

*Youth Work and Schools
Partnership Programme*

Final Report
March 2003

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Youth Work and Schools Partnership Programme

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YOUTH WORK AND SCHOOLS PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME

FINAL REPORT

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. BACKGROUND.....	1
PROJECTS FUNDED 1998 - 2002	2
3. APPROACHES AND AGENDAS	3
4. ACHIEVEMENTS	4
YOUNG PEOPLE	4
YOUTH WORKERS.....	5
SCHOOLS AND OTHER AGENCIES.....	7
5. QUOTES	8
6. RECOMMENDATIONS	9
CONCLUSION	10
APPENDIX 1	11
INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS - A SUMMARY OF AIMS AND STRATEGIES.....	11

YOUTH WORK AND SCHOOLS PROGRAMME

End of Programme Report

1. INTRODUCTION

This report was compiled using information from the end of project reports, interim reports.

The report gives an overview of the programme from its inception in 1998 to its conclusion in 2003 with recommendations and implication for youth work practice.

2. BACKGROUND

In 1998 the Welsh office announced additional resources for the Wales Youth Agency to administer 8 initial projects in 8 local authority areas; and in due course to include all 22 unitary authorities.

The projects were designed to establish and utilise partnership arrangements to respond to local needs, with particular regard to issues of achievement; attendance; motivation and attitude of young people within secondary schools.

The major focus of the projects was directed towards those young people who were disengaged, or at risk of disengagement, from the formal education system. An *Estyn* report into these pilot projects noted that - '*Overall, projects have made a very positive contribution to reducing the numbers of pupils temporarily or permanently excluded from school.*' It was also noted that - '*School and youth work partnerships have proved successful in re-engaging young people in education*' with consequent improvement in attendance; attainment; self confidence and behaviour (*Estyn 2001*).

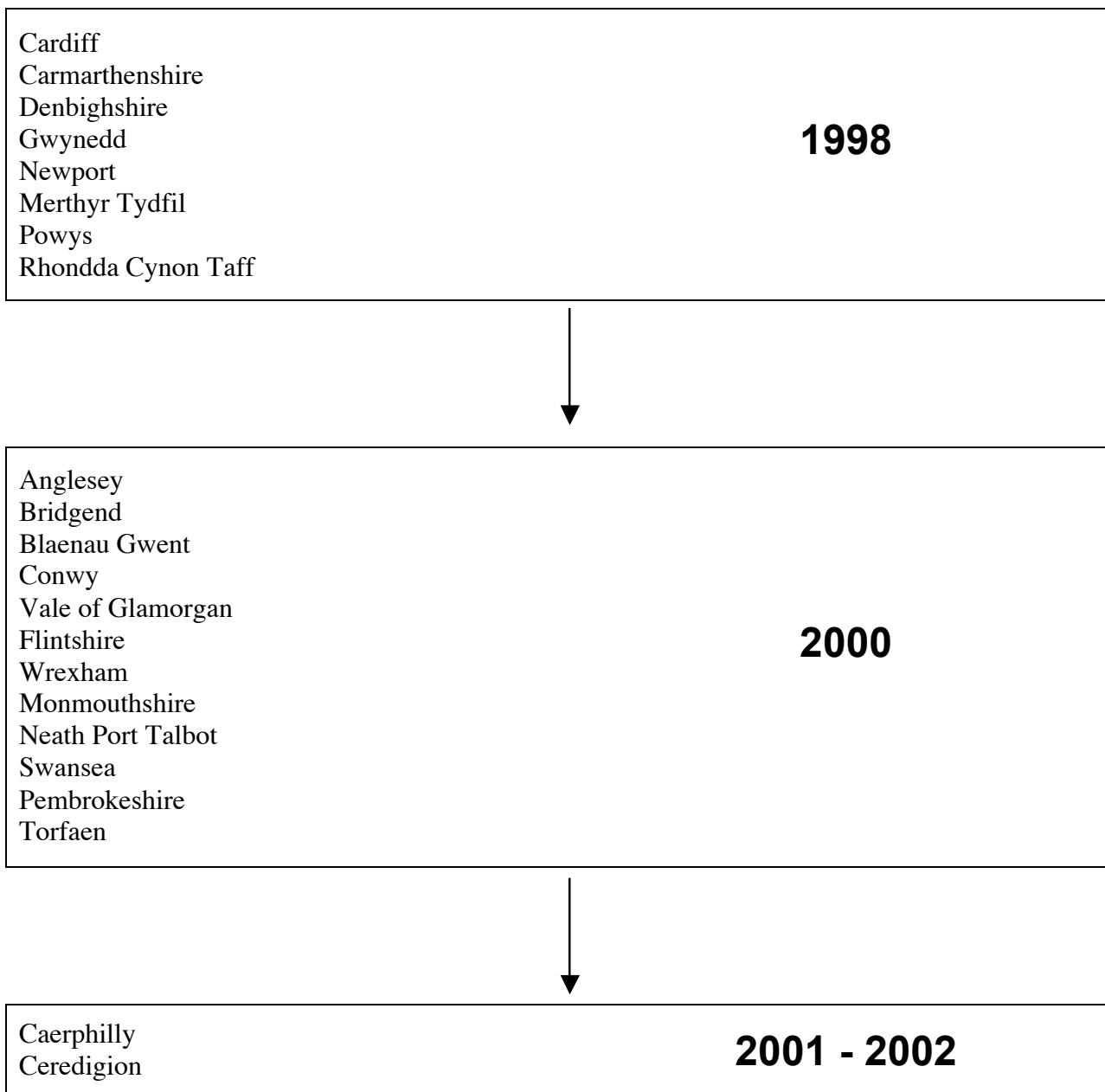
A detailed commentary and analysis of the work of these initial projects has already been undertaken and published by the Wales Youth Agency - '*Attitude; Attendance and Achievement*' (W.Y.A. June 2000).

