convene the group and review the draft vision statement.

This is a shorter meeting and can be done over a conference call. Go for "roughly right", or "directionally sound" and falling into the trap of drawn-out debates over using the word "grow" or "increase".

9. Review the draft with key extended stakeholders that were not at the meeting.

This is the time to review the vision with your manager, peers, customers, suppliers, and anyone who has a stake in your team's work. It is a chance to receive input with an aim at improvement and to build a broader coalition of support.

10. Communicate the vision and begin to make it a reality.

A vision is just a dream without solid goals and action plans. This is the team's next step and requires at least another meeting. Communicating your vision in a way that inspires others is covered in another post. Get some of your creative people involved to bring it alive in a way that inspires, using images, metaphors, and stories.

Investing the time to create a shared vision may be the best investment you have ever made.

The vision statement serves an additional function in that, not only does it describe the preferred future, it also provides the inspiration and the structure, framework and context for all strategic planning.

ETHOS

***“In business, as in life you don’t get what you deserve, you get what you negotiate.”
Chester L. Karrass***

The Ethos of a collaboration, in its purest form answers the question “Do we do what we say we are?” So if we say this collaboration is a pork pie creation consortium, are we really making pork pies, or are we rolling out apple pies because it is easier?

An ethos identifies the collaboration’s character and practices and how it implements its values and beliefs. It serves to bring into focus and to evaluate the work that the collaboration undertakes, its importance and everyday practice.

This is what the Homelessness UK handbook has to say about Ethos on the website homeless.org.uk

What are values and ethos?

A value is a principle, standard or quality considered worthwhile or desirable. Its worth is derived from its usefulness or importance to the person who either possesses it or regards it highly. It therefore usually holds some utility such as an ability to improve a person’s circumstance.

An ethos is the set of fundamental values held by a person, group or organisation. Ethos is what characterises the tone or culture of organisations, such as hostels.

Importance of ethos in collaborative working.

Ethos determines how we see the world around us and how we behave within it. It can be a difficult area to explore because ethos is a subjective concept. To illustrate, someone may profess to hold clear certain values but other people may not experience this behaviour as being in tune with these values. This may particularly be an issue where there are underlying power imbalances or discrimination. There will be times when balancing up values, in certain situations, may conflict..

These values will:

- ❖ *affect the way that staff and residents both feel and are treated*
- ❖ *determine the effectiveness of the service in its attempts to achieve its aims*
- ❖ *determine what these aims actually are.*

In short, the values held by the people that run hostels and the people that use it underpin every other aspect of the service.

With a mission, vision and a strong ethos driving the collaboration there should never be a time, unlike Alice, where the group is not sure where they should go.

EVALUATION

“The only man who behaves sensibly is my tailor; he takes my measurements anew every time he sees me, while all the rest go on with their old measurements and expect me to fit them” George Bernard Shaw

When a partnership has completed its objectives, self-evaluation and self-critique are necessary to provide growth from the collaborative work experience. This stage also can be used to identify further work to be performed. Documentation of previous group actions become particularly useful at this stage. Recommendations suggest that to evaluate collaborative output, individuals must 'attack projects, not people'. Using the values and goals agreed upon at the beginning of the partnership allows group members to make objective, authoritative critique of performance.

This should translate into a series of evidence based questions for the partnership: To what extent has partnership working brought about an improvement in the quality of services which would not otherwise have been achieved? Has the partnership been innovative in the development of new services or approaches which would not otherwise have been introduced? From the perspective of service users, has partnership working resulted in improved and integrated service delivery on the ground? Has the delivery of existing core services changed significantly to meet the needs of users more effectively? Has partnership working enabled pooling of resources or an increase in the scale of services to reach more children more consistently? Is there greater efficiency in the way resources are being used? All of these are critical questions and in turn are addressed through specific assessment criteria requiring the production and interrogation of qualitative and quantitative evidence.

Various partnership models and tools exist and sometimes it may be required to use more than one in order to be able to tease out the width of purpose and activity within a partnership.

The Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU) Performance Management Model (2002) is the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's preferred analytic framework. This model is made up of 3 sections: reviewing delivery, partnership working and improvement planning. It considers whether the actions that have been taken were the right ones to achieve the set targets. In simple terms, the model considers the logic linking actions and outcomes, the clarity of understanding of local problems and issues, the use of best practice methods for actions and the use of good quality evidence to judge process.

