

TOWARDS AN OUTCOMES AND IMPACT APPROACH FOR THE YOUTH SECTOR IN WALES

1. Introduction: Purpose and the Current Position

1.1 This paper seeks to provide a conceptual framework for answering two questions raised by the Welsh Government: what does the Welsh Government get for the funding it provides for the youth service (statutory and voluntary) and to what extent does the use of that funding help to achieve key objectives such as reductions in the number of young people not in education, training or employment.

1.2 Many studies make the important distinction between outputs (actions, processes, products, etc) and outcomes (the *results* of intended or unintended actions). It is also important to try to identify the *impact* (the value or otherwise) of those outputs and outcomes. As one moves from outputs to outcomes and then to impact, it generally becomes harder at each stage to make valid and accurate statements about what those outcomes and their impact might be.

1.3 Reports examining the impact and value of the youth sector have tended to focus on the development of young people and, particularly, on so-called 'soft skills' and their relationship to key skills, employability, personal development and relationship-building (e.g. The Young Foundation's *Framework of outcomes for young people*, the Welsh Assembly Government's *Demonstrating Success*, the PACEC report *A study of the impact of scouting on the UK's young people, adults and communities* and the European Youth Forum's *Study on the impact of Non-Formal Education in youth organisations on young people's employability*).

1.4 Three reports have looked more widely at the economic contribution and impact of the voluntary youth sector: ACEVO's report on the multiplier effect of youth work, WCVA's *Third sector statistical resource* and the Indecon report for the National Youth Council of Ireland *Assessment of the Economic Value of Youth Work*. The Indecon study claims to be the first of its kind in assessing the economic impact of youth work at a national level.

2. Addressing the Problem

2.1 To try to answer the questions raised by the Welsh Government it is necessary to consider a range of levels, areas of impact, and forms of youth work and to summarise recent research evidence concerning outcomes for young people and the broader economic impact of youth work.

2.2 Levels

2.2.1 Youth work provision is influenced by, and has an impact on, stakeholders at a number of levels:

- System level e.g. Welsh Government, Local Authority Sector, Voluntary Sector.
- Organisation level e.g. CWVYS, local authorities, youth organisations including individual CWVYS members, Community Voluntary Councils.
- Youth workers.
- Young people.

2.3 Areas of Potential Impact

2.3.1 Some areas are 'external' such as social return on investment or economic impact whilst others are more 'internal' being concerned with the personal development of individual people. Although frequently identified areas of impact are often referred to under the generic labels of human, social and economic capital, it is helpful to identify more specific categories within these general categories, e.g:

- Economic outcomes and impact, including any multiplier effects of grant funding.
- Social return on investment.
- Employment and employability.
- Engagement.
- Social inclusion.
- Personal development.
- Educational development.
- Professional and workforce development.

2.4 Forms of Youth Work

2.4.1 As youth work uses a range of approaches, it is necessary to try to assess the impact of the different approaches. In Wales, in *Youth Work in Wales, Principles and Purposes*, these have been identified as:

- Centre-based work.
- Street-based, outreach and mobile work.
- Work with a broad range of members of the community, irrespective of age.
- Residential work.
- Targeted provision for specific groups in a variety of environments including, for example, schools, the youth justice system and health environments.

3. Possibilities

3.1 Approaches to Identifying Outcomes and Impact

3.1.1 Approaches to identifying outcomes and impact differ in terms of their focus on qualitative or quantitative data and on whether attempts are made to assess short, mid or long-term outcomes and impact. Most studies have focussed on qualitative data related to short or mid-term impact or on quantitative data limited to records of participation in youth organisations, continuing education or employment, and formal qualifications.

3.1.2 Approaches to data collection include:

- Stakeholder reports.
- Self report.
- Observations.
- One-to one discussions.
- Statistics (e.g. employment, education, qualifications, attendance, criminal records, health records, pregnancy rates).

3.1.3 For the organisational and system levels referred to in paragraph 2.2.1, additional qualitative and quantitative data is required including, for example, funding, grants, contributions in kind, opportunity costs and the impact these have through realising planned and unplanned outcomes at all four levels.

