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Welsh Government

Implementation of the Youth Work Strategy for Wales



Implementation of the Youth Work Strategy for Wales

Audience

Young people aged 11 to 25 and the youth work organisations and youth work staff that support them, as well as wider stakeholders working to improve the outcomes for young people.

Overview

This document sets out the governance and delivery arrangements for realising the commitments identified in the Youth Work Strategy for Wales 2019.

Action required

The youth work sector are asked to work together to deliver the vision set out in this document.

Further information

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 [@WG_Education](https://twitter.com/WG_Education)

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Additional copies

This document can be accessed from Welsh Government's website at gov.wales

Related documents

Youth Work Strategy for Wales (2019); Prosperity for All: the national strategy (2017); Education in Wales: Our National Mission, Action plan 2017–21 (2017); Youth Work in Wales: Principles and Purposes (2018); Extending Entitlement: support for 11 to 25 year olds in Wales, Direction and Guidance (2002); Our Future: A review of Extending Entitlement (2018); Youth engagement and progression framework (2013).

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Foreword from the Chair of the Interim Youth Work Board

When the Welsh Government published the *Youth Work Strategy for Wales* (2019) ('the strategy') it was very pleasing to see the Minister for Education refer to "a duty to help support young people" through youth work delivered by a united youth service. We have seen this duty recognised with an increased investment in youth work in Wales and this has helped to stimulate the sector and increase the profile and value of youth work practice.

Of course the impact of austerity on youth work continues to challenge delivery and that's why the strategy's commitment to work towards a more sustainable model for youth work delivery is so important. I know that the Minister and members of the Interim Youth Work Board recognise the struggle for survival that many youth work organisations have faced on a daily basis and, while the resilience of the sector is remarkable, we must learn from each other to develop new ways of working. The role of youth workers and youth work organisations in helping to shape the future sustainability of the sector is therefore central to the delivery of the strategy.

We have all seen strategies come and go. Some get delivered whilst others linger unfulfilled. As things stand there is a sense of both optimism and momentum in the sector and what we need to do now is build on that and deliver for young people. To do that I want to utilise the skills, knowledge and experience of youth workers and youth work managers. This document isn't about the 'what' we will do (that is for the sector to decide), it's about the 'how' we'll do it – collaboratively and through participatory practice.

This document sets out how together, over the next 12 months, we will:

- establish a new way of working that reflects the strength of the youth work approach – empowering, educative, participative, inclusive and expressive
- establish mechanisms for capturing the sector's voice and ensuring participation.
- not lose sight of what is already good about youth work in Wales and will share and build on it
- ensure there are resources and a scaffolding of support to allow young people, youth workers, and organisations to participate in the development and delivery of actions that will implement the vision, aims and commitments made in the strategy.

The document refers to Systems Leadership. Put simply, it is a way of ensuring participation. Rights based youth work practice is all about participation. We do it well in Wales and through it youth workers change young people's lives for the better. This document represents an opportunity for young people and the sector to participate and build a sustainable delivery model for youth work in Wales.

It is an exciting time to be involved in youth work so I'm delighted that so many of you in the sector are supporting this new approach, including the Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services (CWVYS), the Principal Youth Officers Group (PYOG),

Education Training Standards (ETS), Education Workforce Council (EWC) and Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA).

For some time the youth work sector has wanted the opportunity to define its future. That time is here, and I look forward to working with you to shape delivery for young people now and for future generations.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keith Towler". A horizontal line is drawn underneath the signature.

Keith Towler
Chair of the Interim Youth Work Board

Introduction

In June 2019, following detailed discussion with young people and youth work stakeholders at all levels in the system, we published the new *Youth Work Strategy for Wales* (the strategy). The strategy set out an ambitious programme of collaborative action to improve both youth work provision and our offer to young people. Further to this, and through its delivery, it is intended to generate the evidence necessary to inform our future approaches, supporting the development of a sustainable model for youth work delivery in Wales.

In developing the strategy we engaged directly with young people and the youth work sector to agree a shared vision to guide our collective improvement efforts.

