MAPPING AND ANALYSING THE VOLUNTARY YOUTH WORK SECTOR IN WALES

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Abstract

This paper examines the scope, composition, and nature of the Voluntary Youth Work Sector (VYWS) in Wales. At the time, momentum around youth work was growing in Wales due to significant policy and practice developments such as the Interim Youth Work Board and the Youth Work Strategy Implementation Board. The study intended to comprehensively map the sector in Wales while also analysing how the sector tackles contemporary issues impacting young people and considering sustainability and the challenges faced. A cross sectional research design was adopted with three research stages. First scoping the sector using publicly available data, establishing the scale of the sector. Second, 103 surveys were conducted with organisations identified during the scoping, and finally 3 focus groups were conducted with 15 managers from voluntary youth work organisations already surveyed. The research uncovered the vast, varied, and valuable scope of the VYWS in Wales, highlighting the composition of its workforce, those supported, and the nature of provision provided. The study highlighted the importance and difficulty of responding to contemporary issues impacting young people such as mental health, homelessness, county lines and poverty, but nonetheless evidencing the significant influence the VYWS has in delivering this support. The advantages of using a reactive and holistic approach in youth work were also uncovered. Key issues in relation to sustainability within the VYWS in Wales including unstable funding, austerity, and reliance on volunteers were confirmed. The impact of COVID-19 was also explored revealing varying experiences between organisations and regions in Wales. Overall, the commitment, collective passion and drive to support young people in Wales was unmistakable and supports the endorsement of greater governance, recognition and consideration needed for the VYWS in Wales.

Keywords: *Youth Work, Voluntary Sector, Voluntary Youth Work, Voluntary Youth Work Sector, Young People, Sector Mapping, Contemporary Issues, Wales.*

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List of Abbreviations

ACE'S – Adverse Childhood Experiences

CAMHS – Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service

CWVYS – Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services

EE – Extending Entitlement

ETS – Education Training Standards

EWC – Education Workforce Council

EYWC – European Youth Work Convention

HMI – Her Majesty's Inspectorate

IYWB – Interim Youth Work Board

JNC – Joint Negotiating Committee

LA – Local Authority

MEC – Ministry of Education and Culture

MYD – Ministry of Youth Development

NAW – National Assembly for Wales

NAYC – National Association of Youth Clubs

NCA – National Crime Agency

NCVO – National Council for Voluntary Organisations

NCYI – National Youth Council of Ireland

NEET – Not in Employment, Education or Training

NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation

NOS – National Occupational Standards

NYA – National Youth Agency

NYB – National Youth Bureau

PCC – Police and Crime Commissioner

VYW – Voluntary Youth Work

VYWS – Voluntary Youth Work Sector

WHO – World Health Organisation

WYA – Wales Youth Agency

YMCA – Young Men's Christian Association

YWCA – Young Women's Christian Association

YWSIB – Youth Work Strategy Implementation Board

YWWRG – Youth Work in Wales Review Group

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Candidate declaration

This is to certify that, except where specific reference is made, the work described in this thesis is the result of my own research. Neither this thesis, nor any part of it, has been presented, or is currently submitted, in candidature for any other award at this or any other University.

Signed	*Elizabeth Bacon* *Candidate*
Date	*27/03/2023*

This form is available in Welsh. Mae'r ffurflen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg.

1 Introduction to the study

1.1 Overview of Research

Youth work is a global phenomenon, undertaken worldwide to help better the lives of young people. Although processes, governance, and definitions vary greatly between countries, sectors and organisations, the Council of Europe (2017, p.3) attempt to provide an inclusive definition of youth work:

> *"Youth work is a broad term covering a wide variety of activities of a social, cultural, educational, environmental and/or political nature by, with and for young people, in groups or individually. Youth work is delivered by paid and volunteer youth workers and is based on non-formal and informal learning processes focused on young people and on voluntary participation. Youth work is quintessentially a social practice, working with young people and the societies in which they live, facilitating young people's active participation and inclusion in their communities and in decision making".*

Despite continuous debate surrounding definitions of youth work, there is a shared understanding that youth work is paramount to the future of young people today (EYWC, 2020; IYWB, 2021; YWWRG, 2022).

The Voluntary Youth Work Sector (VYWS) specifically is a precarious terrain (Williamson, 2022; Glaze, 2022), which could explain the lack of information available on its scope, nature, and composition in Wales. A clear gap was identified by the Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services (CWVYS) of the fragmented existing knowledge of the VYWS in Wales, forming the basis for this research. Despite the clear efforts of CWVYS in strengthening recognition and knowledge on the VYWS, information on its scope, scale and composition remains largely unknown. The study was conducted at a pertinent time for youth policy in Wales. With momentum building around youth work with the Youth Work Strategy Implementation Board (YWSIB) established in 2022 working to operationalise the 14 recommendations of the Interim Youth Work Board (IYWB) made in 2021 and increasing political attention on the value of youth work, an opportunity arose to develop evidence-based knowledge and assist with these changes. Recommendations of relevance to the voluntary sector and the research include: to conduct an audit on funding expenditure on youth work services, the establishment of a national body for youth work services, commitment to support the development of youth work as a career and to launch a Young Person's Entitlement Scheme assisting young people's access to services, information, and opportunities (IYWB, 2021). This research aimed to fill the knowledge gaps and provide a snapshot of the VYWS in Wales at an important time in youth work and youth policy by working towards the following research aims:

1) Map/scope voluntary youth work (VYW) services in Wales.
2) Identify how these services tackle contemporary issues impacting young people.
3) Consider the sustainability of the sector in terms of the recent impact of social and economic challenges and future developments.

1.2 Outline of Thesis

Chapter two details the results from the critical literature review conducted. First outlining definitions of youth work in the UK and Europe. Then defining the voluntary sector more broadly from a UK perspective, focusing on function, structure, and governance, as well as analysing theories of autonomy and hybridity for voluntary organisations. Next, voluntary youth work is conceptualised by understanding definitions of 'youth', structure and governance of youth work and practical approaches to delivery, including an analysis of 'traditional' and 'new sector' provision. The chapter then outlines key elements of youth work distinguishing it from wider services for young people. A brief overview of the history of youth work and youth policy in the UK is examined. Previous research in youth work is analysed by documenting research done from the perspective of youth workers and then research conducted with young people. Next, key contemporary issues are presented and linked to existing research, before investigating the youth work response to these. Finally, the literature review provides an overview of youth work mapping attempts in England, Ireland, Scotland, Northern Ireland (Pitts *et al.*, 2002; NCYI, 2012; YouthLink Scotland, 2016; Kemp *et al.*, 2018; NYA, 2021) and Wales (Welsh Government, 2021a; YMCA, 2022; ETS, 2022) and the gaps intended to be filled by the research project.

Chapter three documents the research methodology and process for analysis. A three-tier approach is then presented linked to the research aims and the process of triangulation from all data sources. Data collection methods are outlined for each of the three stages: scoping the sector, surveying the identified sample and the focus groups with VYW managers. Ethical considerations are then examined. Finally, the structural and process challenges of the project are summarised to assist future research development.