3.1.4 The growing body of evidence concerning the impact of skills acquired outside but parallel with the formal education system raises an important practical question about the extent to which each individual organisation should be expected to provide evidence of impact. Given the substantial level of agreement amongst current research studies concerning the impact of the ‘soft’/essential skills identified, is it not sufficient for organisations to be able to demonstrate that a young person has indeed developed these skills without having to demonstrate the longer-term achievement of those young people in education, the workplace or other spheres of life?

3.1.5 It is also important to bear in mind that impact studies normally, and for obvious reasons, focus on impact as it relates to young people themselves. It is much harder to account for the social capital created or supported by the involvement of young people in their communities and with people and organisations in a wide range of contexts. Access to groups and group activities benefits both individuals and communities and, ultimately, benefits society. Youth organisations encourage and support the involvement of young people in the generation of social capital but would find it very difficult to assess the impact of that support and encouragement.

3.2 Types of Outcome

3.2.1 The Young Foundation publication ‘A framework of outcomes for young people’ (McNeil B, Reeder N, and Rich J, July 2012) makes distinctions between extrinsic and intrinsic outcomes and between individual and social outcomes and shows them as two related axes of a matrix with a range of outcomes in each of the four cells of the matrix.

The Young Foundation Outcomes Model		
Extrinsic ↑	Individual achievements or behaviours Literacy, numeracy and language development Attainment of qualifications Participation in and attendance at learning and/or work Participation in youth activities and uptake of advice and support services Individual choices and behaviours that affect health and wellbeing	Benefits to society Less need for health services Contribution to economy through labour market participation Less dependence on welfare Not subject to criminal justice system Strengthened community through leadership and democratic participation
↓ Intrinsic	Social and emotional capabilities Communication Confidence and Agency Creativity Managing Feelings Planning and Problem Solving Relationships and Leadership Resilience and Determination	Inter-personal relationships Positive parenting Positive family relationships Community cohesion
Individual ←		→ Social

Table 1: The Young Foundation Outcomes Model

3.2.2 Important studies like the Young Foundation framework, the Welsh Government’s ‘Demonstrating Success’ and the Bath University/GHK Consulting Report focus on personal and professional outcomes for young people and have a long list of skills, competences and personality traits.

3.2.3 The Bath University/GHK Consulting Report catalogues a whole range of separate variables most of which could be grouped within categories such as those identified by the Young Foundation.

4. Proposal

4.1 Whilst there is obvious value in identifying outputs and impact and in the learning and reflection that is an inevitable part of that process, for practical reasons the process needs to be streamlined and built into the normal operation of organisations. This would go some way to ensuring that the process supports rather than detracts from the objectives of the organisations concerned.

4.2 For this reason, it is important to consider whether it might be possible to focus simply on outcomes where there is a body of research evidence to demonstrate that impact is clearly associated with the identified outcomes. The Young Foundation report, for example, cites research evidence to substantiate correlations such as the following:

- Emotional intelligence as a predictor of academic success.
- The importance of motivation and effort in learning and fulfilling potential.
- The importance on non-cognitive traits as well as cognitive skills for occupational attainment.
- The importance of persistence, reliability and self-discipline in achieving success.
- The role of social competence, autonomy, problem solving and sense of purpose in healthy development and life success.
- The association of social and emotional skills with rates of teenage pregnancy and crime.
- The association of self-regulation and social and behavioural skills at age 11 with later employment.

4.3 The European Youth Forum study concludes that those skills and competences that seem to benefit employability more markedly from long-term involvement with youth organisations are:

- Leadership skills.
- Organisational skills.
- Problem-solving skills.
- Decision-making skills.
- Adaptability, flexibility.
- Communication skills.

4.4 The Scouts' PACEC study identified benefits of involvement with Scouting, including:

- Developing a sense of citizenship.
- Improving life chances in terms of education and employment.
- Confidence building.
- Commitment towards others.
- Health and fitness.
- The building of social bonds and networks.
- A stronger sense of altruism and of community.
- Satisfaction gained through civic activities.