The structured evaluation framework offered by the Strategic Partnering Taskforce (SPT) model (2003) provides an alternative model. This model outlines 6 principles against which a partnership can be assessed:

- recognition and acceptance of the need for partnership working
- clarity and realism of purpose
- development and maintenance of trust
- clear and robust partnership arrangements
- monitoring, measurement and learning

As can be seen, this model concentrates more on the internal working of the partnership rather than outputs, hence a reason to use both.

Why is evaluation so important?

An evaluation framework is required to allow judgments to be made about the overall effectiveness of the collaboration, facilitate debate about its sustainability and future direction and identify clearly defined areas for improvement, development and learning. In addition the development and use of an evaluation framework can contribute to the wider debate on whether collaborative working adds value and is the best mechanism for the delivery of improved outcomes and services for young people. The evaluation framework should be underpinned by the concept of a virtuous circle formed by evaluation, learning, improvement, measurement and renewed evaluation. If, as part of the implementation of an evaluation framework for partnership working this continuous process is maintained, its full benefits may be realised. There is of course no 'best' evaluation framework applicable for all partnerships, however the potential does exist, for partnerships to adapt any framework and apply it, ensuring that it is compatible with the purpose and ethos of the partnership to deliver change and improvement.

On the flip side of successful collaborative working, there can be cases where collaborative working fails. There will be many reasons for this, for example where one partner loses interest or develops other priorities, needs of young people or key partners change, or that the partnership simply is not achieving the desired outcome.

Other factors that may contribute to a partnership failing are:

- lack of commitment from partners
- partners not fulfilling roles and responsibilities
- lack of common visions and goals
- lack of trust
- insufficient funding to support collaborative efforts
- lack of communication
- lack of time
- having different definitions of collaboration, or different priorities for what needs to be done

Whatever reason a collaborative working partnership is failing, partners should look to:

- open up communication immediately
- if a situation can be fixed, do so
- if a collaborator has lost all interest, back out
- do not be discouraged by an unsuccessful collaboration

Example of a National Partnership

Meic Helpline.

Meic is the national information, advice and advocacy helpline for children and young people in Wales aged 0 to 25. Young people can access the service by phone, SMS text message, web based instant messenger or e-mail.

ProMo-Cymru successfully ran a pilot with project partners to establish the model required to make distance advocacy possible. With this success they were awarded funding from the Welsh Assembly Government and formed a consortium to oversee the continued running and development of the Meic service.

Cywaith – The Consortium behind Meic

Cywaith is the Consortium led by ProMo-Cymru which runs Meic. The other members include:

- * NYAS – the National Youth and Advocacy Service;
- * Tros Gynnal – a Children Rights Charity;
- * Voices From Care – an organisation that helps young people who are or have been in local authority care;
- * Children In Wales – an umbrella organisation whose members are involved with Children and young people.

Why is it called Meic? Meic = Meicroffôn = Microphone

Meic is an abbreviation of *meicroffôn* which is Welsh for *microphone*. The name was chosen with advocacy in mind as a microphone can amplify a young persons voice to make sure they are heard and has parallels with the concept of Advocacy.

Meic IT = Engaging with Youth Through Technology

Originally tasked with just developing a phone based service, ProMo-Cymru established the best way to engage with young people was to implement a text message, web instant message and e-mail system along with the phone line. All of the contact flows through a Virtual Call Centre which allows for quick expansion and helpline advisers who can work from almost anywhere in the UK.

Due to the confidential and anonymous nature of the service, ProMo-Cymru also created a bespoke and robust database as a standard package did not have the functionality required for Meic. Included in the database's functionality, the first All Wales Advocacy Services database was also created. The Advocacy Services Database is due to go on-line for all to access during the next phase of the project.

With the help of its project partners, ProMo-Cymru has also developed the policies and procedures that govern the Meic service to ensure that Children and Young people receive the best service possible.

ProMo-Cymru and its project partners have also ensured that training in telephone and electronic communication skills, policies and procedures and the use of ICT are regularly provided to ensure the best qualified staff possible.

As well as designing the logo, ProMo-Cymru built the website and integrated the instant messenger service. As part of the marketing, ProMo-Cymru also launched a national campaign by advertising Meic on the radio, via billboards and on buses, as well as presentations at conferences aimed at young people. An extensive link-building campaign and Pay Per Click campaign are currently being used to extend the sites on-line reach.