Subsequent to this pilot programme all local authorities in Wales have developed youth work and Schools Partnership Programmes, some authorities have expanded their programmes significantly, others have maintained provision on a more limited scale, a small number of authorities have gained local funding to continue the provision beyond the time scale of national funding.

In many cases partnership working has extended beyond the original concept of school and youth work to include other support agencies including Education Welfare Services, Voluntary Sector providers and Further Education colleges (with youth workers also being placed within pupil support teams).

The range and variety of the projects outlined in this document demonstrates how in most cases project development has reflected a response to local needs and issues, as well as the range of opportunities available in different areas of Wales (see appendix one).

Projects Funded 1998 - 2002



3. APPROACHES AND AGENDAS

Whilst all the partnership programmes have broadly similar target groups, usually described in similar ways - 'young people who are, or at risk of, becoming disaffected with, or disengaged from mainstream education'. The approaches taken, and agendas followed show some commonality but also several key differences reflecting different philosophies. Perhaps this reflects the different perceptions of the purpose of such programmes by the various partners and the relative power they have in the partnership. Although most programmes state categorically that a key aim is the re-integration of pupils into mainstream education, it would appear that the enthusiasm with which this aim is pursued varies considerably from project to project. The experience of specialist truancy and withdrawal units in the 1970's and 1980's was that such facilities were used by many schools as dumping grounds for difficult pupils. It is clear from the outcomes of the programmes within this scheme that something much more positive is happening in terms of the quality of services offered, and the experiences being gained by the majority of young people involved. The reality is however, with a few exceptions, that re-integration into the school setting for many of these young people is unlikely, and it could be argued not necessarily in their best interests.

Within the projects in the partnership programme there appears to be three identifiable approaches:

- The development of an alternative curriculum in response to the needs of the young people.
- A negotiated programme delivered concurrently by the school and other providers with young people maintaining a part time presence in the school and attending other provision for the remainder of the week.
- School based provision with additional support to enable young people to follow the national curriculum.

The positive responses from young people would seem to indicate that all of these approaches can have beneficial outcomes, although some would appear to rest more easily with a youth work philosophy than others.