4.5 It is interesting, but perhaps not unexpected given the underlying philosophy of Scouting, that the PACEC study identified benefits and satisfaction arising not simply from developing one's own

skills and opportunities. This kind of link between personal development and benefit to society, communities, business, the economy etc has to be recognised explicitly in any assessment of outcomes and impact. Benefits derived from investment in individuals through their involvement in the youth sector do not simply apply to those individuals but contribute to outcomes and impact at all levels of the chain from the individual through organisations, communities and businesses to the broadest level of Government. The table at Appendix 1 seeks to show how outcomes for any one level have an aggregated impact at all other levels.

4.6 Outcomes and impact beyond the acquisition and use of soft skills.

4.6.1 The growing body of evidence, referred to above, concerning the contribution of youth work to the acquisition of soft-skills should be seen as complementary to the provision of evidence concerning the wider impact of youth work. The Indecon study for the National Youth Council of Ireland, for example, undertook a cost-benefit analysis of the economic value of youth work and sought to quantify direct and indirect benefits.

4.6.2 Direct benefits were measured through:

- The economic value of volunteering and paid employment.
- The multiplier impacts of youth organisation expenditures.

4.6.3 Indirect benefits, measured in terms of the estimated longer-run costs avoided by the State through the provision of youth programmes and supports, were:

- Justice-related benefits.
- Health-related benefits.
- Welfare-related benefits.
- Education-related benefits.

4.6.4 Indecon identified the following net economic benefits of youth work:

- Net economic value of volunteering activity: €245,685,202.
- Justice-related benefits: €21,821,326.
- Health-related benefits: €89,455,764.
- Welfare-related benefits: €289,659,788.
- Multiplier impacts of youth work organisation expenditures: €563,623,504.

4.6.5 The total economic benefits identified by Indecon amounted to approximately €1.21 billion with a Benefit-Cost Ratio of 2.22:1.

4.6.6 The youth sector in Ireland is not dissimilar in size to that in Wales. There are approximately 383,000 young people engaged with the youth service, almost 1400 paid staff and over 40,000 adult volunteers. A key difference is that, in Ireland, almost all provision is through the voluntary sector.

4.6.7 WCVA's *Third sector statistical resource* for 2013 estimates that of 33,100 third sector organisations working in Wales, 8.6% or somewhere in the region of 2846 organisations explicitly involve young people. For the sector as a whole, WCVA estimates that there are around 191 million hours of voluntary effort given in a year which, using the average hourly wage for Wales, is worth £2.2 billion. Third sector income is estimated at £1.6 billion per year therefore producing a total economic equivalent input of around £3.8 billion, or approximately 2.4 times third sector income.

4.6.8 If we take a narrower focus on the use of government funding by single organisations, the figures can be just as favourable. In the financial year 2012-13, CWVYS (as an example for which detailed information is known) received core government funding of £105,000 but used this to generate a total income of around £250,000. Total funding therefore amounted to 2.4 times core funding, the same multiplier as that estimated by WCVA for the third sector as a whole.

4.6.12 YouthLink Scotland's *National Voluntary Youth Work Organisations (Scotland) Survey* estimates that there were approximately 73,000 volunteers in youth work in Scotland in 2012 with a replacement value of around £128 million. Based on these figures, YouthLink claims a social return on investment of £10 for every £1 spent.

4.6.13 Whilst organisations can demonstrate that government funding, especially core funding, produces high levels of cost benefit to government (as well as being a means of leveraging additional funding and inward investment) any claims should go beyond financial indices and include evidence related to strategic and operational plans.

4.7 *Demonstrating outcomes and impact*

4.7.1 How, then, might organisations demonstrate outcomes and impact? This can be done in part from the aggregation of outcome and impact data for young people and for youth workers. In the same way, the Welsh Government could appropriately claim impact benefit from funding applied at more grass-roots levels to reduce crime or unemployment or increase achievement and participation.

