

Youth work practitioners¹

National Education Workforce survey 2021

Analysis of open text comments



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

1. Workload

Overall themes from open text comments - workload

- decrease the amount of administrative tasks and the time spent on them;
- additional funding to increase the amount of youth workers;
- increased amount of working hours for youth workers.

Total number of responses: 221

Total number of open text responses: 44

In response to:

Question 5b - Do you have practical suggestions on what changes would help to make your workload more manageable?

Analysis of comments relating to the main workload themes:

1.1. Decrease the amount of administrative tasks and the time spent on them (16 comments)

- The administrative side of the role should be decreased, particularly the amount of paperwork and meetings.

Examples

Paper work take up a lot of time then inputting data on to the computer can be very time consuming.

Less time spent on administrative tasks. Too many last minute tasks being asked to complete which detracts from actual job itself.

1.2. Additional funding to increase the amount of youth workers (7 comments)

- Additional funding allows the sector to plan for future projects, hire extra staff and improve the service.

Examples

Longer term funding, more sustainable core funding.

More core funding for youth managers to allow for extra time to be spent planning and supervising.

1.3. Increased amount of working hours for youth workers (7 comments)

- The amount of contracted hours is currently insufficient for the workload/caseload.
- Low number of contracted hours encourages staff turnover.

Examples

¹ Please note, qualified youth workers and qualified youth support workers have been combined.

There is work that needs to be completed outside of these hours to work effectively in the role which I do not do because it falls outside of paid hours.

Contracts with more hours for youth workers rather than low hour contracts that encourage a high turnover rate.

2. Workload - Delivering blended / remote learning

Overall themes from open text comments – delivering blended / remote learning

Additional workload:

- impact of COVID-19 pandemic - every aspect of the work more difficult;
- administration requirements and / or paperwork;
- insufficient staffing - in particular those trained to a senior level;
- shift away from young people to performance targets;
- insufficient contracted hours for the workload/caseload.

Practical suggestions for improvement:

- more quality support from services to help young people;
- over the phone support for young people;
- additional staff to deal with administrative tasks;
- more staff who are youth work/teaching and quality assurance qualified.

Total number of responses: 221

Total number of open text responses: 90

Total practical suggestions for improvement provided: 26

In response to:

Question 8 If your workload has increased slightly or significantly [as a result of delivering blended learning during the Covid-19 pandemic], please explain what the additional work has been and any practical suggestions on how this could be improved.

Analysis of comments relating to the remote / blended learning theme

2.1. Impact of COVID-19 pandemic - every aspect of the work more difficult (50 comments)

- Development of online / blended learning material.
- New safeguarding measures that have been implemented.
- Providing emotional support for young people during a tough time.
- Impact of the pandemic on personal circumstances.

Examples

Development of blended learning and new safety guidance that has to be interpreted and implemented to ensure safe buildings, practice and staff.

More young people needing support particularly around emotional well-being/mental health.

2.2. Administration requirements and / or paperwork (35 comments)

- Less face-to-face contact has meant more emails, more meetings (particularly video calls).
- Completing paperwork digitally, i.e. risk assessments, has presented issues.
- Increase in referrals during the pandemic.

Examples

Everything is taking longer to do things remotely. Rather than just doing face to face work, finding ways to complete forms etc is harder and taking longer.

Online session planning, and contacting Young people for consent forms and assessments.

2.3. Insufficient staffing - in particular those trained to a senior level (8 comments)

- Staff absences or cuts due to the pandemic, coupled with absences linked to the virus, have led to an increased workload.

Examples

Less staff so covering shifts.

More staff support required.

2.4. Shift away from young people to performance targets (5 comments)

- Increased organisational paperwork and duties has taken some emphasis away from helping young people.

Examples

Increased organisational workload but not with young people.

The pressure of reaching out to young people through unfamiliar platforms but still trying to reach the expectations of the organisation to reach targets.

2.5. Insufficient contracted hours for the workload/caseload (2 comments)

- Current contracted hours are insufficient for the increased workload caused by the pandemic.

Examples

Since COVID and the assumption that working from home somehow gives you more time, I have been asked to be involved with more research and have needed to support my staff a lot more.

During the pandemic, our line management duties included making calls to staff to check on well-being. Keeping in touch with everyone proved difficult and was very time consuming.

Analysis of comments relating to practical suggestions on how blended/remote learning can be improved:

2.6. More quality support from services to help young people (9 comments)

- The pandemic has simultaneously increased the need for services and decreased the quality, i.e. virtual meetings rather than face-to-face.
- Work with other agencies to maintain standards.