What is Advocacy? Advocacy is about helping a young person put their views across. Many young people experience informal advocacy from friends, parents and teachers as part of everyday life. There are some occasions when a young person can not turn to friends, teachers or family and needs formal advocacy provided by organisations such as Meic.

Advocacy supports young people in difficult situations by ensuring their voice is heard, that they know their rights and have access to the same opportunities as others.

Young people can contact Meic by the following methods:

Phone: 080880 23456

Text: 84001

Instant Message & Website: www.meiccymru.org

E-mail: help@meiccymru.org

An Example of Regional Partnership Working

CLIC

CLIC is the national information and advice website for young people in Wales funded by the Welsh Assembly Government and run by ProMo-Cymru.

The primary goal of CLIC is to provide all young people in Wales with information and advice delivered in a way that is appealing and effective. ProMo-Cymru does this by incorporating tailored information, signposting and referral services within the content on the site.

For example, If a young person submits an article about bullying, or watches a video related to this topic, they will also be shown a comprehensive list of anti-bullying organisations relevant to their area along with the corresponding CLIC information page.

CLIC Network

CLIConline.co.uk is the national website that acts as an umbrella for regional websites also developed by ProMo-Cymru. There are currently 10 live CLIC sites (including the National site) with six more under development.

The live local sites are:

TheSprout – Cardiff

Swoosh – Vale Of Glamorgan

Wicid – Rhondda Cynon Taf

ShoutTawe – Swansea

YoungNewport – Newport
Defaid – Anglesey
Carmarthenshire Youth – Carmarthen

YoungFlintshire – Flintshire
Bwsted – Bridgend

At the time of Writing a further six sites are underdevelopment in the following counties:

Wrexham
Monmouthshire
Blaenau Gwent
Neath Port Talbot
Methyr Tydfil
Torfaen

“CLIC is at the heart of the Welsh Assembly Government’s approach to providing information and advice for young people in Wales.

“What makes CLIC so great is the way in which young people are engaged in its work. The more young people are aware of their rights, the more likely they are to access and realise those rights and gain benefit from them. This ultimately results in young people having better access to information, advice and support which in turn contributes to better outcomes for them in the long run.” Huw Lewis, Deputy Minister for Children

INSPIRE YOUTH WORK IN HOSPITAL PROJECT

An unique initiative in Wrexham works with young people who attend hospital with various health issues such as self-harm, long term or chronic health conditions and emotional health issues, is in the running for a brand new national accolade.

The **Inspire Youth Work in Hospital Project** run by Wrexham Youth Service and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (with funding from The Big Lottery Fund) has reached the final of the inaugural Youth Work in Wales Excellence Awards.

Managed by the Welsh Assembly Government, local authorities across Wales and the voluntary Youth Service, the awards scheme has been designed to showcase innovative and inspiring projects and individuals who work in providing non-formal education opportunities to young people.

The Inspire project works with young people aged between 11 and 18 and is primarily involved in self-harming and other risk taking behaviour with the aim of:

- reducing the number of young people readmitted to hospital with self-harm injuries or having attempted suicide
- increasing the number of young people making a successful transition to adult services
- engaging young people in decision-making processes that influence the type of health services they receive and providing a forum for them to express their views to health professionals in the wider community
- providing preventative emotional health education to young people and professionals across Wrexham County Borough

Data collected by the project team has suggested that the support is having an impact on hospital readmissions, helping signpost young people discharged from hospital to support services and giving young people opportunities to maintain or re-establish links with education and training systems and employment.

There has also been a positive impact on the mood of participants, rising sharply when they first meet a project worker and remaining elevated as more sessions are completed.

To combat low confidence, anxiety and poor social networks, a youth club has been created to offer those Inspire has worked with. The youth club offers an opportunity to socialise and stay involved with the Inspire project while promoting their health and well-being through youth work activities.

“The project is having a significant impact on awareness of young people’s mental health and self-harming issues across a range of mainstream services. The Inspire management group has reported that hospital wards have begun contacting the project for the support offered by the project – testament to the impact this activity is having.

“As far as we’ve been able to establish, Inspire is the only project of its kind in Wales. The initiative and team have been instrumental in helping young people to turn their lives around and have hope for the future.” Youth Outreach Worker, Charlie Price.