'I like doing alternative curriculum because we can choose what activities to do. The chance to do different work experiences which helps me to decide what I want to do when I leave school'

'It could help you with your attendance 'cause it's a fun working environment, and they give you breakfast, and you haven't got arrogant teachers, the lessons aren't always writing'.

'I get on with teachers better, I don't go head to head with them as much. More support is better. I feel better when I talk and I can calm down'.

In terms of outcomes, as suggested above, the approach adopted by the project does not appear to be crucial, what does appear to be important is a combination of the following factors:

- *A coherent and planned approach involving all parties in the partnership.*
- *An involvement of young people in making a positive choice to become participants.*
- *The development of an understanding of, and respect for, differing professional perspectives and practices.*
- *A commitment to encouraging young people to achieve, and the provision of appropriate 'across the board' support.*
- *Involvement of parents and gaining their support.*
- *A flexibility in the programme that allows for progress review and adjustment.*
- *Utilising and developing partnerships with a range of service providers and support agencies.*

4. ACHIEVEMENTS

Achievements can be categorised under various headings, and related to all participants in the programmes.

In terms of the young people involved this would include accreditation gained; changes in attitude; improved levels of self-esteem and confidence; and improved levels of attendance.

In terms of youth workers this would include positive developments in professional practice; an enhanced understanding of issues related to partnership working; a recognition of perspectives of, and problems faced by, coterminous professions; and the development of more rigorous systems of recording and evaluation.

For schools and other agencies involved this would include a greater understanding of the role of youth workers and a recognition of their professional expertise; an increased awareness that for some young people the formal environment of mainstream education is counter productive; and the development of a range of strategies to address the issue of disaffection.

Young People

In terms of measurable outcomes the scheme would appear to have had considerable success - over 900 OCN accredited certificates have been awarded; some 1500 young people have undertaken other forms of training, including for example:

Issue based workshops; work experience programmes; link courses with F.E. institutions; D of E awards; youth achievement awards and ASDAN awards amongst others. In addition there are

several examples where young people have successfully pursued core subjects within the national curriculum within a school based context.

All projects report positive changes in attitude amongst participants, this is evidenced not only by comments from project leaders, but also by improved attendance figures; comments by school staff; parents; and young people themselves:

- *'The provision of this scheme has been of enormous benefit to the students involved, there has been a significant improvement in both attitude and attendance'* (Head-teacher)
- *'The team provides a cross fertilisation of ideas, where teachers and youth workers work side by side, with complementary skills, to bring benefit to young people with difficulties with the disciplines of school life'* (Head of pupil support services)
- *'She is looking forward to going to college and getting her qualifications'* (Parent)
- *'My son's reading and writing has improved dramatically . . . he now comes home from school and talks enthusiastically about what he has done in the day'* (Parent)
- *'She is not so shy and now has a goal in life'* (Parent)
- *'I like doing the alternative curriculum because it's interesting and I like taking part in the activities'* (Year 10 pupil)
- *'It has made me more confident and I have improved my attendance'* (Year 11 pupil)
- *'My youth worker has made me realise how important school is for my future, I listen more in classes now and do my homework. My mum is pleased so things are better at home too'* (Year 9 pupil)