Our vision:

Wales is a country where:

- all young people are thriving, with access to opportunities and experiences, in Welsh and English, which provide enjoyment and enrich their personal development through youth work approaches
- youth work is rights-based, informed by young people, and collaboratively planned and supported by a skilled workforce of voluntary and paid professional staff
- the value of youth work is understood, with clear lines of accountability.

In addition to this, it was agreed that our vision would be best achieved by focusing our efforts across the following five aims.

1. Young people are thriving

2. Youth work is accessible and inclusive

3. Voluntary and paid professional youth work staff are supported throughout their careers to improve their practice

4. Youth work is valued and understood

5. A sustainable model for youth work delivery

Each aim articulates a set of commitments which, once realised, will collectively contribute towards the delivery of our shared vision for youth work in Wales. The publication of this implementation document is itself a key commitment identified in the strategy. It is intended to be a living document with this first iteration being time-bound to the life of the Interim Youth Work Board. It does not aim to repeat what is in the strategy, rather it identifies how we will go about delivering it, clarifying phases of activity and setting delivery milestones. Further, it defines the structures that will govern the strategy's delivery and defines the end point for this preliminary stage of

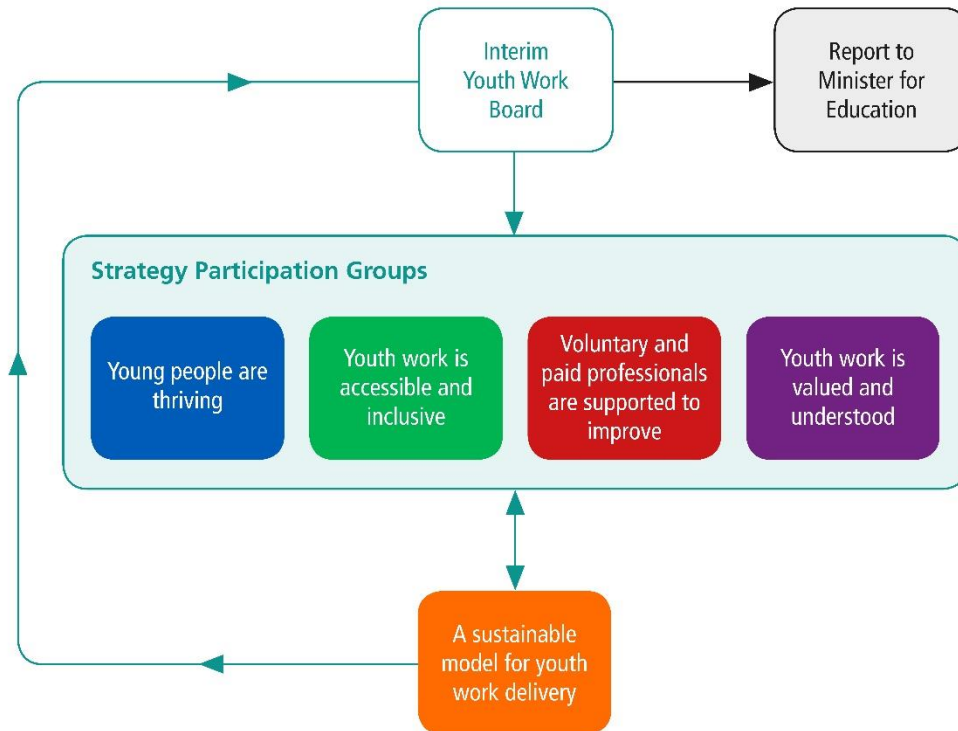
activity, which will culminate in the publication of a report by the Interim Youth Work Board.

Ensuring participation

This document does not attempt to capture the full breadth of activity across the five aims of the strategy and this is by design. The strategy drew on the theory of Systems Leadership as a mechanism through which young people and the sector could be empowered to play an active role in the design, delivery, and monitoring of activity under each of the strategic aims – in essence, a way of ensuring participation. We remain committed to the principle of participation and therefore do not seek to pre-empt the outcomes of this work, which must be taken forward by young people, youth workers, and youth work stakeholders, if we are to move towards sustainable, sector-led models of delivery. Instead, this document identifies how this collaborative, participatory way of working will be established and governed.