Chapter four reports the findings from the project in three sections, first documenting the tier one data from the scoping and the survey, to understand the scale and composition of the sector. Next, further survey findings are linked to focus group data for key CWVYS and Welsh Government priorities including staff qualifications and Welsh Language. The chapter then explores the needs of young people in Wales and the VYW response to these, including mental health, homelessness, county lines (exploitation and substance misuse), poverty, identity and COVID-19. Finally, the sustainability of the sector is evaluated by

triangulating findings from all research stages to build a knowledge base for future development and recommendations.

Chapter five embeds the findings within existing knowledge, while highlighting new findings produced from the research. The chapter introduces four key themes. First, understanding the data on the VYWS in Wales and what this means. Secondly understanding concepts, terms, and criteria and how broad or all-inclusive contemporary youth work requires data to be. Consideration is made here for ‘traditional’ and ‘new sector’ provision. Thirdly, a holistic approach is discussed as a theme that emerged from the research, linking to understandings of ‘filling a gap’ or ‘meeting a need’, individualism and contemporary issues impacting young people and how well equipped the sector feels in responding to these. Finally, sustainability is discussed in relation to resource, support and capacity and understanding how austerity, COVID-19 and funding impact sustainability within the VYWS in Wales.

Chapter six concludes the thesis by summarising the key themes throughout and the key findings that could assist with future research and policy development for the VYWS in Wales.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

To further understand the need for the research and embed youth work and the voluntary sector in theory and existing research, a critical literature review was conducted. Due to the scale of the project, a critical literature review was preferable to identify key literature relating to the voluntary sector, the Voluntary Youth Work Sector (VYWS), youth work, contemporary issues impacting young people and previous sector mapping attempts. By identifying the significant literature, it allowed for greater critical evaluation and deeper analysis (Grant and Booth, 2009). Key search terms can be found in Appendix 1.

2.2 Defining youth work in the UK and Europe

Before exploring definitions of youth work in the UK and Europe, it is important to consider definitions of 'youth'.

The age range of 'youth' differs between countries and organisations in both policy and practice. However, in Wales a young person is anyone between the ages of 11-25 (Welsh Government, 2019), this is quite consistent across Europe, however with a few exceptions. For example, in Finland, the Youth Act (2006) states that a young person is anyone under the age of 29 (MEC, 2012). In Spain, they define youth as over 14 and under 30 (Youth Partnership, 2009). In Greece, youth policy and practice includes anyone aged 15-35 but can reach as high as 40 in some cases (Moschou, 2012). It is important to consider the age of young people when researching youth work as there is clear evidence to suggest that in modern society, the change in pace and heightened risks brought with modernisation and globalisation have extended the period of 'youth'.

'Youth' was once a short and transitional period in a person's life, but now can be defined as up to 40 or as low as 3 (Belgium) or 5 (USA) (Williamson *et al.*, 2021; Batsleer, 2008; Moschou, 2012; Nieminen, 2016, p. 39). The entry and exit point of youth are clearly not homogenous internationally, but defining a distinct group introduces risks. As stated by Fusco and Heathfield (2016), once a group is separated by establishing identity norms, this allows for discrimination and inequality and can lead to labelling and targeting of resources. Bessant (2005) supports this claim, stating that young people are subject to 'systemic disadvantage' due to continued stereotyping by adult policy makers. However, Bessant (2005) presents this as a key argument for youth work to be viewed as distinct from other community and human services, thereby warranting separate research, policy, education and qualification of workers.

In the UK, definitions of youth work differ between the four nations but tend to be consistent around a few core elements. This is due to the National Occupational Standards (NOS) that the UK adhere to, but which are adapted to fit each nations terminology, with the Values of Youth Work, developed in 2007, intrinsically forming the basis in all four nations. The NOS (2019, p.4) define the purpose of youth work as:

> *"Enable young people to develop holistically, working with them to facilitate their personal, social and educational development, to enable them to develop their voice, influence and place in society and to reach their full potential".*

In England, the National Youth Agency (NYA) (2020a) states that youth work's aim is to contribute to the personal and social development of young people, through the use of educational, recreational and leisure time activities. Although historically in England it was seen more as a 'rescue operation' which placed 'delinquency prevention' as a central focus (Cranfield, 1990; NYA, 2020a).

In Scotland, the Alexander Report (1975) (Scottish Education Department, 1975) saw the emergence of a new form of work with young people, termed 'Community Education' which dominated practice for many years (Sercombe *et al.*, 2014). Today, youth work in Scotland is not dissimilar to the rest of the UK, although there is a strong commitment to partnership between the young person and youth worker in the process of learning and development, as well as an attachment to its Curriculum for Excellence (Education Scotland, 2019).

Youth work in Northern Ireland (NI) outlines the importance of social and developmental needs of young people and bettering their future and their communities. Governance of youth work in NI is led by the Department of Education due to the Youth Council for Northern Ireland (YCNI) losing its committee members and relinquishing duties back to government in 2019 (Department of Education, 2019). Interestingly, in NI, 57% of all youth organisations are uniformed groups, suggesting a strong narrative of citizenship and discipline in NI youth work (Education Authority, 2018).

In Wales, youth work today is defined as an informal, voluntary relationship between young people and youth workers, using holistic development and as part of an overall universal entitlement for young people (YWWRG, 2022; Welsh Government, 2019; NOS, 2019). Youth participation is a key element of Welsh youth work practice and policy as seen in the Children Act (2004)[1] and the Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015). Youth policy in Wales has, however, been ambivalent about the role of youth work. The National Youth

[1] The inception of Llais Ifanc (young voice) in the early 2000s, which later became the Welsh Youth Parliament (Funky Dragon) is another example of the importance of youth participation in Wales (Williamson, 2007; Williamson, 2010, p.83).

Work Strategy (2019) set out the five key aims of youth work in Wales: that young people thrive, accessibility and inclusion, improve career development of youth work staff, the value of youth work being recognised, and sustainability of the youth work sector (Welsh Government, 2019). The *Principles and Purposes of Youth Work* was also produced, to assist in the delivery of youth work in Wales, with emphasis on the five pillars of youth work (educative, participative, expressive, empowering, and inclusive) (YWWRG, 2022). Interestingly, qualified youth workers and youth support workers are amongst teachers and learning support staff on the Education Workforce Council's (EWC) list of registered practitioners, thereby making Wales one of the only countries globally to value and regulate youth work in the same vein as formal education (YWWRG, 2022). Furthermore, Wales was the first UK country to appoint a Children's Commissioner in 2001, and a decade later, the first country in the world to implement a Children and Young Person's (Wales) Measure (2011) further demonstrating commitment to bettering the lives of children and young people (Towler, 2013).

Throughout Europe more generally, youth work was seldom referenced in policy until the 21st century. However since 2010, three European Youth Work Conventions (EYWC) have taken place (in 2010, 2015 and 2020) and a seven volume History of Youth Work in Europe series has been produced, leading to a European Youth Work Agenda, termed The Bonn Process, launched in December 2020. Its key aim was to strengthen recognition and political support for youth work as a profession within the 46 member states[2] of the Council of Europe and proving the contributions youth work has on young people's lives (EYWC, 2020b; EYWC, 2020a). In development of the European Youth Work Agenda, the Declaration of the 1st EYWC acknowledged the diversity in which youth work practices and embraces (EYWC, 2010). Next, following a preparatory paper titled *Finding Common Ground* (Williamson, 2015), the Declaration of the 2nd EYWC focused on strengthening partnership, collaboration, and shared knowledge for creating *spaces* for young people's voices to be heard and building *bridges* to assist in the next stages of their lives (EYWC, 2015). The Declaration of the 3rd EYWC, *Signposts for the Future*, offered eight recommendations for the future development of youth work and stipulated the Bonn Process throughout Europe (EYWC, 2020a). Despite such developments, youth work across Europe remains patchy, with different levels of understanding, recognition, provision, and support. For further discussion on youth work concepts globally, see Appendix 2.

