

Meeting of:	Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	Monday, 07 October 2024
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Learning and Culture
Report Title:	Youth Service Update 2023-2024
Purpose of Report:	To update Members of the progress made by the Youth Service this year.
Report Owner:	Rhys Jones, Youth Engagement Manager Peter Williams, Youth Engagement Senior Officer
Responsible Officer:	Elizabeth Jones, Director of Learning and Skills
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	Councillor Rhiannon Birch, Cabinet Member for Education, Arts and the Welsh Language Morwen Hudson, Head of Standards and Provision Martin Dacey, Lead Officer for Social Inclusion
Policy Framework:	The recommendations of this report are within existing policy framework and budget.
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In March 2024, Estyn inspections were undertaken within the Youth Service and across the Local Government Education Service (LGES) more generally. Good practice from the Youth Service was highlighted in both reports, encompassing a single recommendation for the service in relation to the Welsh language offer. The relevant actions in relation to the recommendation are now embedded within the Service's Team Plan. The outcome of the Estyn report is evidence of the strength of the service and its impact upon the lives of young people across the LA. The Youth Service is awaiting formal ratification from Welsh Government of achievement of the Gold Youth Work Quality Mark, following a positive assessment in July 2024. This award further evidences the clear strengths of the service. The Youth Service has implemented changes to its delivery model, accreditation offer and management structure as part of its continued post-covid recovery. This ensures the best value for money, improves the quality of the service available to young people, and supports some of the most vulnerable young people in the Vale of Glamorgan. 	

- The Youth Service has raised concerns regarding the risks arounds its reliance upon grant funding, with reviews of Welsh Government Youth Support Grant funding taking place alongside the future uncertainty of the Shared Prosperity Fund.

Recommendations

1. That Members consider the progress made by the Youth Service in the last 10 months and note the ongoing developments, achievements and quality of the service. This is with a particular emphasis on the Estyn inspection report and the effective work towards the achieving the Bronze, Silver and Gold Quality Mark.
2. That Scrutiny Committee (Learning and Culture) receives a further progress update report in December 2025 regarding delivery, awareness of grants and any potential risks post March 2025.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. To ensure that Members of the Scrutiny Committee (Learning and Culture) continue to have oversight of Youth Service developments and delivery of service to vulnerable young people from across the Vale of Glamorgan.
2. To ensure Members have a clear understanding of both the targeted and universal aspects of the Youth Service and are informed to scrutinise decision making around key workstreams.