4.7.2 An obvious way to assess outcomes and potential impact, in addition to using aggregated data, is to provide assessments related to operational plan objectives or results-based accounting systems. The same approach could be used

- to assess outcomes and impact at the system level for whole sectors such as the voluntary youth sector, the local authority sector, for individual local authority youth services and for central government.
- to evaluate the outcomes and impact of forms of youth work such as centre-based work (often closely overlapping the outcomes for a whole organisation) and street-based, outreach and mobile work (often a sub-set of organisational provision).

4.7.2 The following table suggests possible outcome/impact categories for individual young people (sections 1 to 3) and for their organisations (section 4) and provides columns for identifying how information could be gathered and by when. The content of the table might seem simple or even self-evident but it is a distillation of categories for which there is research related to outcomes. The categories are relatively few to try to make the focus and process of assessment congruent with, and not an impediment to, day-to-day youth work practice. Having said that, a considerable amount of work is still likely to be necessary to ensure that teams have a common understanding of the meaning of the categories and have developed and practised procedures to achieve reasonably valid and reliable assessments.

Variables by Group	Means of assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific measure (e.g. from The Young Foundation) • Youth worker assessment • Self report • Peer observation • From organisation records 	Evidence/Impact timetable <i>Identify time scale for identifying progress to or achievement of outcome e.g. Short, Mid or Long Term</i>
1. Essential Skills		
Communication		
Planning, problem solving & decision-making		
Leadership		
Relationships including respect for others		
Creativity		
Confidence and agency		
Adaptability, resilience and determination		
Managing feelings		
2. 'Career data'		
Engagement with youth organisation(s)		
Engagement with education and/or training		
Engagement through work experience or apprenticeship		
Voluntary experience/employment		
Paid experience/employment		
Academic and other formally assessed results		
Personal health and well-being		
3. Additional progress through the organisation's development scheme or activity programme for young people (including the achievement of any thresholds, awards, etc)		
1.		
2. etc		
4. Areas related to the organisation and its objectives		
Aggregated personal data for young people (see above)		
Aggregated participation data		

for client groups e.g. young people, adult workers, members of the organisation.		
Core funding		
Funding leveraged		
Data for adult workers e.g. participation rates, training, etc		
Achievement of organisation's objectives		
Achievement of external stakeholder 1's objectives		
Achievement of external stakeholder 2's objectives etc		

Table 2: A possible model for planning and assessing outcomes

4.7.3 Table 2 provides just one possible model but does include categories from a broad range of studies and reports. Ideally, there should be some standardisation of categories across the youth service (voluntary and statutory) whilst allowing for appropriate organisational amendments and additions and for specific development programmes as in Section 3 of the table.

4.7.4 The data identified in the table for young people and for organisations can be aggregated for different forms of youth work as appropriate.

4.7.5 The data identified in the table can also be aggregated to demonstrate impact at various levels. Appendix 1 provides a model for how that data might be aggregated and evaluated at increasingly higher levels.

5. Recommendations

5.1 Data to be collected by organisations working directly with young people should, where possible, include:

5.1.1 Statistical data (e.g. related to participation, membership, attendance, awards, demographics, finances including leverage, etc)

5.1.2 Skills and competence data for young people such as those identified in reports such as *Demonstrating Success*, the PACEC report for Scouts, the Young Foundation reports and the study undertaken by the European Youth Forum. Table 2 provides an incomplete example. The Young Foundation provides examples of ways in which information might be collected. Whilst some degree of standardisation across the sector would be helpful, organisations could choose their own approaches to data collection. The Young Foundation provides information about available tools and measures.

5.1.3 Youth worker data (e.g. participation, demographics, qualifications and training, etc)

5.1.4 Achievement of the organisation's mission, strategic and operational plans.

5.1.5 Achievement of external stakeholder objectives.

5.2 Data to be collected by co-ordinating organisations (like local authorities) which are directly responsible for providing for young people should, where possible, include:

5.2.1 Statistical data (e.g. related to participation, membership, attendance, awards, demographics, finances including leverage, etc)

5.2.2 Skills and competence data for young people such as those identified in reports like *Demonstrating Success*, the PACEC report for Scouts, the Young Foundation reports and the study undertaken by the European Youth Forum. Note: Table 2 provides an incomplete example of the kinds of data that could be collated to provide the skills and competence data referred to in paragraph 5.1.2. The Young Foundation provides examples of ways in which information might be collected. Whilst some degree of standardisation across the sector would be helpful, organisations could choose their own approaches to data collection. The Young Foundation also provides information about available tools and measures.