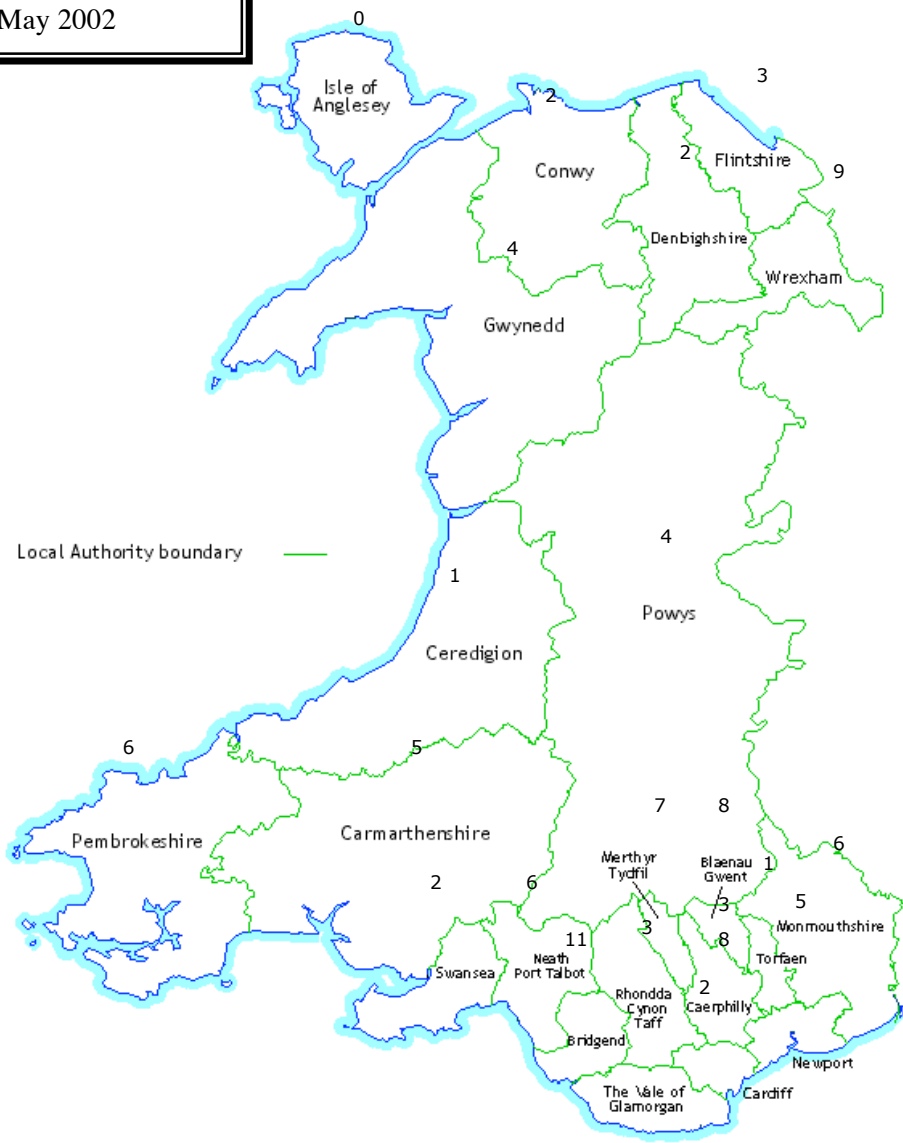
Youth Workers

There is considerable evidence of development of successful inter agency working and some good examples of youth workers developing positive relationships with the schools, although this would appear to be dependent, to some extent, on the youth workers either accepting and conforming to the school's ethos or gaining professional respect by demonstrating best youth work practice. In some cases positive outcomes have clearly altered initial perceptions of their role.

- *'Since the outset of the project the development of links with statutory and voluntary agencies has broadened and been sustained'*
- *'(The youth worker) has become an integral part of the school. Her confidentiality and trust is an asset to the pupils and has achieved a lot of success'* (Teacher)

- ‘After an initial period of ‘getting to know each other’ . . . I am beginning to feel more involved in the school’
- ‘ There is good and frequent communication between the two lead agencies . . . with combined presentation events of achievements to the girls families’
- ‘The benefits of networking can clearly be seen by referrals and work with other agencies’ (Info. Shop Manager)
- ‘As the improvement in the participants has become evident the attitude of other people is changing and becoming more positive’

**Map of
Youth Workers in Schools
May 2002**



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CartoGraphics: The National Assembly for Wales

Schools and Other Agencies

There is evidence that many of the schools involved are seeing the projects in a more positive light, and recognise the role that youth work can play in addressing the issue of disaffection. Some have adopted more flexible curriculum strategies and have involved youth workers and other agencies in delivering school based sessions. There are, with some notable exceptions, few examples of school staff working in a closely integrated way with the projects, other than delivering core skills elements of alternative curricula, or playing some part in referrals. This is probably an institutional rather than an individual problem and may reflect the concerns and priorities of mainstream education.