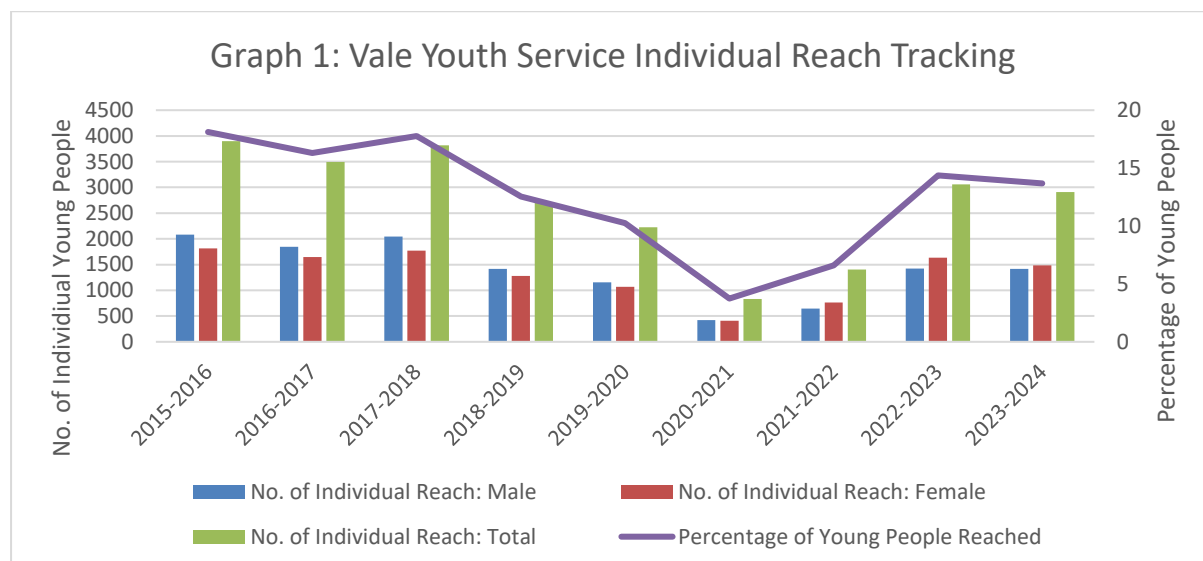
1. Background

- 1.1 The Youth Service delivers services for young people aged 11–25-year-old across the Vale of Glamorgan. This is delivered via a range of mechanisms including open-access youth clubs, youth voice and rights projects, detached, street-based and mobile projects, Strive (NEETS pre and post16), homelessness youth mentors, Youth Wellbeing mentors, SEREN pre and post 16, and rights ambassador worker. All the projects have a youth-led focus on the needs of young people in each area of the Vale of Glamorgan.
- 1.2 This report seeks to make Elected Members aware of the progress made in the Vale of Glamorgan and milestones achieved for those vulnerable young people in our communities.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1 The annual statistical release from National Audit Statistics has not been officially released to date. Based on data submitted within the audit, the number of young people registered and engaged with the Youth Service as a percentage of the youth population for the Vale of Glamorgan for 2023/24 was 13.7%. This represents a small decrease of 0.7% from 2022/23 which can be seen on Graph 1 below. We have seen a slight decrease due to staffing recruitment issues faced across Wales, however we have implemented a new coherent training route for new workers which will allow us to increase capacity across the Vale.

- 2.2** The below graph also identifies the significant increase in engagement post-Covid, as a result the service has now returned to pre-Covid levels in 2018/19



- 2.3** The Service received a very positive Estyn inspection report as the first official pilot of separate Youth Service inspection. There was one recommendation for the Service, in that the Service could look at developing opportunities for Welsh medium and bilingual youth work provision. The service currently funds Urdd Gobaith Cymru £50,000 to deliver a range of services linked to the WESP, so this will need to be reviewed further alongside staff training and recruitment of Welsh speaking youth worker.
- 2.4** The Service had a successful Gold Quality Mark for Youth Work assessment in July 2024. The initial report and recommendations have now been sent to Welsh Government for approval, which we are awaiting ratification. The Gold Quality Mark assessment reviews how the Service celebrates the success and recognises the achievements of young people, how it utilises management of information to support and direct the work of the Service, works in partnership with other organisations to increase the opportunities for young people in the Vale of Glamorgan, and the way in which the Service monitors and utilises resources effectively as part of its provision delivery.
- 2.5** Once official notice from Welsh government is received the Vale Youth Service will be the 10th Organisation in Wales to have achieved all levels of the Quality Mark.
- 2.6** The number of young people receiving a national accreditation with the Service in 2023/24 was 3%, this is an increase of 1.2% on 2022/23. As part of the new delivery model within the Service there was a review of the accreditation offer, which is the reason for the increase. The Service has also seen an increase of 0.15% in the number of young people receiving a local accreditation. This continues to be an area that the Service is prioritising, both in terms of its recording processes as well as the opportunities available for young people.
- 2.7** The Vale Youth Service has an 84% compliance rate in staff being qualified to Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) qualifications. The remaining six staff are

currently in training and working towards their JNC qualifications. These six staff have been employed on a part-time basis to support the recruitment issues that have already been discussed. As part of this, they are employed as unqualified staff with the aim of progressing into qualified positions once their training is complete. Through this change in recruitment, the Service has been able to react more effectively to the emerging service needs.