Implementation of the new *Youth Work Strategy for Wales* will be overseen by the Interim Youth Work Board, facilitated by the Welsh Government, supported and driven by young people and youth work stakeholders. It will be taken forward in phases, ensuring activity remains focused and evidence-based. See diagram overleaf.

Overview



Phase 1

Initiating change, mapping and evidence collection

This phase will identify young people and youth work stakeholders to serve on Strategy Participation Groups. The groups will be aligned to the aims of the strategy and will focus on working with the sector on a series of early initiatives aimed at improving youth work in Wales. At the same time, we will begin strengthening our detailed understanding of youth work in Wales, so that further, targeted activity can be designed and delivered.

Phase 2

Developing evidence-informed approaches

This phase will build on the early initiatives from phase 1. However, the focus will begin to shift towards the development and implementation of longer term, evidence-based approaches in response to the learning identified during the phase 1 mapping exercises.

Phase 3

Embedding new ways of working, reviewing progress, and making recommendations for further changes

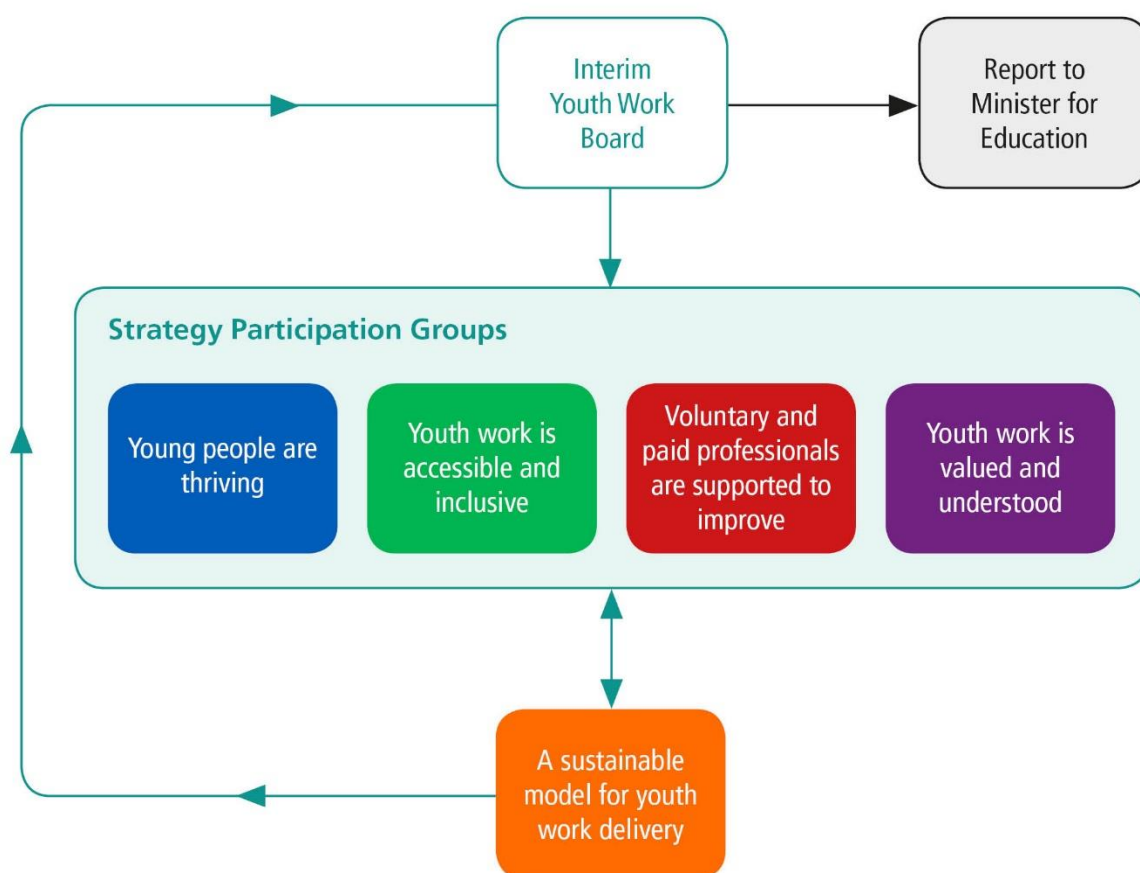
The final phase will focus on embedding new approaches developed to date, sharing good practice, reviewing progress made, and making recommendations for next steps. It is here, at the end of the third phase of activity, that the Interim Youth Work Board will report formally to the Minister for Education.