- *'As the project grows and becomes more effective the staff at the school are taking us more seriously and acknowledge the fact that this method is very effective in tackling the problems that they could not find answers to'*
- *'Teaching staff in the school and at the college are generally very supportive of the methods I have been using'*
- *'The school has an ethos that marries well with that of youth work in general. The staff and care workers have all been very supportive'*
- *'Proformas are used for subject teachers who can comment if children are having difficulties which can then be addressed by others'*
- *'The school has utilised several outside agencies to create a varied programme for the girls'*
- *'The views of the teaching staff and their attitudes towards the programme have become much more positive this year'*
- *'You have helped us as a school to take forward our thinking in a number of important areas'*

5. QUOTES

Many of the points made in section 4 are echoed in the ‘**Annual Report of Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales 2001 - 2002.**’ and in the ‘**Final Report on The Wales Youth Access Initiative**’, (Estyn 2002). Some of the key issues raised, with respect to this programme, are as follows:

- *Classroom assistants and youth workers are playing a bigger part in schools. Their work, particularly with those who are finding schoolwork difficult, is helping more pupils to gain confidence and make good progress in their learning. Behaviour support plans are working well to improve the behaviour of pupils who are likely to disrupt the work of other pupils’.*
- *‘Youth work projects often have a positive effect on young people who do not see the value of school. Many of the young people move on from the projects to courses in further education institutes. Some others look for training or for work’.*
- *‘Schemes where youth workers work with small groups of pupils have also improved attendance’.*
- *‘In projects based in schools the youth workers do a lot to help young people to improve their attitudes and learning’.*
- *‘Projects similar to those of the Youth Work and Schools Partnership Programme, where a youth worker is based in the school are more successful in keeping young people engaged with mainstream school life, than attempts to reintegrate young people once they have been out of the school setting for long periods of time’.*
- *‘The (Youth Access) initiative has improved understanding of disengaged young people and some changes in the attitudes of school staff have been observed. This is particularly the case in areas where the Youth Access activity is closely linked with the Youth Work and Schools Partnership programme’.*
- *‘(Youth Access)Projects which are more integrated into school life appear to be more successful in changing young people’s attitudes to school regimes, teachers and to other pupils. They also act as a catalyst for change within the school itself’.*
- *‘Projects in many areas are well established, and in a position, along with the Youth Work and Schools Partnership projects, and local youth services, to enter into extended partnerships for the support, development and progression to adulthood of young people throughout Wales’.*

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the generally successful outcomes of the various projects, and current proposals for a more vocationally orientated curriculum for those young people less suited to a traditional academic curriculum, it would appear that the concept of youth work and schools partnerships could have an important supportive role to play for a significant number of young people. In this context it is equally important to acknowledge that the partnership programmes do not just have a beneficial effect on those young people with whom it deals directly, but also has a positive effect on schools themselves and their ability to deliver the mainstream curriculum more effectively. The impact on the educational process of changing the attitudes of, or relocating, potentially disruptive pupils enables teachers to pursue their educative function in a more positive learning environment, rather than being managers of classroom conflict.

The programme has enabled the identification of those elements of practice that have led to successful outcomes, and areas of practice where improvement is desirable. Some of the issues raised are indicated in sections 3 and 5 above.

In terms of future practice the following recommendations need to be explored and developed:

- Sharing ‘Best Practice’

More needs to be done in this area, one successful conference has been held. The most effective projects were those with a closely integrated approach, then discussions at local; regional; or national level should include representatives of all partners in the process.

- Clarification of aims

All parties involved need to clarify the aims of each project, depending on the target group of young people. If re-integration of pupils into mainstream education is the primary aim then the most appropriate strategies to achieve this need to be evaluated and employed, on the other hand it may be that for some groups the provision of an alternative, but valid, curriculum is a more realistic option then strategies to implement this should be implemented.