[2] When the Bonn Process was launched in 2020, there were 47 members of the Council of Europe, but in March 2022, Russia withdrew its membership after the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

2.3 The Voluntary Sector and Youth Work Within it

The terminology, approaches and theories underpinning the literature on the voluntary sector more broadly are important to consider in understanding the VYWS in Wales. This section will first explore the voluntary sector from a UK perspective, before looking into conceptualising youth work and Voluntary Youth Work (VYW).

2.3.1 Defining the Voluntary Sector: a UK perspective

The voluntary sector, also known as the third sector, community sector or civil society, constitutes any formal, non-profit distributing, self-governing organisation that acts independently of the state and benefits from voluntarism (Kendall and Knapp, 1995). Voluntary sector organisations are defined in a variety of ways, for example in relation to their mission, goal, function, operation, structures, or governance.

Voluntary sector organisational functions include service delivery, mutual-aid, advocacy, and oversight. Most relevant to this research is the service-providing function, seen as pioneering and demonstrative to supply a direct service for people or places (Kendall and Knapp, 1995, p. 65), reflected most frequently in the community work of organisations through information, guidance, advice, and counselling services. The mutual-aid function extends this further to include self-help and an exchange on a common interest or need, largely through support groups, for example Alcoholics Anonymous (Kendall and Knapp, 1995 p. 65). Less common, the pressure-group function involves the assembly of information around a particular issue or cause followed by campaigning, lobbying and advocacy for change or a desired outcome (Brenton, 1985). This is demonstrated by the work of environment and sustainability groups and social action campaigns. Finally, and often forgotten in the literature - the resource and coordinating function, this is apparent predominantly in national representative bodies and wider industry partners, for example the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) which provide support, guidance and at times funding for the wider voluntary sector (Kendall and Knapp, 1995, p. 65). The Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services (CWVYS) are also an example of this but specifically for the VYWS.

Voluntary organisations can also be categorised by their structure and form. Kendall (2003) outlines three distinct groups: ‘broad non-profit sector’, ‘broad voluntary sector’ and ‘narrow voluntary sector’. These groups, although not exhaustive, are relevant to the research because key distinctions between them informed the inclusion/exclusion criteria developed for mapping the VYWS in Wales. For example, Kendall’s (2003) ‘broad voluntary sector’ category excludes religious and political groups as these are difficult to reach, and the ‘narrow voluntary sector’ definition excludes universities, sports, and social clubs due to the lack of altruism. These key debates are discussed in more detail in section 2.3.2.

Another way that voluntary sector organisations are defined is by process of governance and control. Smith *et al.* (1995) offer a three-way typology. First, 'professional non-profit' organisations are national bodies that raise funds for local work and smaller branches. Second, 'broad voluntary services' are autonomous local branches that raise their own funds while still being governed centrally by the national body. Third, 'independent local community' groups are self-standing and rely immensely on voluntarism. It is thought that 'professional non-profit' organisations can realign their goals more to those of the state, enabling greater funding opportunities, while local community groups are forced to rely on external funding opportunities - in turn removing the power, control, and autonomy of community organisations (Smith *et al.,* 1995). This can be linked to the theories on hybridity and autonomy discussed below and is seen largely within youth work in Wales.

The complexity of the voluntary sector is clear; therefore, a broad and inclusive definition could be more useful. Salamon and Sokolowski (2003, p.71) attempt a broad definition based on the structure, aim, economic processes or governance of the voluntary sector. Their 'structural-operational' definition aims to encompass all elements and is reflected in the research definition of the VYWS in Wales (see section 2.3.4). The five criteria principles that form a voluntary sector organisation are: not-profit distributing, separate from the state, self-governing, voluntary membership/participation and with some form of organised structure. This definition provides a basis for the inclusion of formal, informal, religious, expressive, political and those providing a service (Salamon and Sokolowski, 2003, p.71), all of which are found in the VYWS in Wales.

Recognised as key debates within the voluntary sector are ideas of autonomy and hybridity linked to the reliance on statutory funding mentioned above (Smith *et al.*, 1995). Hybridity involves any blending of structure, attributes or values between sectors, specialist areas or organisational types (Smith *et al.*, 1995). Haasenfeld and Gidron (2005) argue that voluntary sector organisations often develop into hybrid organisations by expanding elements of their mission, goals, and values to reflect a social change approach as well as adopting service provision and mutual aid approaches. As stated by Tarrow (1994) and Della Porta and Rucht (1995), this often occurs at times of political competition and division, creating greater opportunity for social change. Researchers also note that having access to social networks and partnership is key to the success of hybrid organisations to gain support and access to resources and funding (Hassenfeld and Gidron, 2005).

Billis and Glennerster (1998) identify 'stakeholder ambiguity' in human service providing organisations. They highlight that voluntary sector organisations providing human services to vulnerable people can blur in the four 'worlds' of governmental, private, associational, and

personal worlds (Billis and Glennerster, 1998). The complexity of voluntary organisations, and the overlaps between employer, employee, service user, director, funder, and volunteers as well as the blurring of boundaries of expectations and capacity, results in organisations adapting and evolving elements of other sectors to receive more funding, governance, and gain credibility (Billis and Glennerster, 1998). This leads to organisational structure being 'hybrid' in its form (Battilana and Lee, 2014), as reflected by some voluntary organisations when ConneXions was launched in England, discussed in section 2.3.5). In practice, this requires organisations to form structures to manage 'multiple stakeholders', with a variety of agendas, different from their own, to provide the service and meet the needs of those accessing the service. This is documented by some as the 'precarious equilibrium', between organisational, professional, and personal relationships apparent in interagency work (Into, 2022; Williamson, 2017, p.89). This requires capacity, training, additional skills, knowledge, and funding, of which the voluntary sector largely lacks. Consequently, organisations experience an absence of autonomy and ability to make decisions due to the fragmented and contradictory needs of funders and voluntary organisations.

2.3.2 Conceptualising Youth Work within the Voluntary Sector

Now consideration has been made for definitions of 'youth' and the voluntary sector more broadly, it provides the dual context for exploring definitions of youth work and VYW.

As mentioned above, youth work is largely delivered by the voluntary sector but can be delivered by local authorities. According to Buchroth (2012, p.162), VYW organisations can be categorised by their goal, activity, and function. As stated by Cooper (2018, p.3), there is no contextual or institutional coherence within youth work. It can be found in almost any location where young people are including parks, schools or online. Youth workers can also be employed by government, schools, churches, community organisations or in health settings, making the theoretical basis for youth work difficult to generalise. Nieminen (2012, p.65) attempted to conceptualise youth work in Finland by using four core traditions: the 'Christian tradition' (church based work and the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA)), 'national-idealistic tradition' (national liberation, Scouts, young farmers, and organisations that have strong national characteristics), 'political-corporative tradition' (political youth organisations or pressure groups) and finally, 'hobby-based tradition' (focused on young people's interests and the use of 'politically harmless activities'). Similarly, Hurley and Treacy (1993) identified four approaches to youth work based on sociological theory, that covered character building, personal development, critical social education, and radical social change. However, based on the complexities of young people's lives, it is likely that

contemporary youth work encompasses elements of all these models adopting a more holistic approach.