- 2.8** All staff undertake annual Safeguarding training, alongside other compulsory iDev training, as well as holding relevant First Aid certification. The service has continued to support student placements, as part of the Level 2 Certificate in Youth Work Practice, Level 3 Certificate in Youth Work Practice, degree and master's degree JNC qualifications: in partnership with Adult Learning Wales, Cardiff Metropolitan University and University of South Wales.
- 2.9** In addition, six youth workers have completed their Detached and Outreach Level 3 qualification enabling the team to increase the amount of detached youth work undertaken in the Vale of Glamorgan. This supports the work of the Service going forward as part of the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) delivery model, which requires detached and consultation within specific areas of the local authority.
- 2.10** The service supports young people through youth clubs, outdoor activities, after-school clubs and holiday provisions. The service has delivered 380 open access sessions in 2023/24 through a varied weekly programme based on consultation with its members. A new Curriculum Plan for 2022-25 is now being implemented which has seen an increase in the outdoor offer that is funded through the Welsh Government Youth Support Grant. As a result of this, 39 young people have worked towards their Bronze or Silver Duke of Edinburgh (DofE) Award within the Pencoedtre cluster this year. Further plans are in place to increase this offer for the 2024/25 academic year, by offering the opportunity for up to 60 young people to complete their Bronze or Silver Award.
- 2.11** In addition, successful school holiday programmes have been delivered throughout the year with activities such as wellbeing activities, trips, accredited courses, sports and cultural activities engaging 354 young people. These activities have been arranged, based on the findings from the Make Your Mark consultation within the Vale.
- 2.12** The Service continues to staff the 4 Wellbeing After-school clubs in Whitmore, St Cyres, Llantwit, and Stanwell comprehensive schools for pupils in years 7 and 8. During the last academic year, 115 pupils have benefitted from low level wellbeing support such as socialising, confidence building and having a sense of belonging within their school. Sessions focus on the '5 Ways to Wellbeing' and pupils can be referred by school staff based on SELFIE data. In response to lower numbers of engagement within St. Cyres, a review of the delivery model has been undertaken and from September 2024 a lunchtime provision is being implemented. Alongside this, developments of new lunchtime school provisions are being explored in Cowbridge School, Ysgol Bro Morgannwg and St. Richard Gwyn RC High School.

- 2.13** The Youth Service facilitates a number of inclusion and wellbeing projects such as 'Gloves in the Gym' (supporting young people with confidence and positive behaviour through physical fitness), 'I Am Me' (Wellbeing group for LGBTQ young people and allies) a 'Youthy 18 plus' (specialist older youth club) and 'Hive Guys' (a gardening project in partnership with other community groups) to support young people to develop life skills and improve their wellbeing. These have continued to operate successfully within the Pencoedtre cluster, as well as other areas in the Vale of Glamorgan.
- 2.14** The Service continues to implement its Participation Policy outlining the Youth Service's commitment to a rights-based practice in its youth work delivery. The Service provides a range of opportunities for young people to have their voices heard. These include the Vale Youth Council, Penarth Youth Action, the Vale Rights Ambassadors, Her Voice Wales project and the School Council Network. Members have attended 72 meetings and have accrued a total of 2,040 volunteering hours in 2023/24 which have been recognised through in-house certificates and vouchers.
- 2.15** The Vale Youth Council has begun working towards its objectives, following its formation in September 2022. Meetings have been held to elect the new Vale Member of UK Youth Parliament, completing training and development, as well as starting work on their campaign to raise awareness of Glass Children and ALN support. The group have also contributed to the local authorities Annual Delivery Plan and budget consultation.
- 2.16** The Her Voice Wales is a Girls' Rights group project aims to support young people to build the skills and confidence to become a champion of equality in their own communities and empower them to change perceptions and attitudes towards girls, so that girls can live free from gender inequality. From the work they have undertaken, Her Voice Wales won a national award at the Youth Excellence Awards in Llandudno for the quality of their partnership working. Alongside this achievement, Her Voice Wales continues to attend workshops, volunteer in their communities and complete accreditations relating to the work they are undertaking. A group of four young people are travelling to New Zealand as part of an international mobility programme funded through Taith, where they will be able to look at good practice and share their experiences in partnership with Plan International.
- 2.17** The Vale Rights Ambassadors Project provides young people in the Vale of Glamorgan with an opportunity to raise awareness of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the National Participation Standards. In 2023/24, 13 new Rights Ambassadors completed the Agored Cymru accreditation course in children's rights. The members deliver rights workshops to children, young people and adults across the LA. The project also supports primary and secondary schools with the Super and Student Ambassadors schemes from the Children's Commissioner for Wales. Alongside this work, the Rights Ambassadors have shared their views as part of various consultations, including the Monthly Matters consultation that is released through the Children's Commissioner for Wales.