- Training

It is apparent that the success of some projects has been dependent on the abilities of staff to work co-operatively and in a climate of mutual professional respect, with a shared understanding of principles and values. This cannot be left to chance, but should be developed by appropriate inter-professional training strategies to achieve this level of mutual understanding and co-operation as an essential part of future schemes. Training should also be available to address issues such as ‘behaviour support’, and supportive work with families. In those projects where youth workers are involved in the delivery of accredited courses then appropriate training, e.g. F.E.T.C. should be made available.

- Partnership working

Most of the successful schemes involved structured partnership working with regular meetings of youth workers and school staff, sometimes involving staff of other agencies, such meetings should be a regular and natural feature of future projects.

- Location of projects

The preferred location of projects should be determined by their agreed aim, re-integration is best facilitated by projects that are based within the school, the development of an alternative curriculum is perhaps more effective when it takes place outside the school context utilising other providers and the F.E. sector.

- Support and supervision

There are some instances where youth workers felt isolated and marginalised within the school situation, while much of this could be alleviated by some of the strategies outlined above, it is equally important that they be given adequate support and supervision by those responsible for their line management, wherever that is located.

CONCLUSION

The Youth Work and Schools Partnership programme has exceeded its initial aim and now as the map (page 8) demonstrates approximately 100 youth workers are now employed in schools as a direct result of the programme. It has raised the levels of attendance, attitude and achievement and kept those young people at risk of exclusion as close to education as possible.

There is continued commitment to the partnerships, and they have a headstart in providing education tailored to the needs of young people.

What is now needed is relevant training and support to ensure that the youth workers and youth work methods are not phased out and assimilated into the mainstream education culture, keeping the needs of the young people (learners) a priority.

The Youth Work and Schools toolkit and a training module have been written from the perspective of youth workers who were employed on the programme, both will endeavour to ensure that the perspective and values of the work will not be lost.

INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS - A SUMMARY OF AIMS AND STRATEGIES

Anglesey

The Open Door Project focussed on the school curriculum, developing alternative accreditation, providing counselling support for specific pupils and utilising reward systems for appropriate school based behaviour. Working within one school, the programme included work with individuals, groups, parents and the wider community.

Blaenau Gwent

The Alpha project is based in one school in the county and targeting year ten pupils who are unable to maintain themselves in mainstream education and training. Referrals are made via a consultative process involving the school, education welfare service, and project leader. Parents and pupils are also involved as voluntary participation is seen as the key to maintaining youth work principles and practice. Links with core subjects are maintained but an accredited alternative curriculum is a key element of the programme.

Bridgend

The Headway project worked with one school within the county and targeting year eleven pupils with low academic attainment or poor disciplinary records. Individual action plans are developed and pupils retain access to key elements of the national curriculum alongside a planned alternative curriculum that includes opportunities for work placements. Accredited programmes followed include O.C.N.; ASDAN; as well as COEA and GCSE. Parents are closely involved and regularly updated on young peoples' progress.

Caerphilly

Working with one designated school within the borough, utilising a needs-based approach linked closely to the Youth Work Curriculum Statement for Wales. The programme includes - confidence building; anger management; life skills; art based activities; outdoor pursuits and links with local F.E. college. Where possible training opportunities are accredited (D. of E.; O.C.N. etc.). Positive links have been developed with other support agencies.

Cardiff

Specifically focused on 'looked after' young people, some with significant learning difficulties. Delivered through individually negotiated targeted programmes of work offered in a range of settings with the aim of increasing participants' motivation to re-integrate into mainstream education and/or take up other training opportunities. This being achieved by providing opportunities to participate in a range of accredited courses and alternative learning programmes, offering the support of a 'mentor' for each participant and developing partnerships with public and voluntary sector support agencies.