Practically, the way youth work is delivered differs between nations and organisations. Historically, across the UK, youth work was delivered exclusively by the voluntary sector dating back as late as the 18th Century in church Sunday Schools or the YMCA/Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) (Davies, 2009, p.63; Jeffs, 2010, p.15). Traditional forms of youth work such as centre-based clubs, known as the 'base camp' of youth work, are just one youth work setting (Davies, 2009, p.63). Centre based clubs surfaced in the UK by the 20th century in the form of Boys and Girls clubs and were pioneered by Robert Baden Powell who believed that 'youth' could be seen as a generalised group of prospective citizens needing guidance without dictation. Baden-Powell was famously opposed by Josef Cardijn, however, who believed that working class youth should be the focus of youth work as they have "their very own problems" (Coussée, 2010: 14). This approach is seen by radical traditionalists as the core of youth work, making it a distinct and definable service for young people. These clubs are small and community based but are sometimes part of much larger national and international movements or representative bodies, for example The European Confederation of Youth Clubs (Jeffs and Smith, 2010). Termed by many as 'informal education', youth work in the form of youth clubs and groups relies solely on the hope that conversation, association and 'being there' for young people will assist in development and fulfilling their potential (Smith, 2001). This notion of 'informal education' later became 'non-formal education and learning' when consideration was made for both learning 'accidentally' and 'purposefully', with the learner at the centre of the process and reflection from an informal educator optimising learning opportunities (World Scouting – Learning, 2019). Non-formal education and learning is now the dominant term used amongst most major youth organisations (The Commonwealth, 2023).

A paramount philosophy of youth work in practice has always been association and dialogue, seen historically in street-based work with 'unattached' youth (Morse, 1966; Goetschius and Tash, 1967). This notion of 'unattached' youth began during a 1960's study, which aimed to reach young people who were not already associated with a youth organisation (Morse, 1966). The study focused on those who did not use their leisure time constructively, who were more likely to partake in criminality and anti-social behaviours, or those who were 'purposeless'. During this time (the mid to late 1960s) young people were increasingly demonised in the media, as Cohen (1972) illustrated in his theory of 'moral panic' in response to so called 'folk devils', as young people were being identified. Therefore, some young people during this time felt a hostility towards adults. This feeling developed into young people feeling like 'unfortunate victims of circumstance' and a lack of belonging in

society as perpetuated by parents, teachers, youth leaders and other authoritative figures. This can be linked to Merton's (1938) influential strain theory, which states that young people who are both delinquent and despondent are reacting to a societal system that is failing them, which was apparent in Morse's (1966) study. Goetschius and Tash (1967) further developed the idea of 'unattached' youth into a four-way typology, categorising youth as the 'can copes', 'temporarily disorganised', 'simply disorganised' and the 'seriously disorganised'. Subsequently, due to the development of understanding and concern over 'unattached' and delinquent youth, there was a call for more innovative and experimental work to take place (Whelan, 2010, p.47). The work that ensued – detached youth work – used a bottom-up approach based on spontaneous interactions to develop deeper and more sustained relationships with young people (Morse, 1966; Goetschius and Tash, 1967; Spergel, 1966; Pitts *et al.*, 2002; Whelan, 2010, p.47). This surge in 'detached' youth work, with the aim of viewing the world from young people's perspectives, contrasted the perception of young people held by the wider public at the time (Tiffany, 2007; Whelan, 2010, p.47).

Street-based youth work can be both physically detached (work conducted on the street) or by the young person being detached institutionally or socially (Whelan, 2010, p.47) as detailed by Morse (1966) and Goetschius and Tash's (1967) typology. Another form of street-based work is outreach youth work, the key distinction is that outreach workers have a clear goal and agenda to encourage participation in a club, support programme or project so it is not as spontaneous as detached work where the only aim is relationship building, and where "asking the right questions was more important than knowing the right answers" (Morse, 1966: 194).

It is practitioners who are often seen as the radical thinkers in their approach to youth work, focusing on belonging, identity, and relationships – 'learning in life as it is lived' (Fine and Sirin, 2007; Belton, 2010; Jeffs and Smith, 2005). Policy makers, in stark contrast, prefer the more structured, outcome focused approaches where few questions are left unanswered, seen more in targeted youth work facilities (Bradford, 2004). Howard Williamson depicts this notion clearly stating that "where youth work tries to proclaim its grand autonomy and freedom from any of the social control aspects of their practice, they will be dismissed as irrelevant by politicians" (Into, 2022). Therefore, overtime, there has been a shift in focus of youth work away from association towards citizenship, character, health, and crime prevention, with more targets and outcomes. This is categorised by Brown *et al.* (1995) as the distinction between 'traditional' and 'new sector' provision. Although others would argue that 'traditional' youth work has always been target focused but with more overarching

targets for all young people. Today, it is seen in more specific terms focusing on young people who 'need' support.

An increase in targeted youth work can occur when the state becomes more involved. Whereas previously youth work was largely run by volunteers, with a strong focus on voluntarism and little involvement from the state, the recent interest from governments about the benefits of youth work has shaped its current and prospective journey (Jeffs and Smith, 2010). Interestingly, it was reported by Coopers and Lybrand (1994) that statutory youth services tend to be more targeted than the voluntary sector for example when the Wales Youth Agency (WYA) reported the benefits of youth work for crime prevention (Youth Work Wales, 2017). Contemporary targeted approaches to youth work focus more on issues including youth crime and victimisation, teenage pregnancy, drugs and alcohol misuse, homelessness or young people who are Not in Employment, Education, or Training (NEET), LGBTQIA+ young people, disabilities and gender inequality and avoid explicitly labelling socio-economic groups as 'in need'. It could however be argued that while the labels have changed ('NEET', 'at risk', 'delinquent', those involved in anti-social behaviour), these young people are still generally more from working class backgrounds further perpetuating the 'saviour narrative' and so called 'rescue operation' of young people (Fusco and Heathfield, 2016; Baldridge, 2020; Ranahan *et al.*, 2015; Cranfield, 1990; NYA, 2021; Jeffs and Smith, 2010).

Youth work has also seen a diversification of practice to more 'formal' settings such as schools, hospitals, or youth justice facilities. For example, globally, youth work has been taking place in schools in the form of before and after school programmes, early intervention programmes, as well as targeted projects for marginalised groups (Corney, 2006). It is however argued that youth work undertaken in formal education settings can blur the professional boundaries of youth work practices and undermine its value as a distinct practice (Corney, 2006). This is due to the unclear relationships between youth worker, young person, and teacher. Despite this, there is clear evidence of the positive impacts of youth work in schools including, increased engagement, decrease in risk of becoming NEET, improved aspirations, and development of partnerships (Arad Research, 2015). Despite Wales leading the way with youth work conducted in schools, a recent review of youth work in schools in Wales found that funding, school priorities of hard outcomes and negative perceptions of youth workers to be key barriers to delivering youth work in schools (Arad Research, 2015). This study did outline that youth work in schools was undertaken by both Local Authority (LA) services and the VYWS, however the scope or specific implications for the VYWS were not outlined. The implications for the voluntary sector in forming

partnerships with schools and other formal settings link back to the arguments presented on autonomy and hybridity and are thus important to consider.