Governance

We want the shared commitments identified in the new *Youth Work Strategy for Wales* to be taken forward collectively by young people, youth workers and youth work stakeholders. This is essential if we are to maximise the strengths, skills, knowledge and experience of individuals and networks at all tiers of the sector. We want their work to be agile, responsive, and able to influence change across organisational boundaries. We will, therefore, identify and resource a small cohort of motivated, committed individuals to sit on Strategy Participation Groups for the new Youth Work Strategy. They will take the lead in engaging more widely with the sector and driving change.

Working within and across four participation groups aligned to the first four aims of the Strategy, these individuals will develop programmes of work aimed at delivering the strategy's key commitments and strategic aims. The work of the groups will also collectively contribute to the fifth strategic aim: the establishment of a sustainable model for youth work in Wales.

To ensure this wide range of activity is coordinated effectively and contributes meaningfully to our shared vision, the Strategy Participation Groups will act on behalf of, and report directly to, the Interim Youth Work Board in the context of the following governance arrangements:



Roles and responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of those detailed in the governance arrangements above, as well as those of the task and finish groups established to provide additional capacity and dedicated focus and resource for identified areas, are detailed below.

Person/body	Roles and responsibilities
Minister for Education	Portfolio responsibility for securing the strategic direction of youth work in Wales
Interim Youth Work Board	Overseeing delivery of the implementation of the new <i>Youth Work Strategy for Wales</i> , ensuring fidelity to the sector-agreed shared vision.
Welsh Government	Facilitating delivery, securing and coordinating resources, and reflecting new ways of working.
Strategy Participation Groups	Commissioning, developing, delivering, and monitoring activity aimed at realising the new <i>Youth Work Strategy for Wales</i> ' aims. Reporting directly to the Interim Youth Work Board, four agile groups of key individuals will be established. Membership will span young people, Welsh language representation, the voluntary sector, local authorities (who have the duties under section 123 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000), regulatory and inspection bodies, Welsh Government, and members of the Interim Youth Work Board.
Task and finish groups	Support the Strategy participation groups. (This includes those groups already established and tasked with leading on the Welsh language, Communications and Marketing, and Digital agendas.)

Regularity of meetings

We want to ensure pace across all phases of work. With that in mind:

- The Minister for Education will provide scrutiny, support, and challenge to the Interim Youth Work Board bi-annually (aligned to phases of activity).
- The Interim Youth Work Board will meet regularly to review progress to date and provide advice on next steps.
- The Strategy Participation Groups will usually meet bi-monthly at a minimum, providing regular, formal updates to the Interim Youth Work Board. However, in practice the groups will meet more regularly, both in person and through virtual networks, and will be taking forward activity on an ongoing basis.
- Task and finish groups will be established on an ad hoc basis and meet as required by the task in question.
- To ensure the full diversity of the sector is represented, resources will be made available to enable full engagement with these groups. Meetings will be arranged to ensure they are inclusive and accessible to all participants.

Reporting

We want the implementation of the strategy to be open and transparent. The following documentation will be published when agreed:

- agendas and minutes of Interim Youth Work Board meetings
- Strategy Participation Groups' reports and workplans
- updated policy or associated grant criteria.

Phase 1: Initiating change, mapping and evidence collection

A central theme across all five aims of the new *Youth Work Strategy for Wales* is the need to better understand youth work in Wales. We remain committed to the development of evidence-based approaches but in many instances the level of evidence available to us is insufficient or isn't recorded systematically. This lack of detailed understanding is a limiting factor in our ability to maximise positive change and impact, but it shouldn't prevent us from beginning to develop approaches based on our current level of understanding.

We want the strategy to have a positive impact from the earliest opportunity. What this will mean in practice is that an iterative approach must be adopted, with activity being refined over time as new evidence becomes available. Phase 1 will therefore take a two-pronged approach:

- initiating change in the short term
- mapping and evidence collection to inform medium and longer term approaches.