- 2.18** The Youth Service also facilitates a secondary School Council Network (SCN). It aims to provide school council members from all secondary schools in the Vale with a platform to share information, learn more about the LA as well as engage in any consultation work. These meetings are hosted once a term and schools have a choice to attend in person or join online. The meetings are attended by the Cabinet Member for Education as well as senior leaders in the council. The SCN has impacted upon high profile workstreams such as the Transgender Toolkit the LA has launched as well as the Social Emotional Mental Health draft strategy.
- 2.19** The Youth Service has a longstanding partnership arrangement with Urdd Gobaith Cymru to provide Welsh language youth work in the Vale, and they feed into our local authority Welsh Education Strategic Plan (WESP). The Urdd provide a youth worker based at Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Morgannwg and provide a weekly Welsh language youth club, attended by 15-20 young people, they support gigs in the school itself, they work with the youth service to offer bilingual sessions and activities, including holiday events or bigger trips. They also provide Welsh language lunch club in 4 other schools, holiday and weekend trips and sessions for 131 young people, and supporting young people at the local Gwyl Fach y Fri event and the National Eisteddfod.
- 2.20** The Urdd have 8 young volunteers who have received local certification whilst an additional 83 young people have achieved an accreditation.
- 2.21** The Youth Service has partnered up with the YMCA Healthy Relationship Service, a specialist and confidential Sexual Health and Relationship Service, to provide targeted support to small groups of young people aged 11-18 in the Vale of Glamorgan in a range of different youth settings and schools. They also coordinate and develop the C-Card Scheme on behalf of the Youth Service in the Vale of Glamorgan. The C-Card scheme is a confidential scheme offering free sexual health items and information to support all young people aged 13-25 years. They have delivered C-Card Assessors training for 19 new assessors and 13 staff received refresher training. Whilst also moving to a delivery for the c-card within leisure centres within the Vale of Glamorgan.
- 2.22** As part of the review in the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (YEPF), and in line with a review within the Service, STRIVE was setup to combine the NEETs prevention and homelessness prevention provision. The homelessness prevention team have supported 44 young people through 2023/2024. Referral numbers dropped slightly in the first half of the year, but with additional promotion to schools, internal and external partners, this increased in the second half of the year. Further work is ongoing to increase awareness and partnership working within the area, to include closer working with housing colleagues.
- 2.23** The STRIVE pre-16 aspect works within all Vale secondary schools with learners identified as 'at risk' of becoming NEET post16 utilising the early identification tool via school and SIMS data. Through mentoring and coaching the learners work towards bespoke support and informal learning from BTEC SWEET qualifications, or delivery of ACU or Highfields awards. This provision is now funded under Shared Prosperity Funding, which is due to run until March 2025.

- 2.24** The STRIVE post-16 support works with Careers Wales to identify those learners who are classed as NEET or who are unknown to services. The impact of this team can be seen within the Youth Engagement and Progression update report which is also on this agenda.
- 2.25** The Wellbeing Service is funded by Families First and a team of mentors provides wellbeing support to young people aged 10-16 referred through the Families First Advice Line who have experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). The Wellbeing Service received 197 referrals in 2023/24 and delivered 1375 mentoring sessions. Mentoring interventions have been delivered face-to-face, one-to-one and to groups during the school term, in the community through outdoor sessions, wellbeing walks and supporting young people to attend youth clubs and community groups. '5 Ways to Wellbeing' workshops were delivered to school staff in the Vale of Glamorgan, 200 staff benefitted from these workshops. The team has continued to deliver Mental Health First Aid training, 33 school staff and professionals were trained in 2023/24.
- 2.26** The service, in partnership with Vale Peoples First, are running a weekly Inclusive Youth Club for young people with additional learning needs aged 11-16yrs. 30 learners with a range of protected characteristics are currently undergoing a range of informal learning opportunities utilizing 'healthy living' in order to gain nationally recognised qualifications; over time with enhanced support, confidence building and skill building of staff we aim to transition learners into open access provisions, enabling learners to access many more opportunities available to them. The partnership is growing, and we are currently reviewing the provision to enable wider scope for us to collaboratively run an 11-17 club alongside a new 18-25yr old club for those with additional learning needs, building on the current Youthy18+ provision.
- 2.27** The service continues to lead on the Seren network (WG initiative dedicated to supporting Wales's most able state educated learners into leading Universities), There were a total of 1,529 Seren learners registered at the start of the 2023/24 academic year. Support has been in place with a clear workplan for university outreach teams and external providers such as Positively You and The Brilliant Club to support young people, teachers and parents through a variety of workshops, summer schools and online masterclasses in certain subject areas. Regional work has been undertaken with Cardiff Council to provide sector themed experience days in Cardiff University, which young people have been able to positively engage with.
- 2.28** The service has worked with Ethnic Minority & Youth Support Team Wales (EYST) to consult young people from the global majority as to how the youth service can engage and deliver services that meet need and encourage more young people from the global majority to engage in our clubs and activities. We are currently reviewing proposals with EYST on different models of delivery we can adopt in the Vale, this will fall alongside wider training for staff and volunteers.

