



End of Year Report: Workforce Development Project for the Youth Work Sector in Wales

This report provides an end of year overview of the Workforce Development Project, managed by the Workforce Development Officer for the youth work sector in Wales. It highlights progress made during the year in strengthening workforce development infrastructure, expanding access to training and qualifications, supporting the voluntary youth work sector, and establishing the foundations for longer-term delivery through the Youth Work Training Academy for Wales and the new Workforce Development Group, which reports to ETS.

1. Introduction and Context

The Workforce Development Project has continued to support delivery of the wider vision set out in the Youth Work Strategy for Wales, particularly the aim that voluntary and paid professional youth work staff are supported throughout their careers to improve practice. During the year, the project has focused on building a more systematic and sustainable approach to workforce development, aligned with the Workforce Development Plan for the Youth Work Sector in Wales and supported through Welsh Government investment in training, qualifications and professional learning.

Delivery of the programme is undertaken on behalf of the Workforce Development Plan and is set out each year through an annual delivery plan. This provides a more detailed and practical framework for implementation, outlining the key deliverable actions, timescales and associated risks, and ensuring that activity is planned and monitored in a way that is specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound.

2. Project Overview

The Workforce Development Officer has worked with both the WDIPG and WDG to coordinate delivery across a range of priorities for the youth work sector in Wales. This has included supporting the development of the Youth Work Training Academy for Wales, coordinating a programme of accredited and non-accredited learning opportunities, widening access to qualifications for practitioners and volunteers, and helping to transition workforce development governance arrangements from the Workforce Development Implementation Participatory Group to the Workforce Development Group. Throughout the year, the emphasis has been on ensuring that training provision is responsive to identified sector need, geographically accessible, and inclusive of both local authority and voluntary sector practitioners.



The project has also played an important role in strategically developing workforce development across the sector through active participation in a range of strategic groups and by supporting organisations to strengthen their approach to qualifications and professional learning. This has helped ensure that workforce development remains connected to sector priorities, responsive to organisational need and focused on creating sustainable progression routes for practitioners. In addition, targeted support was provided to students from North Wales who had expected to begin the BA Youth and Community programme at Wrexham University, before the programme was suspended for a further 12 months despite learners already being enrolled. Learners were supported to access the programme at UWTSD Carmarthen Campus instead, where they are now enjoying their learning experience and continuing their professional journey.

3. Training and Participation Summary

The training programme delivered during the year demonstrates a significant level of activity and reach across Wales. A total of 29 courses were delivered, with 635 participant attendances recorded overall. Of these, 424 participants were from local authorities, 232 were from the voluntary sector, and 68 were recorded as 'other' participants. Delivery methods included 7 in-person courses, 17 online courses and 4 blended courses. The programme included 14 accredited opportunities alongside a substantial non-accredited professional learning offer, reflecting a balanced approach between formal progression routes and topical continuing professional development.

Measure	Total
Total courses delivered	29
Total participant attendances	635
Participants from local authorities	424
Participants from the voluntary sector	232
Other participants	68
In-person courses	8
Online courses	17
Blended courses	4
Accredited courses	14

4. Development of the Youth Work Training Academy for Wales

One of the most important areas of progress this year has been the continued development of the Youth Work Training Academy for Wales. The Academy has



strengthened its role as a vehicle for coordinated workforce development, offering a structured and visible programme of qualifications, training and professional learning opportunities for practitioners across the sector. Through this model, the project has helped move workforce development away from isolated or short-term opportunities towards a more coherent and strategic national offer. The Academy has also created a clearer entry point for practitioners seeking accredited qualifications, leadership development and specialist topical training.