Initiating change in the short term

To fulfil our commitment to young people and the sector, empowering them to play a central role in the design and delivery of new approaches, we will begin by establishing the four Strategy Participation Groups. These groups will remain active during the lifetime of the Interim Youth Work Board. The tables in this document include the sustainable model of youth work aim to demonstrate that this work will take place alongside, and be collectively contributed to by, the four Strategy Participation Groups. However, this aim will not receive its own dedicated Strategy Participation Group and will remain the focus of all members of the Interim Youth Work Board.

Following an initial period, during which members of the groups will engage with the Interim Youth Work Board and agree terms of reference, each group will be tasked with identifying their initial priorities, mapping their interdependencies, and developing draft workplans. These will then be submitted to, and considered in detail by, the Interim Youth Work Board. Working with the Welsh Government, the Interim Youth Work Board will approve the initiation of activity and seek to secure appropriate levels of resources.

While we do not wish to pre-empt the work of these groups, their workplans will begin tackling some of the key commitments identified under the aims of the new *Youth Work Strategy for Wales*, giving consideration to how we:

- embed a children’s rights approach and develop a nationally recognisable youth work offer that helps ensure that **young people are thriving**
- work in partnership to deliver safe spaces and sufficient levels of Welsh and English provision so that **youth work is accessible and inclusive**
- publish and resource a Workforce Development Plan that ensures **voluntary and paid professional staff are supported throughout their careers**
- develop a communications and marketing plan, alongside toolkits and resources, so that **youth work is valued and understood**
- clarify roles, strengthen accountability, and develop equitable funding arrangements as part of a **sustainable model for youth work delivery in Wales**

Mapping and evidence collection to inform medium and longer term approaches

Parallel with efforts to begin securing change in the short term, the Strategy Participation Groups will work with the sector to consider where gaps in evidence limit our ability to target resources and maximise outcomes in the longer term. It is our proposal that these gaps in evidence be filled, initially at least, with a comprehensive and inclusive mapping exercise. Working in partnership with the voluntary sector and local authority provision, the mapping exercise will focus on strengthening our understanding of the youth work sector in Wales, and what young people want from it. This will mean that approaches developed in the short term can be refined to ensure they are robust in the medium to longer term.

Again, while we do not wish to pre-empt the work of the Strategy Participation Groups, it is likely that they will be giving consideration to key questions in order to meet their specific aim. Examples of questions for the various aims can be seen below.

<p>Young people are thriving</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is/isn't engaging? • What language do they speak? • How old are they? • What are their priorities for youth work? • What are their needs and aspirations? • How do they want to access support?
<p>Youth work is accessible and inclusive</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where is youth work available? • Is there Welsh medium provision? • How much capacity exists? • Who is delivering it? • What service models exist?
<p>Voluntary and paid professional youth work staff are supported throughout their careers to improve their practice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is the workforce (voluntary and local authority provision)? • Can they work through the medium of Welsh? • How are they employed? • What are their skills? • What are their needs and aspirations? • What are their professional learning and leadership requirements?
<p>Youth work is valued and understood</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In which contexts and settings does youth work currently take place? • What outcomes are they working towards? • What evidence bases exist? • Who are the key stakeholders?
<p>A sustainable model for youth work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is youth work funded? • What is the legislative framework and how is it interpreted? • What roles and responsibilities exist? • What accountability mechanisms exist?

This activity will inform the development of a comprehensive and inclusive mapping exercise to be conducted during phase 1 of the strategy's implementation. To ensure that the questions we ask, and evidence collected, are statistically robust and meaningful, we will procure a contract with an independent knowledge and research

organisation who will provide an oversight in to the design and delivery of the mapping process. This will include qualitative research so that barriers and opportunities are comprehensively understood. Furthermore, to ensure as wide a reach as possible, we will identify and allocate communications and marketing expertise to publicise this activity.