A more recent development in youth work is digital youth work, which first emerged (as 'online youth work') in the European youth work context in Finland in 2012, when the impact of digitalisation on young people and youth work was relatively unknown (Kiviniemi and Tuominen, 2017). Digital youth work is now known as any youth work which uses, includes, or discusses the digital world. It is no longer seen as simply a youth work method, but rather a setting, tool, or the content of youth work (European Commission, 2018). It is argued, however, that this should not be viewed as a separate method but embedded within traditional forms of youth work (Kiviniemi and Tuominen, 2017). Although relatively new, it has become a significant part of youth work coinciding with the fast pace of the digital world and young people becoming 'digital youth' (Erstrad, 2012), especially – arguably vital – during the COVID-19 pandemic. As well as attracting the attention of young people, digital technologies used in youth work practices can also address social inequalities through access to digital devices ensuring more digital competence in contemporary society (Kiviniemi and Tuominen, 2017).

Certain youth work approaches are subject to debate amongst academics and practitioners. Particularly, uniformed groups such as the Scouts, Cadets and Guides have faced such debate. Kendall and Knapp (1995) grouped uniformed groups such as these with church groups, the YMCA/YWCA, Young Farmers Clubs and Boys and Girls Clubs and reflects their influence in the VYWS by stating they support approximately 5 million young people in England alone (although this is based on statistics in 1995). However, as stated by See *et al.* (2017), while uniformed groups share the goal of strengthening volunteering opportunities and inspiring young people to be active citizens in the community – synonymous with youth work at its core – their different missions, motives and structures have been subject to debate. A distinction must be drawn here between military uniformed groups such as the Army Cadets and Sea Cadets, and the Scouts, Girls/Boys Brigades and Woodcraft Folk, as although they share similar notions of 'good citizenship', they differ greatly in their radicalism and ideas of discipline (Springhall, 1970). As Cadet forces stemmed from a history of national service and compulsory military training in schools, they are inherently discipline and patriotism focused (Springhall, 1970). This, for many, questions the voluntarism, spontaneity, and open-ended nature of youth work by underpinning with ideals of imperialism, patriotism, and nationalism. Some also argue that Cadets are used as a recruitment tool for the military, as it is thought that 20% of recruits are former cadets (Castella, 2018). However, in recent years, the cadets have been promoting notions of youth development and challenging former views. Additionally, with an £180 million annual budget

and over £1 million expansion for cadets in schools, to exclude them from definitions would be inappropriate (Department of Education, 2021; Castella, 2018). As well as this, Army Cadets, Fire Cadets, and Police Cadet forces are members of CWVYS – the representative body for the VYWS in Wales and a partner of the research.

Faith groups present a similar debate. While many youth work traditions are grounded in faith-based practice (Myobi, 2010, p.111; Davies, 2009, p.63; Jeffs, 2010, p.15), there has been debate around the secularisation of modern youth work practices (Bright *et al.*, 2018, p.197). As stated by Jeffs (2011), all youth work is grounded in faith, but this can be social, political, educational, human, or religious faiths. However, faith-based (religious) youth work practices have been criticised, based on the potential of broadening inequalities for gender and sexuality, and the expressions of conformity and restriction over empowerment and participation (Page, 2015; Coburn, 2011; Garasia *et al.,* 2016). Despite this, there is clear evidence of the influence and scale of faith-based (religious) youth work. These debates can also be linked to hybridity in that working towards the state's priorities of tackling crime prevention or mental health, is not dissimilar to an organisation using the principles of religion to inform practice.

2.3.3 Distinguishing youth work from wider youth services

Defining youth work and distinguishing it from other services for young people has been subject to continuous debate. While no coherent definition exists globally, there are key elements distinguishing youth work from other services that are concurrent across borders. This includes the importance of relationships, association, voluntary participation, and informality (Pozzoboni and Kirshner, 2016, p.1). There has been continuous debate on whether youth work is a distinct and definable service with its own purpose, principles, and values or if simply the act of working with young people is youth work in itself (Hall *et al.*, 1998). However, many have contested the latter, stating that as opposed to other work with young people in contexts such as formal education or health, there is a service being provided, whereas in youth work the focus is on the relationship and incidental outcomes, rather than a specific service or purpose (Martin, 2003; Rodd and Stewart, 2009; Daughtry, 2011). Although as presented in relation to targeted provision, service providing is still found within youth work so this distinction is not as clear cut.

The most documented distinction between youth work and other services with young people is voluntarism. Youth work definitions all declare the necessity of the young person taking part of their own free will, with no obligations or expectations for attendance and participation (Coussée and Williamson, 2011; Williamson, 2015; Ranahan *et al.*, 2015; Smith, 2013; Davies and Merton, 2009). This shared assumption within youth work that young people

choose to take part has been justified and strengthened by the idea that choice and agency can result in better outcomes and the young person owning whatever they gain from the experience (Batsleer and Davies, 2010). What is not clear however, is how to define voluntary participation and thus introduces arguments around agency in young people's lives.

The agency debate highlights two contesting arguments, one focused on young people's control, choice, individualism, empowerment, and responsibility (Nico and Caetano, 2021) – the perspective that youth work is believed to take – the other focused on structure and society and how young people are 'trapped' in a life they cannot control, linked to 'strain' theory discussed previously (Nico and Caetano, 2021; Merton, 1938). As stated by Sercombe (2010) and in the Declaration of the 2nd EYWC, youth work's role is to 'facilitate agency' for young people to be active agents in their lives and decision making (EYWC, 2015). As young people are inherently diverse, it is essential to assist those from more disadvantage backgrounds by developing 'navigational capacities' to challenge, understand and articulate their circumstances (EYWC, 2015). Although structural forces (such as unemployment, homelessness, poverty) have a clear impact on young people's lives, this ignores the role that agency plays in shaping lived experiences (Giddens, 1987). In the context of youth work and voluntary participation, some would argue that taking part in youth work activities can strengthen either argument. On the one hand, young people access support or take part in activities as agents of control and have the choice to do so, but on the other hand, if their lives existed without strain and difficulty (including boredom, homelessness, deprivation, lack of opportunities), support or access may not be necessary. Youth work organisations providing homelessness support clearly highlight this complexity. However, by providing guidance, support, and advocacy through homeless agencies, it creates opportunities, capacity and agency in changing current circumstances and thus undertaking the role outlined in by the EYWC and synonymous with youth work definitions.