The range of provision coordinated through the Academy during the year included accredited qualifications such as the Level 2 Award in Youth Work Principles, the Level 3 Certificate in Youth Work Practice and Level 4 Leadership and Management, alongside specialist and responsive learning on themes including youth homelessness, political engagement, digital practice, safeguarding-related issues, elective home education, vaping, gangs and radicalisation, podcasting and suicide prevention. This breadth of delivery has supported both workforce entry and progression, while also responding to emerging practice issues affecting young people and the practitioners who support them, as outlined in the Training Needs Survey 25/26.

The Academy has also begun to explore more innovative and accessible approaches to learning and engagement. This has included the use of podcasts featuring a range of practitioners from across the sector, alongside short-form digital content such as YouTube Shorts, TikTok and Instagram Reels to share learning, raise awareness and increase the visibility of workforce development opportunities. Promotion of training and resources has also been strengthened through a variety of channels, including the Accelerating newsletter, which now has over 500 subscribers, a WhatsApp channel, a Discord server and wider social media platforms. Together, these approaches have helped extend the reach of the project and engage practitioners through formats and platforms that reflect contemporary communication and learning preferences.

As well as offering training, the Training Academy is also committed to mentoring colleagues across a range of subjects to help embed learning into practice. This approach has been trialled through follow-up support for practitioners using podcast equipment after training and through guidance on setting up a Discord server. This kind of practical mentoring extends the impact of formal training by helping practitioners

Not all training during the year was delivered directly by the Training Academy itself (34.48% of training). 65.42% of training was delivered by partner organisations under the Training Academy brand, helping to create a central and trusted base for workforce development. This approach has enabled the Academy to widen the range of opportunities available while maintaining a coherent identity for training and making it easier for practitioners to access provision through a recognised and reliable national offer.



build confidence, apply new skills in real settings and continue developing beyond the classroom or workshop environment.

5. Youth Work Qualifications delivery

A key priority during the year has been supporting the voluntary youth work sector to access recognised qualifications, particularly the Level 3 Certificate in Youth Work Practice. Supporting voluntary sector practitioners to achieve this qualification is important for strengthening professional confidence, improving consistency of practice, and creating clearer progression routes into the wider youth work profession. Four Youth Work qualification providers were commissioned to deliver the Level 3 Certificate in Youth Work Practice across four cohorts, supporting a total of 48 learners. As a result, 48 practitioners will be able to register with the EWC as Youth Support Workers. This additional funding from the Welsh Government followed concerns raised by CWVYS about the new definition of youth work set out in the strengthened Legislative Framework.

Within the Training Academy the Level 3 was delivered across multiple locations and delivery models, including South Wales, Conwy and Ynys Môn, helping to improve accessibility for learners in different parts of the country. Across the Level 3 cohorts, voluntary sector participation was strong, alongside local authority learners. This demonstrates both demand for the qualification and the value of a flexible delivery approach that includes in-person, blended and online options. The Academy model has been particularly valuable in enabling more flexible access for practitioners who may be working part-time or balancing study with frontline delivery. This has helped address barriers that can otherwise prevent voluntary sector staff and volunteers from engaging in formal qualification pathways.

6. Resource Development for the Youth Work Sector

Alongside direct training delivery, the project has also contributed to the development of workforce development resources for the youth work sector in Wales. This has included supporting the creation and shaping of learning content that can strengthen the quality, relevance and consistency of accredited provision. Key examples during the year include resource development linked to the Level 3 Youth Homelessness unit and the Level 4 Leadership and Management unit, both of which respond to important areas of practice and leadership within the sector.

Work has also progressed in relation to a Youth Work in Public Services unit that may sit alongside the VCSE programme. This reflects a wider commitment to ensuring that learning resources are not only available for current delivery but are also being developed in ways that support future workforce needs, partnership working and progression routes within the sector. Taken together, this area of work shows that the project is contributing not only to the delivery of training, but also to the underlying



curriculum and resource infrastructure needed to sustain high-quality youth work workforce development in Wales.