Phase 1: Key milestones

Milestone	Target date	Undertaken by
Key individuals identified	End of November 2019	The Interim Youth Work Board
Strategy Participation Groups established	End of November 2019	The Interim Youth Work Board, young people, the sector, Welsh Government
Terms of reference agreed	End of December 2019	Strategy Participation Groups
Identification of initial priorities and interdependencies, and the development of draft workplans	End of December 2019	Strategy Participation Groups
Procure a contract with an independent knowledge and research organisation	End of December 2019	Welsh Government
Strategy Participation Groups' workplans agreed and published	End of January 2020	The Interim Youth Work Board, Strategy Participation Groups, Welsh Government
Assess existing data sources	End of January 2020	Contractor, Strategy Participation Groups
Identify gaps and develop mapping exercise	End of March 2020	Contractor, Strategy Participation Groups
Launch mapping exercise and supporting communications/marketing activity	End of May 2020	Contractor, Strategy Participation Groups, the Interim Youth Work Board, Welsh Government, young people, the sector.

Phase 2: Delivering evidence – informed approaches

Any standalone activity initiated in phase 1 will be built upon during phase 2. However, the second phase of activity will largely focus on analysing the information collected as part of the mapping exercise, as well as using that knowledge to develop evidence-informed approaches to improve youth work in Wales. The second phase of work will therefore begin with a thorough analysis of the mapping data, followed by publication and dissemination of the results. These will be shared as widely as possible so that stakeholders at all levels of the system can consider how this new information can inform their practice.

As well as sharing the results of the mapping across the system, the Strategy Participation Groups will begin using the results to inform and refine their workplans. This rich data set will allow us to take account of the diverse nature of youth work in Wales, across both the voluntary and local authority sectors, ensuring the tailoring of support and strategic approaches according to identified need.

This information will, therefore, be vital in supporting the Strategy Participation Groups to work with young people, the sector, and the Interim Youth Work Board to further develop and deliver the key commitments identified in the strategy, as detailed overleaf.

Young people are thriving

- A consistent, quality, and nationally recognisable youth work offer for young people
- A strengthened children's rights approach
- Improved youth information and digital youth work
- Bespoke youth work support for vulnerable or marginalised young people

Youth work is accessible and inclusive

- Guidance and support on the creation of safe spaces
- Increased youth work through the medium of Welsh
- Improved partnership working between local authorities and the voluntary sector
- Mechanisms to ensure sufficient levels of youth work provision
- Mechanisms to make youth work more accessible

Voluntary and paid professional youth work staff are supported throughout their careers to improve their practice

- A Workforce Development Plan for the entire sector
- Welsh language support
- Bespoke training and professional learning
- Leadership support
- Updated registration mechanisms
- Improved career progression
- Strengthened networking and sharing of best practice

Youth work is valued and understood

- A Youth Work Communications and Marketing Plan
- Enhanced contribution and recognition of youth work across a range of agendas
- Toolkits and resources supporting self-evaluation, impact monitoring, and quality improvement
- Greater promotion of youth work and young people locally and nationally

A sustainable model for youth work

- Agreed roles and responsibilities across all tiers of the youth work sector
- A detailed understanding of the legislative framework, accountability mechanisms, and funding arrangements for youth work in Wales

Phase 2: Key milestones

Milestone	Target date	Undertaken by
Analysis of responses to mapping exercise and development of recommendations	End of May 2020	Contractor
Publication and dissemination of results of the mapping exercise	End of June 2020	Welsh Government
Strategy Participation Groups activity to refine workplans in response to mapping	End of June 2020	Strategy Participation Groups, the Interim Youth Work Board, young people, the sector
Publication of revised Strategy Participation Groups' workplans	End of July 2020	Welsh Government
Piloting and evaluation of new evidence-informed activity and approaches	End of September 2020	Strategy Participation Groups, the Interim Youth Work Board, young people, the sector
Stakeholder engagement to strengthen adoption of new ways of working	End of September 2020	Strategy Participation Groups, the Interim Youth Work Board, young people, the sector, Welsh Government

Phase 3: Embedding new ways of working, reviewing progress, and making recommendations for further change

With a stronger understanding of the youth work landscape in Wales, and the development of new approaches informed by this understanding, the third phase of activity will focus on engagement and collaboration across the sector to promote and embed new ways of working.