Other features of youth work definitions include trusting relationships, championing diversity, promotion of equality, empowerment, non-authoritative practice and individualism (Batsleer and Davies, 2010). As discussed by Kiilakoski (2019), the diversity socially, politically, geographically, and historically makes youth work intersubjective. By using Steven Kemmis' theory of 'Practice Architectures', Kiilakoski (2019) highlights that the development and evolution of youth work practice is influenced by social interactions, relations, and is formed over time. Further, practice architecture theory claims there are three elements facilitating effective and sustainable practices: the 'sayings' and professional vocabulary of a practice, the 'doings' of a profession such as the wages, design of premises and career paths, and finally the 'relatings' or social relationships between people and objects within the profession

(Kemmis *et al.*, 2014; Kemmis, 2009). In the context of youth work, Kiilakoski (2019) analysed these three categories to understand youth work as a distinct social practice across Europe and concluded that the diversity of 'practice architectures' between countries perpetuates confusion and debate amongst academics and professionals in defining youth work.

Nieminen (2014, p.35) also explored youth work as a distinct profession by outlining the key elements of professionalisation of Finnish youth work but can be generalised to wider youth work contexts. Within their analysis of the professionalisation of youth work, Nieminen (2014, p.35) looked at Torstendahl's (1990) three-tiered approach to studying professions, similar to that of Kemmis (2009). First, he outlined the descriptive properties that make up a profession including the characterisation of workers. Secondly, the intentions and conflicts of the profession are identified and finally analysis of the relationships with other social groups and over time (Torstendahl, 1990). Although Torstendahl (1990) takes a more functionalist approach and Kemmis (2009) a more interactionist or interpretivist approach, there are clear similarities in defining a profession based on the practices and relationships it enacts. Nieminen (2014, p.35) also sets out the key attributes of a profession, including: laws and defined qualifications, academic education for the occupation, professional autonomy, and a specialist knowledge base. It is clear from the literature explored so far that youth work possesses these attributes in some capacity and therefore should be identified and governed as a distinct profession. However, Sercombe (2010) argues that the professionalisation of youth work could run the risk of minimising its importance and value on relationships rather than the outcomes and professional practice, reflected by Ord (2016: 20) who states: "the present context is an unprecedented assault on youth work itself" in describing over-professionalisation and focus on outcomes.

2.3.4 Research Definition of VYW Services

In the planning of this research, the following definition of a VYW organisation in Wales was developed, encompassing elements of the definitions of the voluntary sector discussed above such as the funding, structure, governance as well as the definitions of youth work, both academic and in policy. This definition forms the basis for the research project:

> *In Wales, a voluntary youth work organisation is a national, regional, or local organisation which operates independently of national, regional or government, though it may collaborate with or be part funded by those levels of government. It may be staffed by both paid workers and volunteers and works in the interests of young people through adherence to core youth work values, expressed in the Principles and Purposes of being educative, participative, empowering, expressive and inclusive. Beyond these values, it may also pursue other elements within its mission and engage with young people in a variety of ways, across different settings/contexts, on a range of issues, and through both individual and group*

relationships. Its overall goal is both to provide spaces for young people's autonomy and voice, and bridges towards the next positive steps in their lives.

2.3.5 A Brief History of Youth Work in England and Wales

Key points in the history of youth work and youth policy in the UK include the Albemarle Report (1960) which reviewed the new 'Service for Youth' (Davies, 2009, p.63) and called for new purpose-built youth centres, better professional training and development of youth work staff, and highlighted issues including inconsistency, poor leadership, low political priority and lack of resources/funding (Clements, 2019; Williamson, 1995). Further key moments in history include Secretary of Education Margaret Thatcher's concentrated focus for youth work on those from 'demonstrable disadvantage' during the 1970s which led to the voluntary sector facing threat for being too liberal and inclusive (Davies, 2009, p.63) and The Thompson Report (1982), which focused only on England and saw the earliest signs of separation between England and Wales in youth policy (Williamson, 1995). Finally, the launch of ConneXions in England was an unsuccessful attempt to provide a universal support service to all young people by bringing together the careers service, the education welfare service and some parts of the youth service (Davies, 2009, p.63). ConneXions also, applied only to England. However, ConneXions could not corral the voluntary sector as it cannot, by definition, be legislated by government, though the voluntary sector can of course be persuaded and encouraged through withdrawal of funding, for credibility, or quality assurance, and so inevitably some parts of the voluntary sector did align with the ConneXions policy.

As seen above, historically, Wales has been umbilically attached to English social policy and practice, including youth policy. Differences between communities in Wales and England were largely ignored and practices perpetuated the long standing middle-class philanthropic ideals of English society (Jones and Rose, 2003). Post-war Wales differed greatly from England; poverty, unemployment and disadvantage overwhelmed rural areas and basic survival needs were being met by youth work provision, such as food and shelter, compared to England with more prosperity (Jones and Rose, 2003). In 1974, CWVYS[3] became the independent representative in Wales for VYW, which still, despite times of uncertainty and precarity, remains a leading body in the youth sector in Wales (CWVYS, 2023). In 1984, Survey 13 was published by Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI), focused on Wales' Youth Services and impact (Williamson, 2010, p.83). In 1989, *The Youth Work Curriculum*

[3] It is important to note that CWVYS began in 1947 under the name The Standing Conference in Wales of Voluntary Youth Organisations, it was renamed in 1974 when it became the independent representative for VYW in Wales.

Statement for Wales outlined four key aims to be educative, participative, expressive, and empowering. After inclusion was later added, this is now known as the five pillars of youth work (Williamson, 2010, p.83; YWWRG, 2022).

Further key moments in history include establishment of the Wales Youth Agency (WYA) in 1992 (dissolved in 2006) and the Youth Work Excellence Awards launched in 1994 to recognise and enhance the value and importance of youth work and gain political support for the sector (Williamson, 2010, p.83). Local government reform in 1996 saw eight local authorities become 22 unitary authorities, with separate and independent local networks, introducing difficulties within funding streams for VYW organisations. Tensions also grew between CWVYS and the WYA. While CWVYS remained a separate agency, it did not have funding, leading to the WYA delivering the CWVYS work plan. Conflict grew thereafter on whether the WYA was a more broad-based youth agency, serving wider needs such as health promotion or economic development, or a youth work agency and how this would reduce the amount of resource available to youth work in Wales if the former were true (Williamson, 2007).

With the exception of youth justice, most policy areas affecting young people became devolved functions following the establishment of the National Assembly for Wales (NAW) in 1999 (Williamson, 2010, p.83). After devolution, a specific Wales Youth Strategy was produced, *Extending Entitlement (EE),* with youth work discussed as a key driver for the provision of many entitlements for young people in Wales (Williamson, 2007). *EE* recognised the responsibility of society to support young people and 'fill the gap' when personal circumstances were not meeting their needs (NAW, 2000). *EE* also identified the lack of current policy focusing on prevention and support rather than 'fixing societal' problems (NAW, 2000). The publication strengthened the argument for why Wales needed to be distinguished from England in its youth policy, by identifying specific issues facing young people in Wales, including the high number of NEET young people (NAW, 2000). Unlike ConneXions, *EE* stressed that there was no need for new structures or professions but rather a need to build on and improve existing methods, practices, and policies (Williamson, 2007).

When the WYA dissolved in 2006, youth work lost a central champion, and collaboration and partnership between the statutory and voluntary sectors struggled. However, it could be argued that the voluntary sector specifically gained a stronger advocate with CWVYS remaining an independent representative for the VYWS and harnessing greater endorsement for its work.

The volatile history of funding cuts and threats to wider networks such as CWVYS and the WYA led to the emergence of campaigns such as *In Defence of Youth Work*[4] which aimed to defend the youth work profession and its accompanying educational practices, processes, and agendas against policy changes that could undermine its distinct practice (IDYW, 2011).