Impact on young person (Case Study)

Young person, aged 11, is referred to ‘Inspire’ via A&E after admission to hospital having suffered a panic attack.

The Youth Outreach Worker and Assistant Psychologist contacted the young person and their mother by phone, arranged to meet with the young person in school for sessions 1-3, at the family home for sessions 4-7. We stayed in contact with the young person’s mother throughout the process. The mother had informed us that the young person had lost their father at an early age and another significant relative recently.

Session 1: Psycho-education around anxiety to increase the young persons awareness of anxiety and what this is.

Session 2: Related to the previous session, to help the young person with their feelings around anxiety in order to give them an understanding of how anxiety affects them.

Session 3: Session on thoughts and feelings, to offer the young person the opportunity to look at the differences between thoughts and feelings and how these affect them.

Session 4: Spent session completing a time line and relaxation techniques, in order to better understand where the young person’s anxiety was coming from and offer ways to manage anxiety.

Session 5: Worked on coping skills for helping with anxieties.

Session 6: Session to practice relaxation techniques and complete coping skills list to reinforce ways young person can deal with anxiety.

Session 7 Evaluation session where we gave the young person a folder with all the work they had completed with us.

- after this session the young person's mother reported that the young person's anxiety level had gone down.
- the young person also stated that they felt more able to cope with feelings of anxiety.

Friday night Football (Ferndale Cluster Operational Group/Partnership – Rhondda Cynon Taff)

Identified Issue

Following a number of the meetings with the Police, including Community Support Officers, it was acknowledged that there were a lot of anti-social behaviour call-outs to the Police on Friday Nights which involved Youths gathering in public spaces and generally perceived to be intimidating by local residents. The partnership identified the need to establish a project to tackle this behaviour and provide the young people with something to do instead of hanging around in these spaces.

What was done?

The partnership, working alongside the Police identified the need to approach the young people to find out why they were hanging around in those spaces and what could be done for them in order to reduce the anti-social behaviour issues. Following joint discussion it was decided that the partnership working with the Police would establish Friday Night Football Sessions at the local leisure centre to provide the young people with a place to go and something to do.

How was this done?

Members of the partnership provided resources such as staff time, transport provision and administration time. The Police supervised the sessions. Regular meetings were held to identify and address problems.

Was the project successful?

The project has been very successful and anti-social behaviour issues on a Friday night when the football project runs is virtually zero. Young people taking part in the project have had the opportunity to experience trips to football grounds and have taken part in county-wide tournaments.

COLLABORATIVE WORKING – A CASE STUDY

'HAWTHORN FRIDAY NIGHT PROJECT'

The Hawthorn Cluster Operational Group which is made up of representatives from Services for Young People staff including the Detached Youth Work Team, E3, 5 x 60, as well as community partners such as Valleys Kids, the Police, Hawthorn School and Rhydfelin Communities 1st have been thrilled at the success of a recent Friday night project.

Young people had asked during the recent Rhondda Cynon Taff Viewpoint Consultation, which reached 9000 young people across RCT, for more activities to take place on a Friday evening and during the Weekend in the Hawthorn Cluster.

There had been issues of youth annoyance in the Hawthorn Cluster where the police received 84 calls relating to anti-social behaviour in Rhydyfelin alone in April 2011. Rhydyfelin had the highest anti-social behaviour record within RCT.

To combat both issues, the Hawthorn Cluster Youth Operational Group discussed the intervention of piloting a Friday night youth 'Drop In' provision from 5.30-9.00pm in Hawthorn Youth Center and Friday Night Football sessions at Hawthorn Leisure Center for a six week trial period.

The 'Friday Night Project' provision was for all young people aged 11 - 25 years of age in the Hawthorn Cluster.

Youth workers from Valleys kids and Rhondda Cynon Taff Services For Young People staffed these 'Drop In' sessions and Services For Young People's Detached Youth Work Team facilitated the Friday Night Football sessions.

The first 'Drop In' and Friday Night Football sessions took place in June 2011 and on average engaged over 50 young people at each session. Activities on offer included: Hair & Beauty, Football, Pool, board games, Arts & Crafts and much more. There was also a 'Chill Out Zone' for young people to sit and chat with friends and workers.

At a recent PACT meeting (Police and Communities Together), Hawthorn Community Support Officers reported that reports of anti-social behavior had dropped significantly since the Friday Night Project had begun - a massive 76%.