Carmarthenshire

Three schools in the county were identified, two urban and one in a rural location. Focusing on pupils who are excluded or in danger of being excluded. The programme is linked to existing youth access programmes and outreach work initiatives. The scheme operates a needs based approach, with needs identified by a network of specialist agencies in consultation with pupils and their parents. Key elements include - curriculum flexibility; alternative learning experiences; accreditation; development of both peer and adult mentoring schemes.

Ceredigion

Delivered in one school in the county, with partnership links with the youth access initiative; education welfare service; pupil referral unit and a range of other private and public organisations. The focus of work is specifically on year 10 pupils at serious risk of exclusion and aims to provide alternative curriculum opportunities with accreditation. The youth worker will assist pupils to identify appropriate learning opportunities and offer support within the context of the school with the ultimate aim of re-integration into mainstream provision. It is also anticipated that an 'after school club' will be developed to operate within the youth work curriculum.

Conwy

Working with two schools in the county with partnership links to a wide range of other providers both public and private. The project works very much to a 'youth work' agenda and has focused on a Youth Forum context, which 'aims to develop young peoples' awareness of citizenship, democracy and participation in order to empower them to have a voice and to create positive change in today's society'. Methods used include - group work; outdoor activities; individual projects; drama and one to one work. Learning achievements are recognised through Y.A.A.s and currently O.C.N. accreditation is being explored.

Denbighshire

Working with two schools in the county, but integrated with the youth access initiative which has a wider remit across the county. Aimed at developing a coherent inter agency package to address the issues of disaffection and develop a range of appropriate intervention strategies for young people. This is a needs led approach that offers accredited informal educational opportunities and support for the emotional, educational, health and social development of young people. As well as referrals from a range of agencies the scheme operates a successful 'open door' policy that allows for self-referral.

Flintshire

The partnership involved two designated schools within the county and the education welfare service. This project works with young people from year 7 through to year 12. Methods used include group work, individual work, peer support and providing alternative accredited learning opportunities through Y.A.A.s and The DofE scheme as well as open access drop-in provision. A 'Buddy' scheme has been developed to ease the problems faced by some pupils on transition from the junior to secondary school.

Gwynedd

Working with three designated schools within the Meirionnydd area of the county and targeting young people who are, or are in danger of becoming disaffected with the formal education provision available to them. Methods used include responding to individual needs by developing individual learning packages and forming a mentoring relationship; forming links with parents; developing alternative learning packages for key skills; developing additional learning opportunities with accreditation where appropriate; identifying, and supporting young people to gain access to, appropriate youth provision in both the voluntary and statutory sectors.

Merthyr Tydfil

Working with one school in the area and linked closely to the core values and mission statement of the school. The project targeted year ten pupils who were low achievers, disengaged or who saw school as having little relevance for them. Close links were developed with other agencies within the area, the programme was conducted off the school site with the youth workers acting as a link with other agencies and as a support worker for individual pupils which included work with their parents. The key element of this relationship is the workers ability to form relationships with young people to provide them with intellectual and emotional support in a non-judgmental context.

Monmouthshire

Placed in one school within the county and maintaining a continuing connection within the formal education system. The project targeted young people within the school who were disengaged from formal education with the aim of assisting them to re-engage by using informal approaches, one to one work, group work and developing positive relationships with young people. Young people's work was rewarded with certificates of achievement. Links were developed with a wide range of other agencies including Youth Access; Mentoring projects; Police and Social Services.

Neath Port Talbot

Working with two designated schools within the county. The project has targeted a maximum of 15 young people to take part in the scheme, they were identified by the schools as showing signs of disaffection and not achieving in the formal school curriculum. The programme uses an informal youth work approach in its work and provides a wide range of alternative learning opportunities based on pupils expressed needs and interests. The young people maintain a 2-day attendance at school for core skills, the remaining 3 days are spent in a range of venues pursuing O.C.N. accredited courses and other activities. Positive links have been developed with a range of other agencies, and service providers.