As recently as 2016, the practice, value, and governance of youth work in Wales was subject to a spot inquiry where the value of the voluntary sector especially was questioned by policy makers (Glaze, 2022). During the inquiry, CWVYS was notified by Welsh Government officials via a short letter addressed to 'CWVYO' that its core funding would be withdrawn and CWVYS was thanked for its work over the 'previous 10 years', despite CWVYS being active for 69 years (Glaze, 2022). This decision was later reversed, and funding reinstated. Paradoxically, this later strengthened CWVYS' standing in Wales, particularly through advocacy for more 'open' youth work – the terrain most occupied by those in the voluntary sector and supported by CWVYS (Williamson, 2022; Glaze, 2022). This moment of concern proves, nonetheless, that youth work and the voluntary sector are inherently precarious and unstable terrains, difficult to manage and research. This could explain the gaps in knowledge on the scope of the VYWS in Wales and lack of research. Despite this, most youth work continues to be delivered by voluntary organisations or Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). For a more detailed overview of the history of youth work in the UK see Appendix 3.

2.4 Previous Research in Youth Work

Now definitions of 'youth', the voluntary sector, youth work and a brief overview of the history of youth work in Wales has been outlined, key existing research will now be analysed to understand the current knowledge base.

2.4.1 Research with Youth Workers

Previous research into youth work has taken varying approaches including targeting different populations – youth workers and young people – or different issues for example racism, inequality, or responses to challenging behaviour, a summary of which is provided. First focusing on the perspectives of youth workers and then young people, and then identifying key contemporary issues facing young people in society and the youth work response.

Rodd and Stewart (2009) interviewed seven experienced youth workers from a range of youth services (drugs/alcohol, housing, local government, employment, education) with the aim of exploring the nature of youth work relationships. Key findings included the importance

[4] The In Defence of Youth Work campaign ended its work in October 2022 after deciding that much had been achieved and a loss of energy had become apparent for those leading the campaign (IDYW, 2022).

of the rapport building process, long term relationships, and the lack of value placed on supportive relationships by funders. Similarly, Hartje *et al.* (2008) looked at key characteristics of youth workers through their survey of 886 youth work staff. Their key finding showed the correlation between lived experience and successful relationship building with young people (Hartje *et al.*, 2008). They also emphasised the importance of youth worker's belief in, and encouragement of, young people's capabilities and that they are not seen as helpless and in need (Daughtry, 2011). This is significant in modern society where young people are seen by some as relentlessly restricted and expected to be both adult and child simultaneously (drinking at 18, driving at 17, sex at 16, employment at 16), though others may however argue the opposite, that young people have more freedom and autonomy (Daughtry, 2011; Epstein, 2007). These contemporary findings are comparable to Morse's (1966) study where they found the important factors of detached youth workers were a non-authoritative approach, encouraging young people's autonomy, humour, being permanently on call and listening. The Morse (1966) study highlighted the importance of personality, an understanding of human behaviour and support on the job to successful detached youth work, but also evidenced that no one method or procedure will work for all young people and thus should not be viewed in isolation.

Despite these findings focusing on the personality of youth workers as essential to successful youth work, it is also argued by many that qualifications and professional training and development are essential to equip youth workers with the necessary skills to work with young people (Bessant, 2005). Bessant (2005) describes the key propositions for qualifying youth workers stating that professional education provides youth workers with the skills and knowledge on policy, ethics, needs and diversity, while also assisting in the development of a distinct professional identity and ensuring quality assurance. Further to this, the EWC in Wales states that qualifying and registering youth workers improves safeguarding and professionalism (Welsh Government, 2022a).

Other research with youth workers by Jenkinson (2011) found that understanding young people's background to be essential in youth work, especially in the context of criminality and challenging behaviour. This is based upon the notion of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's) and Trauma Informed approaches. The notion of ACE's first emerged in 1998 in the USA where Felitti *et al.* (1998) outlined ten potential experiences in childhood that impact future development and attachment. These included abuse (physical, sexual, and verbal), neglect (emotional and physical), mental illness and household adversities (domestic violence, divorce/separation, substance abuse, relatives in prison/criminality). Harris and Fallot (2001) identify the key principles of a trauma informed approach as: safety, trust, choice, collaboration, and empowerment. By recognising, where necessary, that behaviour

responses could be trauma based or due to adverse experiences, this adds value and understanding to the young person's life and can reduce and improve challenging behaviour (Hickle, 2020). A lot of youth work practices actively implement a trauma informed approach and ensure that ACE's are understood and considered in work with the young person.

The importance of individual experiences and upbringing can be extended to conversations around race and inequality. Baldridge (2020) found that dialogue on race in community-based educational spaces (youth work settings), often linked to the narrative that young people are 'needy' or need 'saving' or 'fixing'. This was particularly apparent for youth from minority groups, especially those from minority ethnic groups, whereas more affluent youth present in minority spaces, were seen as 'resource hoarding' due to structural advantage (Baldridge, 2020). Although this study's focus was mainly on race and ethnicity, it evidences the importance of understanding individual experiences in successful youth work. Despite this, Baldrige (2020) identified that this can create a paradox, with young people challenging systems of oppression and inequality, while simultaneously reinforcing narratives that youth are to blame for their position in society and thus requiring a complex balance. Therefore, youth work should not be distinguished too broadly from wider socio-political structures due to existing inequalities in both (Baldridge, 2020).

It is also important to understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on youth work and young people. Despite evidence that the pandemic put some youth work related organisations in jeopardy, research also suggests that the pandemic has magnified the credibility, recognition, and the connection of youth work to wider public concerns, especially mental health. For example, studies conducted by CWVYS with member organisations, revealed that the mental health of staff and young people, loss of funding, uncertainty, and isolation were the main concerns of the sector at the time (Jones and James, 2020; Jones, 2021). Further into the pandemic, many reported greater resilience, the ability to adapt, strengthened digital skills and communication and a sense of gratitude as positives for both staff and young people, bringing greater value and credibility to the sector (Jones, 2021). These studies were conducted during the pandemic, the findings, therefore may not be representative of the experiences of youth work organisations thereafter.

While these studies yield important results on the characteristics of youth workers and youth work practices, the structure, governance, and scope of specifically the voluntary sector has been routinely ignored, while also ignoring the voice of young people.

2.4.2 Research with Young People

The views and opinions of young people are not widely researched. This could be due to the ethical boundaries and accessibility of this particular cohort. Despite this, there is a need for

comparative research into young people's views and youth workers' opinions in order to understand if professional priorities align with expressed needs.