Hayley John, Youth Integration Officer commented, 'Plans were being made to ensure the provision was now established on a long term basis. The Cluster Youth Operation Group had been successful accessing funding for a fantastic Summer holiday programme for young people. Fun activities including white water rafting, a residential at St David's and regular trips and activities on Friday evenings were all part of the provision. Through excellent partnership working between Rhondda Cynon Taff Services For Young People and other key community partners, they have responded to the needs of Hawthorn's young people, providing them with an array of exciting opportunities to engage in whilst addressing the local area's needs and priorities, providing other community members with a reassurance that together they can all make a positive contribution to the issues that face them.

Building on the Success of the Friday Night Project , 'The Emotion Behind The Commotion' is a workshop designed for young people to raise their awareness of how anti-social behaviour can affect vulnerable people living in the community.

The original idea came about from 'link' meetings with Social Workers from Pontificated Disability Team, Rhondda Cynon Taff Detached Youth Work Team and Wifeliness Neighbourhood Police Team due to the high number of service users and instances of anti-social behaviour incidents in the Wifeliness area. A need was identified for young people to be aware of how their behaviour can affect others.

Planning sessions were held with Social Workers, Detached Youth Workers, GTRA (Glynnne Residents and Tenants Association) and the Police to develop a programme for the workshops.

On Tuesday, 25th. October, 2011 a pilot workshop was held at Élan Community Centre complimenting 'Operation Bang' objectives. 10 local young people who had been engaged in anti-social behaviour, aged between 11 and 16 years of age attended the session. The 3 workshop sessions each lasted approximately 3 hours and included classic icebreakers, real life studies and interaction with adults with disabilities.

The young people engaged throughout the workshop and a positive response was received. Feedback from the young people included, "I felt sad, upset and it makes me think differently how I would act towards disabled people again."

The following evening, the young people were invited to Fern dale Skate park for a 2 hour session of scooter riding – an enjoyable evening was had by all !

Evaluations with all of the agencies involved have been carried out since the pilot workshop and developments are currently being made to the overall presentation. All agencies involved felt that the workshop was a success and are excited to deliver many more sessions in partnership in 2012.

CYOG

The purpose of the CYOG is

- to co-ordinate and improve the provision of services for young people within school cluster areas
- work together – joint planning and delivery
- share resources
- market and promote services
- engage other services and organizations
- realign and integrate provision to reflect demand and need
- involve Young people in service design and delivery

The vision is the Skype vision statement

Services for Young People Vision Statement:

Services for Young People are a service committed to:

"The delivery of integrated programmes of personal and social education that are needs led, empowering young people to have a real voice and choice and to reach their full potential as active and respected citizens within their communities."

Within the context of the above vision and in line with other key strategic drivers, Services for Young People has identified the following key overarching objectives and priorities:

1. Ensure that all participants in the services offered by Services for Young People attain their agreed learning goals, progress in learning and develop personal, social and learning skills.
2. Ensure that all youth workers, E3+ Co-ordinators, Community Focused School Cluster Workers, tutors and trainers meet the needs of participants and curricular or course requirements; assess rigorously and use the outcomes of assessment in planning and improving learning.
3. Ensure that learning experiences meet the needs and interests of all participants and respond to the needs of employers and the wider community.
4. Ensure there is good quality care, support and guidance for participants with due attention to the support and provision of any additional learning needs. Ensure that this care and support is delivered within a strong commitment to equal opportunities.
5. Ensure that the service has effective leadership from managers, monitoring and evaluating performance.
6. Ensures that services deliver at an adequate level; plans effectively for improvement and makes efficient use of all resources.
7. Continue to work in partnership with a range of other providers and organisations to develop a truly co-operative approach to partnership working.

Some of the impact has been:

- ⤴ improved working arrangements and that 'everyone has had a say'
- ⤴ streamlined meetings
- ⤴ focussed annual action plan
- ⤴ improved recording systems
- ⤴ shared responsibility of work i.e. different group leads
- ⤴ improved partnership working
- ⤴ improved outcomes including reduced ASB in particular clusters
- ⤴ more coordinated approach to Youth provision – less duplication of services
- ⤴ better communication between agencies – improved information sharing
- ⤴ increased opportunities for young people to take part in Friday night and weekend provision
- ⤴ holiday provision

✧ targeted provision working with Children's services, Looked after Children