7. Transition from the Workforce Development Implementation Participatory Group to the Workforce Development Group

Another significant development during the year has been the renewal of the Workforce Development Implementation Participatory Group which shifted into the Workforce Development Group. This transition reflects the maturation of the workforce development agenda in Wales. The earlier group played a key role in shaping the Workforce Development Plan, progressing the skills and training audit, and informing the creation of the current training and qualification programme. The new Workforce Development Group provides a more sustainable and forward-looking structure for implementation, oversight and sector engagement as this work moves from planning into longer-term delivery.

The establishment of the Workforce Development Group provides an opportunity to maintain whole-sector involvement while strengthening accountability, prioritisation and coordination. It also ensures continuity for the progress already achieved, including implementation of the Workforce Development Plan, identification of workforce gaps, and development of funded responses to those needs. The Workforce Development Officer has had an important role in supporting this transition and ensuring that operational delivery remains connected to strategic oversight.

To support delivery of the Workforce Development Plan, 4 subgroups of the Workforce Development Group are hosted by ETS. These include Training and Learning, Scrutiny, Funding and Sustainability, Leadership and Management, and the newest subgroup, Promoting Youth Work as a Career and Profession. While each subgroup is at a different stage of development, all are intended to make an important contribution to progressing key areas of the workforce development agenda. Each subgroup is independently chaired by members of the Workforce Development Group, helping to ensure shared ownership, leadership and accountability across this programme of work.

8. Key Learning and Ongoing Challenges

The year has highlighted the value of a mixed delivery model, with online, in-person and blended approaches each playing an important role in widening access and meeting different learner needs. It has also reinforced the demand for both formal qualifications and shorter topical training that responds quickly to emerging issues in practice. At the same time, challenges remain around ensuring equitable access across all areas of Wales, sustaining practitioner engagement over time, and continuing to support the voluntary sector to participate fully in qualification pathways. Maintaining sufficient capacity and funding to build on this momentum will be essential.



Demand for training and learning opportunities has continued to grow, and the Training Academy is now delivering a broader and more ambitious offer within the same overall budget. While this demonstrates improved reach and value for money, it has also increased the administrative and development burden associated with coordinating provision, supporting learners, commissioning delivery, maintaining quality and responding to emerging sector needs. As the Academy continues to expand, this growing pressure on capacity and resilience will need to be recognised if the model is to remain sustainable.

9. Priorities for the Coming Year

Looking ahead, priorities include continuing to embed the Youth Work Training Academy for Wales as the national infrastructure for training and qualifications; expanding access to accredited learning, especially for the voluntary youth work sector; refining the training offer in response to sector feedback and identified gaps; and supporting the Workforce Development Group to drive implementation of the Workforce Development Plan. There will also be a continued need to evidence impact, monitor participation trends, and ensure that workforce development activity remains closely aligned with the needs of practitioners, organisations and young people across Wales.

In the next academic year, there will be a stronger focus on creating in-person opportunities for practitioners to share good and innovative practice. These sessions will be designed to support deeper and more meaningful conversations, enabling practitioners to reflect together on what is working well, exchange ideas and strengthen peer learning across the sector. Alongside this, the Training Academy will continue to strengthen its trainer base, ensuring that future delivery is shaped by and responsive to the outcomes of the Training Needs Survey. This will help build a broader and more sustainable pool of trainers able to deliver learning that reflects current sector priorities and identified areas of need.

Overall, this has been a productive year for the Workforce Development Project. The combination of strategic planning, strong training delivery, support for accredited progression, and renewed governance arrangements has created a stronger platform for future workforce development in the youth work sector in Wales. The contribution of the Workforce Development Officer has been central to this progress, helping connect strategic ambition with practical delivery and sector-wide engagement.

Thanks are due to Welsh Government and other strategic partners for their continued investment in and support for youth work workforce development in Wales.

Appreciation is also extended to the members of the WDIPG and WDG, the Training Academy and the many other providers who have contributed so generously with their time, knowledge and expertise to help drive the Workforce Development Project forward during the year.