

# **THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING ACTION PLAN FOR WALES AND THE YOUTH SERVICE - Some comments and suggestions.**

## **1. Where are we with ETAP?**

The National Assembly has agreed the main points in ETAP. Primary legislation will be introduced through the Learning and Skills Bill to establish a National Council for Education and Training for Wales (CETW). This will have the duty to secure and fund all post-16 education and training facilities in Wales, except H.E.

Below CETW there will be 4 Regional Advisory Panels and Regional Offices, with their running and programme costs controlled by the Council. (This was seen as a concession to the TECs, who wanted a much stronger regional dimension).

The Regional Offices will provide secretariat support to the local Consortia (CCETs). There will be about 15 of these and their aim will be to establish local partnerships to bring about better provision for post-16 learners.

From April 2002 the whole structure will be in place and responsibility for funding all sections of post-16 education and training will be in the hands of the CETW. It is envisaged that informal Community Consortia will take shape well before then.

## **2. The Youth Service and ETAP**

There is little, if any reference to the Youth Service in ETAP. Some of the functions and funding relating to young people which is currently in the hands of the TECs will be transferred to local authorities (Youth Access Initiative) and the new Careers Wales. But much will go to the CETW.

It would seem that the assumption is that the youth service would develop entirely via the new statutory provision that will be placed on local authorities through the Welsh clauses of the Learning and Skills Bill. We would expect that local authorities would develop partnerships with the voluntary sector and develop an holistic set of support services for young people. There would be, I imagine, an emphasis on those young people who are experiencing, or at risk of experiencing social exclusion.

## **3. Is this enough?**

While we would welcome the new statutory base for youth service provision, there are a number of issues which need to be addressed with regard to ETAP:-

- (i) I would expect that part of the brief of the 'new'<sup>1</sup> youth service will be to focus on reducing and preventing social exclusion. Similarly, ETAP sees this as a major priority for lifelong learning and argues that the best way to do this is to help the socially excluded to become more employable. There does seem to be an area of common ground which is acknowledged by the Wales Youth Agency in its document on the EU structural funds and by, for example, Prof. John Andrews in his recent paper on the FE sector and social exclusion and young people.

The youth service is generally regarded as a provider of informal education. The recent ESTYN report on voluntary youth work made the point by entitling the report 'Aspects of Lifelong Learning'. If this is the case, should there not be some kind of relationship with other educational providers included within ETAP?

In some local authorities adult education/community education and youth work are closely linked. Adult education clearly comes under ETAP and if youth work has no recognised relationship, potential delivery problems may arise.

- (iv) Recently, the Wales Youth Agency was asked to nominate a representative to the Partnership Board of the new HRD European Unit. This will develop HRD initiatives throughout the Objective 1 areas of west Wales and the Valleys. To a large extent the Objective 1 structures will reflect the ETAP structures and the HRD unit acknowledges that youth work has a place within the lifelong learning remit. Consistency?

#### 4. Some Other Points

As a counter to the above, at least 3 points are worth keeping in mind:-

- (i) ETAP has been agreed by the National Assembly and there will be no further changes of substance.
- (ii) We need to recognise the hybrid nature of the youth service and the fact that some would differentiate between informal and formal learning. Also, the youth service is by no means only post-16.
- (iii) Some adult educators are not entirely happy with the ETAP arrangements because they are concerned about an economic emphasis on 'training' rather than a broader approach to lifelong learning.

#### 5. What should we do?

Notwithstanding the above, I believe it would be helpful for youth service provision if we could secure some kind of positive relationship with other providers who are within the ETAP structure. If, however, funding for the 'maintained' youth service, in whatever form it develops, will continue to go directly from the National Assembly to the local authorities, it would be difficult for the youth service to argue for representation on the CETW or even for full membership of the CCETs. It has been emphasised that CCETs will be consortia of 'providers'.

However, the Assembly has recognised that a wide range of organisations "have an interest in post-16 education and training at a local level" and it has been argued that, when appropriate, higher education institutions should be represented as "associate members". This may have created a precedent for the youth service to argue for involvement. I believe it is an option we could well consider.

*Wayne David*  
*Wales Youth Agency Policy Adviser*  
*27 March 2000*