5.2.3 An assessment of the effectiveness of different forms of youth work e.g.

- Centre-based work.
- Street-based, outreach and mobile work.
- Work with a broad range of members of the community, irrespective of age.
- Residential work.
- Targeted provision for specific groups in a variety of environments including, for example, schools, the youth justice system and health environments.

5.2.4 Youth worker data (e.g. participation, demographics, qualifications and training, etc)

5.2.5 Achievement of the co-ordinating organisation's mission, strategic and operational plans.

5.2.6 Achievement of external stakeholder objectives.

5.3 Data to be collected by youth sector organisations supporting the sector (e.g. WLGA, PYOG, CWVYS, ETS) should, where possible, include:

5.3.1 Statistical data (e.g. related to participation, membership, attendance, awards, demographics, finances including leverage, workforce development, representation, etc).

5.3.2 Achievement of the organisation's mission, strategic and operational plans.

5.3.3 Achievement of external stakeholder objectives.

5.4 Data to be collected by government departments which are directly responsible for providing for young people should, where possible, include:

5.4.1 Statistical data (e.g. related to participation, demographics, financial support to the youth service, workforce development, representation, etc). In effect this is an augmented aggregate of the data provided by the sector and could include the following:

- Economic outcomes and impact, including any multiplier effects of grant funding.
- Social return on investment.

- Employment and employability, including data on young people not in education or employment.
- Engagement.
- Social inclusion.
- Educational development
- Professional and workforce development

5.4.2 Skills and competence data for young people e.g. those identified in reports such as *Demonstrating Success*, the PACEC report for Scouts, the Young Foundation reports and the study undertaken by the European Youth Forum.

5.4.3 Achievement of relevant aspects of the Programme for Government.

5.4.4 Achievement of Government, Division and Branch objectives.

6. Summary and conclusion

6.1 Identifying and quantifying impact is a difficult task, especially when it relates to the personal, social, educational, employment and economic development of individual people from diverse backgrounds in equally diverse contexts. The easiest data to collect is not necessarily the most valuable. A small intervention by a youth worker might have a huge long-term impact on the life chances or experience of a young person whilst substantial, expensive and well-organised programmes pass them by with much less effect.

6.2 And how are we to know for certain what has had an impact on someone's experience and development? George Kelly, who developed personal construct theory, argued that if you want to know what someone thinks, ask them; they might just tell you. Talking to people, observing them, getting to know someone well, self-report, group discussions are all very useful tools but inevitably suffer from the difficulty of assessing the validity and reliability of the information obtained. But they remain important and they have the major advantage of being part and parcel of the processes of youth work that go on irrespective of whether we wish formally to assess the impact of what we do. The assessment process, for want of a better term, is congruent with youth work ethics and methods.

6.3 Statisticians will often talk about 'soft' and 'hard' data in the same way that studies of the development of young people talk about 'soft skills'. Current research has demonstrated that 'soft' does not mean less important. When Bath University and GHK Consulting examined the impact of non-formal education on young people's employability their conclusion was that 'most young people who have taken part in youth organisations and were in employment believe that they would not have achieved this job without such experience' and that their research suggests that 'involvement with youth organisations has an impact on the range of occupations young people would consider in the future'. Soft skills might not be so easy to identify as examination passes but their effects are considerable and the youth sector has been an important means of developing those skills for many young people.

6.4 Clearly, then, we need both soft and hard data in order to assess outcomes and impact. We also need to try to ensure that obtaining that data for organisations in the Third Sector supports rather than impedes the work of the sector.