Newport

Working with one designated school and with year groups 7 through to 11, the project, run by a voluntary organisation, aims to develop the confidence and self esteem of disaffected young people; using a co-ordinated programme of pastoral care and informal education. Specific aims are identified for each year, prevention and alleviation of transitional and other problems being the main themes of early intervention, and in later years the development of self esteem and self belief through alternative curricula and project work with opportunities for accreditation and certification.

Pembrokeshire

Six schools were identified to take part in the partnership in partnership with Youth Access. The programme targeted year 10 and 11 pupils who are experiencing disengagement, or are at risk of exclusion. The provision of alternative learning programmes aims to re-engage pupils in mainstream education through group based and individual pathways. Youth workers are based in schools for two days per week and operate a needs-based approach utilising action plans and accredited alternative learning opportunities. Relationships have been established with a wide range of support agencies from both voluntary and statutory sectors.

Powys

Working with one designated school in the county, but also caters for pupils within the Breckonshire area of the county and targets pupils who are disaffected or excluded from schools in the area. The project aims to provide opportunities in partnership with the school to re-engage young people in the education process by offering a range of options and advice, including O.C.N. accredited programmes, D. of E. awards, N.V.Q.s and G.N.V.Q.s. The programme operates a multi-agency approach to avoid duplication and facilitate joint working.

Rhondda Cynon Taff

Providing separate provision, initially targeting pupils in years 7 - 9 and subsequently pupils in year 11 - 'the programme is constantly being fine - tuned to meet the needs of young people referred to the project'. The programme caters for the needs of pupils who are on the periphery of exclusion due to attendance or behavioural problems. The project uses a range of strategies including group work; detached work in the community, providing personal support and mentoring. A wide-ranging and accredited alternative curriculum has been developed in partnership with private, public and voluntary sector providers. Subsequently local funding has enabled the partnership concept to expand to include 6 other programmes in the county.

Swansea

The partnership with one school and a church based informal education provider (an independent voluntary organisation) and targeted year 11 pupils who are demotivated and disaffected with present provision. Programmes are delivered to single sex groups jointly by the school and the youth project and consist of a wide range of short accredited courses and core skills. This is a closely co-ordinated programme delivered for 3 days by the project and 2 days by the school over the school year. Courses are O.C.N. and DofE accredited, and include delivery by other specialist agencies.

Torfaen

Working with one designated school and targeting young people who are not succeeding at school, at risk of truanting or being excluded. The programme is closely linked with the schools P.S.E. provision and some of the alternative curriculum is delivered as part of the normal timetable. The youth worker spends two days at each school and some work is also being developed at feeder primary schools. Accreditation through the O.C.N. has been developed and other forms of recognition of achievement are used in particular the 'Mayor's Award' for community based activities. The project involves young people in identifying their needs and evaluating how to fulfil them with the aim of raising levels of academic achievement and school attendance.

Vale of Glamorgan

Working with one designated school and targeting young people who exhibit challenging behaviour or are disaffected from mainstream education. The programme concentrates predominantly on year 7 - 9 pupils at risk of exclusion, and maintains their presence in the classroom situation, this is augmented by other more informal activities either after school or during a lunchtime club. The programme is needs led in that pupils define their own difficulties and goals, then develop an 'individual behaviour plan' in consultation with parents, school staff and appropriate support agencies, this forms the basis for daily one to one support sessions. Links have been established with a range of support agencies and young people are referred to these as appropriate. The youth worker was integrated into the pupil support team and consulted in the planning process. It is currently planned to increase provision for alternative curriculum work.

Wrexham

Using a complementary education model in one school, targeting year 10 and 11 pupils who are not responding to mainstream provision. The programme is based on an alternative curriculum approach managed and facilitated by a full time youth worker and is intended to complement and supplement the schools delivery of the national curriculum. Close links have been developed with a range of agencies offering educational and experiential opportunities, this provides the young people with the opportunity of planning their own work and education programme with the support of the youth worker. The youth work philosophy of voluntary participation is maintained, as far as possible, within the programme. The use of ASDAN youth awards and celebration of all success has led to developments in young peoples self esteem and confidence to undertake further educational and work experience opportunities.