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

- 3.1** Reducing the percentage of young people from becoming NEET & Homeless is set out in the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework and the Welsh Government Child Poverty Strategy. It helps support the national and local indicator of percentage of young people in education, employment, or training, under the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015.
- 3.2** Collaboration takes place with internal and external partners including agencies, education and training providers, Careers Wales, Urdd, Third Sector Partners, local businesses, Charities and Welsh Government, to help meet the wellbeing objective.

4. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 4.1** Climate change and nature implications affect young people accessing employment or education. The Corporate Plan 2020-2025 Objectives including 'to support learning, employment, and sustainable economic growth', is relevant to the work in relation to climate change and economical use of natural resources.
- 4.2** Most meetings with partners, stakeholders and internal staff are held over Microsoft Teams to help minimise transport between meeting locations and impact on emissions.
- 4.3** By using digital management of information systems within the LA, we can move towards a paperless service. To support this work, the Youth Service are undertaking impact assessments to use digital methods for consent to reduce the carbon footprint further.
- 4.4** With the implementation of the wider electric pool car strategies from the Council, it is expected that these will be used, once available, along with carpooling with other staff when available to attend face-to-face meetings.

5. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 5.1** Current core and grant funding 2024/25 (not including central recharges-as now coded centrally) totals £2,027,233.
- 5.2** The funding of the Youth Service is currently split between 60% grant funding and 40% core funding, with the grant funding increasing by 7% in 2024/25. The additional grant funding allocation from Welsh Government is not guaranteed beyond the end of 2025 which makes forward planning difficult. This is being utilised to enhance existing provision rather than creating projects which are not sustainable. This is alongside the additional SPF funding we also receive of which is not guaranteed post March 2025.

- 5.3** One member of staff who are undertaking participation work in line with the Council's Public Engagement Strategy have been funded by Youth Service reserves up until 2025 which is not sustainable in the longer term. There is no additional funding at present to continue this participation work in the longer term. The impact is that this will significantly restrict the service's ability to deliver this work.

Employment

- 5.4** Grant funding makes up 55% of the youth service staffing costs which increases risk as grants are not sustainable.
- 5.5** Recruitment into the service has been a challenge locally and is consistent with the national recruitment situation. Work with Human Resources and the Legal team is ongoing recruit unqualified staff who may have other equivalent qualifications and relevant experience of working with young people in other settings and provide them with the opportunity to become a qualified youth support worker through a coherent route of continued professional development. This will support to become registered with the Education Workforce Council as qualified Youth Workers.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 5.6** The Vale of Glamorgan Youth Service's use of the CAPITA ONE management information system to ensure monitoring of equality of access to open access and targeted intervention opportunities being delivered. Close working takes place with the equalities team to identify training for staff and volunteers to develop their awareness of working with these vulnerable groups.
- 5.7** Additional evidence is given annually to support the numbers of learners accessing the service from vulnerable groups, through review the service has redeveloped an inclusive youth club called Hwb Club to support 25 learners with additional learning needs on a weekly basis, this has included local and nationally recognised qualification and achievement.

6. Background Papers

- 6.1** Estyn: [Inspection report The Vale of Glamorgan Youth Service 2024](#)