Examples

Wellbeing of young people greatly affected. More services and support required.

Face to face hours and digitally to support young people struggling to cope mentally with school work home life and restrictions/loss.

2.7. Over the phone support for young people (5 comments)

- Ensure there is designated time to contact young people, as it is proving much more difficult to engage during the pandemic.

Examples

Ensuring the young people I support have regular welfare calls, support with digital learning and addressing other barriers that may arise.

.... Meetings have become weekly instead of monthly due to young people requesting this more regularly since we moved online. We have also added support groups in order to alleviate mental health issues, loneliness and isolation amongst our young people. We also set up a phone line for young people to contact us if they just want to chat for 15 minutes.

2.8. Additional staff to deal with administrative tasks (4 comments)

- Youth workers are now expected to take on duties that are outside their job remit – dedicated staff to undertake these duties would help ease the workload.

Examples

More staff for admin duties.

More resources in terms of increasing staff capacity and additional funding from Welsh Government due to Covid pandemic is essential.

2.9. More staff who are youth work/teaching and quality assurance qualified (3 comments)

- Due to the pandemic and lack of funding, the number of qualified youth workers has decreased.

Examples

Moving youth work qualifications on line and quality assuring the outcomes has taken more time. This could be improved with more staff who are youth work qualified and teaching and quality assurance qualified.

.... changing areas of work continuously + ensuring safe practices for digital work with young people.

3. Professional learning

Overall themes from open text comments professional learning

- mental health and wellbeing –specifically homelessness, drug misuse awareness, domestic abuse, trauma recovery, LGBTQ, gender and identity;
- management/leadership/multi-agency/partnership working;
- ICT skills including digital/blended learning;
- education, PCGE, outdoor/creative therapies;
- higher level youth work qualifications;
- improving Welsh language skills;
- marketing, promotion, engaging young people.

Total number of responses: 221

Total number of open text responses: 111

In response to:

Question 15 In which areas would you welcome further development to help you be a more effective education professional? (please list up to three areas)

Analysis of comments relating to the Professional Learning themes

3.1. Mental health and wellbeing –specifically homelessness, drug misuse awareness, domestic abuse, trauma recovery, LGBTQ, gender and identity (33 comments)

- More training courses specifically catered to dealing or discussing the above issues with young people.

Examples

More training bases around current issues such as domestic violence in the home, mental health training, drug awareness training.

Supporting young people's mental/emotional health. Youth violence. Youth domestic abuse.

3.2. Management/leadership/multi-agency/partnership working (22 comments)

- Effective training to improve leadership and management skills – most requests are general but some request training that is specific to youth work.
- Improved relations and communications with other agencies and partnerships.

Examples

Strategic Leadership and multiagency working.

I would love more training on management and leadership specifically to youth work.

3.3. ICT/Digital skills including digital/blended learning (20 comments)

- Current level of IT skills among youth workers is inadequate for delivering blended learning.
- Access to new and better could also improve the delivery of blended learning.

Examples

New and emerging technologies to support Youth Work delivery.

Due to COVID-19 and us doing everything digitally I have struggled as I am not very technically minded. However I have persevered with it and I'm getting better.

3.4. Education, PGCE, outdoor/creative therapies (11 comments)

- Freedom to undertake education qualifications, such as PGCE.
- To diversify the skillset with outdoor education or creative therapies.

Examples

Education qualification - Youth work plays a huge part in school education. Youth work would be more recognised within schools if some members of youth workers/staff were qualified teachers operating at the same level of teaching as teachers. I personally would like to complete a PGCE - secondary, however this isn't possible due to the commitment in placement and also that subjects don't fit in with the new curriculum health and wellbeing section that youth work plays such a large part of and could deliver greatly.

Outdoor education.....something new and interesting.

3.5. Higher level youth work qualifications (11 comments)

- Specific development targeted at current role i.e. working towards a Level 3 youth work qualification if they already have a Level 2 qualification.

Examples

Grant/loan to help pay for further learning. I did Level 2 Youth Work Award in my own time but haven't been able to fit a Level 3 in due to placement hours required on top of my work.

CPD in YCW should be legislative and part of professional registration.

3.6. Welsh language (4 comments)

- To further Welsh language training specific to the role.
- In some cases, Welsh language development has been halted due to Covid-19.

Examples

Build my skills in the Welsh language.

Welsh Language Training (on hold due to covid).

3.7. Marketing, promotion, engaging young people (4 comments)

- Guidance on how to boost the profile of the services offered and encourage young people to engage.

Examples

Marketing and promotion (digital delivery).

Digital youth work delivery. Marketing / Publicity and how to target young people.