6.5 It is one thing to ask an organisation to be conscious of the need to assess the impact of what it does and, in so doing, to justify any resources that it receives. It is quite another to try to do this for the whole sector and to answer the apparently simple questions posed by the Welsh Government: what are we getting for our money and how does youth work help young people to do well and to be well. To do that, it is important to try to have an approach to assessing impact which is as standardised as possible across sectors and organisations, uses consistent terminology, and is economical in the information it seeks to collect. It is proposed that *Youth Work Alliance Wales* undertakes this task drawing on the experience of The Young Foundation.

6.6 This paper is intended to be a step in achieving those objectives and to help us towards answering the questions posed by the Welsh Government. *'Youth Work in Wales: Principles and Practices'* is predicated on the assumption that those principles and practices produce positive effects for individuals and the communities and wider society in which they live and on which they themselves have an effect. If as organisations and as a youth service across Wales we can make a reasonable attempt at completing the kind of table provided at 4.7.2 above, agreeing its categories and measures and then implementing them, we might just get there.

Rob Norris
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Appendix 1: Outcomes and Impact Assessment

Level	Scope	Criterion	Timescale	Method
1. System	Welsh Government	Aggregate of Levels 2, 3 & 4		
		Participation		
		% change in participation	Over 5 years	
		Cost-Benefit Ratio	For previous year	
		Achievement of WG objectives		
	Voluntary Sector	Aggregate of Levels 2, 3 & 4 for sector		
		Participation	For previous year	
		% change in participation	Over 5 years	
		Volunteer numbers	For previous year	
		% change in volunteer numbers	Over 5 years	
		Cost-Benefit Ratio	For previous year	
		Estimated Multiplier (leverage using public funds)	For previous year	
	Statutory Sector	Aggregate of Levels 2, 3 & 4 for LA sector		
		Aggregate of Levels 2, 3 & 4 for vol orgs funded		
		Participation for LA sector	For previous year	
		% change in participation	Over 5 years	
		Participation for vol orgs funded	For previous year	
		% change in participation	Over 5 years	
		% of WG funding expended	For previous year	
		Cost-Benefit Ratio	For previous year	
		Estimated Multiplier (leverage using public funds)	For previous year	
2. Organisation	CWVYS	Aggregate of Levels 2, 3 and 4 for vol sector orgs		
		Number of members	Current year	
		% change in number of members	Over 5 years	
		% of WG funding expended	For previous year	
		Cost-Benefit Ratio	For previous year	
		Estimated Multiplier (leverage using public funds)	For previous year	
		Achievement of Operational Plan objectives	For previous year	As listed
	Organisation (a)	Aggregate of Levels 2, 3 and 4 for Organisation (a)		

		Participation	Current year	
		% change in participation	Over 5 years	
		% of public funds received	For previous year	
		Cost-Benefit Ratio	For previous year	
		Estimated Multiplier (leverage using public funds)	For previous year	
		Achievement of Operational Plan objectives	For previous year	As listed
<i>(Level 3)</i>		Achievement for youth workers	Over 5 years	
<i>(Level 4)</i>		Participation of young people	Current year	
		% change in participation	Over 5 years	
		Achievement for young people		Soft Skills
				Education record
				Employment record
				Self-report
				Observation
				Stakeholder reports
				Other statistical data
	Organisation (b)	etc		
	Local Authority (a)	Aggregate of Levels 2, 3 & 4 for LA sector		
		Aggregate of Levels 2, 3 & 4 for vol orgs funded		
		Participation for LA sector	For previous year	
		% change in participation	Over 5 years	
		Participation for vol orgs funded	For previous year	
		% change in participation	Over 5 years	
		% of WG funding expended	For previous year	
		Cost-Benefit Ratio	For previous year	
		Estimated Multiplier (leverage using public funds)	For previous year	
		Achievement of LA objectives		As listed
<i>(Level 3)</i>		Achievement for youth workers	Over 5 years	
<i>(Level 4)</i>		Participation of young people	Current year	
		% change in participation	Over 5 years	
		Achievement for young people		Soft Skills

	Local Authority (b)	etc		
	Other organisations	etc		