Beginning with a national event to review progress made to date in the delivery of the strategy's aims, we will seek to engage young people and stakeholders across the sector through the new Communications and Marketing Plan. This work will be essential to winning hearts and minds and embedding new practice from the ground up. The Strategy Participation Groups will play a central role in working with the sector to orchestrate these efforts, feeding back on their progress towards the strategy's commitments, disseminating resources, and sharing best practice.

Alongside, and as part of these efforts, the Welsh Government will work with stakeholders to update policies and funding mechanisms locally and nationally, ensuring the appropriate scaffolding exists to support the mainstreaming of good practice. It will also work with the contracted, independent knowledge and research organisation to consider what next steps, in terms of formal evaluation of approaches, might be established.

While this activity is underway, another key commitment of the new *Youth Work Strategy for Wales* will be met during this phase of activity. Building on the evidence collected and activity taken forward to date, the Interim Youth Work Board will begin developing a report to the Welsh Ministers. This report will evaluate progress made towards delivery of the strategy's sector-agreed vision and the securing of the strategic direction of youth work in Wales. Furthermore, and particularly where the Interim Youth Work Board considers that further steps are required to secure identified improvements, their report will make clear recommendations to the Welsh Ministers on what else needs to change.

The report will be published by the Interim Youth Work Board no later than December 2020.

Phase 3: Key milestones

Milestone	Target date	Undertaken by
National Youth Work event to review progress made to date and share new ways of working	End of September 2020	Strategy Participation Groups, the Interim Youth Work Board, young people, the sector, Welsh Government
Ongoing stakeholder engagement and professional development	End of December 2020	Strategy Participation Groups, the Interim Youth Work Board, young people, the sector, Welsh Government
Updated national policies and grant funding mechanisms to reflect and mainstream new ways of working	End of December 2020	Welsh Government, the sector
Establish next steps in terms of formal evaluation	End of December 2020	Welsh Government, Contractor
Publication of Interim Youth Work Board report	End of December 2020	The Interim Youth Work Board

Overarching implementation plan

		2019			2020											
Milestones		Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Phase 1	Key individuals identified															
	Strategy Participation Groups established															
	Terms of reference agreed															
	Identification of initial priorities and interdependencies, and the development of draft workplans															
	Procure a contract with an independent knowledge and research organisation															
	Strategy participation groups workplans agreed and published															
	Assess existing data sources															
	Identify gaps and develop mapping exercise															
	Launch mapping exercise and supporting communications/marketing activity															
Phase 2	Analysis of responses to mapping exercise and development of recommendations															
	Publication and dissemination of results of the mapping exercise															
	Strategy Participation Groups activity to refine workplans in response to mapping															
	Publication of revised Strategy Participation Groups workplans															
	Piloting and evaluation of new evidence-informed activity and approaches															
	Stakeholder engagement to strengthen adoption of new ways of working															
Phase 3	National Youth Work event to review progress made to date and share new ways of working															
	Ongoing stakeholder engagement and professional development															
	Updated national policies and grant funding mechanisms to reflect and mainstream new ways of working															
	Establish next steps in terms of formal evaluation															
	Publication of Interim Youth Work Board report															

Conclusion

This is an exciting time for youth work in Wales. The publication of this implementation document represents a concerted, collective effort to bring greater focus, pace, and accountability to the policy, planning, and delivery of youth work provision both locally and nationally. More importantly perhaps, it marks a public commitment to young people, youth workers, youth work organisations, and wider sector stakeholders, that they will play a central role in driving this agenda.

The Interim Youth Work Board are committed and motivated to working with young people and the sector through the arrangements identified in this document, and pledge to act transparently and with honesty when reviewing progress made towards our shared vision for youth work in Wales at the end of their tenure.

Whether or not you find yourself sitting on a Strategy Participation Group, you all have a role to play in contributing to this agenda. This might be formally through task and finish groups, or by engaging with Strategy Participation Groups, or the Interim Youth Work Board directly. Or it might be informally, by role-modelling the principles identified in the new *Youth Work Strategy for Wales* and identifying how you as a young person, volunteer or paid professional youth worker, or the lead of a youth work organisation or service, can contribute towards delivering its aims and, securing the strategic direction of youth work in Wales.