Research with young people provides valuable insight into the needs and desires of young people. The Albemarle Committee defined young people as the 4th partner in the youth service alongside the voluntary sector and local and state governments, and therefore inclusion of their views in research is essential (Davies and Taylor, 2019, p.1). McNeil *et al.* (2012) found that 74% of the 1000 young people in their study said that education was their biggest challenge in life, with 44% saying relationships, 34% careers and 20% health. As will be discussed in more detail, it is likely that concern over health, specifically mental health, has increased in recent years. Research with young people in the youth work context has uncovered the importance of being taken seriously, genuine human connection and choice, control, and agency (Hickle, 2020). Approaches such as that by Ritchie and Ord (2016), which placed young people as experts in their own lives, found the importance of friendships and peer networks, acceptance, and routine as motivators for attending an open access youth club, a seemingly under researched provision (Brent, 2004). Nolas (2013) yielded similar results in their study of 18 young people from a drug misuse and criminal behaviour programme, where participants stated the club gave them a sense of belonging, group identity and an escape from social divisions. They also expressed frustration at the lack of government investment in their communities. This was also apparent during consultation with young people for the *EE* (in Wales) guidance document in 2002, where young people highlighted the need for LA and government to understand their needs better (NAW, 2002). However, Wales was the first country in Europe to include children and young people in a systematic evaluation of the Children's Commissioner for Wales, evidencing the value and importance placed on youth voice and participation in Wales specifically (Hillman *et al.*, 2010).

Recent research into youth work has been largely preoccupied with outcomes and targets. Although often used as an evidence base for policy makers and funders to prove the value of youth work, it has diminished the value placed on less structured and 'off the cuff' youth work (Norris, 2013). McNeil *et al.* (2012) identifies two types of outcomes used in youth work frameworks, extrinsic and intrinsic outcomes. Extrinsic outcomes can be easily measured through qualifications, attendance and participation data and are easier to prove the benefit for society (e.g. contribution to economy, dependence on welfare or health services). These are the outcomes often reported on by LA services, such as the audit conducted annually in Wales (Welsh Government, 2021a). However, intrinsic outcomes, found through research involving young people, like improved communication, confidence, problem solving, and relationships are, in many ways far more valuable to both the young person and society but

measuring these is difficult and results in funders and policy makers focusing on extrinsic outcomes when evaluating youth work (McNeil *et al.*, 2012).

In 1996, the WYA conducted a study to research and analyse youth work practice and how it met the needs of young people aged 15-19 (Williamson *et al.*, 1996). They conducted interviews with both young people and youth workers to specifically understand their needs and how efficiently youth work was meeting such needs. Findings revealed a confusion amongst young people's definitions of 'needs', 'issues' and 'wants', but that boredom significantly characterised the everyday lives of most young people (Williamson *et al.*, 1996). Other key stresses in young people's lives included relationships, policing, school, careers, and social security. The study found a lack of developmental benefits resulting from youth work, but that diversion was valuable for providing a place to go and something to do (Williamson *et al.,* 1996). Although this research is influential in understanding the experiences of young people in Wales, it lacks detail on how successfully young people's needs are being met. There has been a recent expectation that youth work research should engage more with addressing contemporary issues facing young people such as mental health, offending behaviour, and homelessness, and the youth work response to these in understanding if young people's needs are being met.

2.5 Contemporary Issues Facing Young People

Existing youth work research seldom investigates the contemporary issues young people face and the youth work response. Contemporary issues include new phenomena (e.g. COVID-19), or existing topics that have increased in prominence (e.g. mental health and wellbeing). While young people face a wide range of issues that affect their futures and the support they access, only a select few will be explored here and throughout the research: mental health, youth offending and county lines, homelessness and young people who are NEET. The rationale for this focus is based around the Welsh policy agenda. For example, mental health and lack of suitable housing were key concerns outlined across Europe in the Declaration of the 2nd EYWC in 2015 (EYWC, 2015), and where a lot of Welsh Government money was targeted. Similarly, the National Youth Work Strategy (Welsh Government, 2019) and the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (Welsh Government, 2022b) in Wales set responding to the rise in NEET young people as a key aim. Finally, Conroy (2018, p.69) stated that youth work and youth justice should unite in supporting young people in need, and Welsh Government and the Youth Justice Board (2014) aimed to use effective collaboration between statutory and voluntary sectors to tackle youth offending and county lines.

2.5.1 Mental Health

The World Health Organisation (WHO) state that mental health and illness accounts for 20% of the overall 'burden of disease' globally, larger than any other single disease (WHO, cited in Welsh Government 2012). The Welsh Government Mental Wellbeing Strategy (2012) reported that 1 in 10 children between the ages of 5 and 16 have a mental health problem or behavioural issue. Furthermore, 50% of people enduring mental health problems show symptoms by the age of 14 (Welsh Government, 2012), evidencing the need for mental health early intervention for young people. Although it must be noted that while mental health is not a new issue impacting young people, there is evidence suggesting it has increased due to factors including modernisation, globalisation, and digital spaces, as well as the impact of COVID-19 (Ranahan *et al.*, 2015; Williams, 2020; Jones and James, 2020; Jones, 2021).

Arguably many children and young people were the 'hidden victims' of the pandemic experiencing increased risk of mental health struggles. Childline reported an increase in young people experiencing depression, anxiety, panic attacks, nightmares, feelings of loneliness and isolation (NSPCC, 2020). The risk of poor mental health impacted those from disadvantaged backgrounds the most (OECD, 2020; Fegert *et al*., 2020), which, for Wales, was heightened due to it having the highest levels of child poverty in the UK (Bevan Foundation, 2020). Decosimo *et al.* (2019) researched a community-based arts programme in Liberia after the Ebola outbreak and found that engaging in community-based programmes significantly improved the mental wellbeing of young people, providing valuable evidence of the need for youth and community work during times of societal struggle. In Wales, youth work organisations adapted their practice and created new provision to meet the needs of young people during the pandemic. Youth workers did however report concerns over funding and the impact on young people feeling isolated, lonely, and unsafe and the disproportionate impact on the BAME community (Jones and James, 2020). Little is still known about the youth work response to mental health, the scope of services and the capacity and ability of services in handling the increase of young people with poor mental health.

2.5.2 Homelessness

As previously discussed, there has been an increase in youth work using more targeted approaches to tackle issues around homelessness, youth crime, and county lines (Jenkinson, 2011). Despite Wales being the first country in the UK to place homelessness prevention on statutory footing, and ensure every local authority has a designated homelessness officer, the figures on youth homelessness are still largely unknown (Pierpoint

and Hoolachan, 2019). Available statistics in Wales showed that in the year 2018-19, 7,698 young people aged 16-25 felt at risk of homelessness (End Youth Homelessness Cymru, 2022), although this number is significantly lower than Clarke's (2016) UK estimate of over 216,000 young people sofa surfing or sleeping rough on any one night. The disparity between official and estimated statistics is due to the hidden nature of homelessness and could be evidence of the lack of engagement with statutory services or young people 'presenting' as homeless (Clarke, 2016). In Wales, the VYWS has been supporting young people with homelessness prevention for many years. Llamau, a Welsh charity focused on addressing young people's housing needs and domestic violence, gave housing related support to 7,697 young people in 2021 (LLamau, 2021). Research has also shown that youth crime and homelessness are significantly linked. In England, of the 5,000 young people accessing homeless support, 15% had a history of offending (Homeless Link, 2018). Homeless Link (2018) documented the range of problems associated with homelessness such as crime, anti-social behaviour and substance misuse and the heightened risk of homelessness for young people from BAME communities, the LGBTQIA+ community and asylum seekers/refugees. Therefore, these issues appear to be intertwined and thus difficult to handle individually for youth work organisations.

2.5.3 Crime and County Lines

Young people are involved in all types of crime (such as violent crime, anti-social behaviour, theft, motoring offences and drugs) and are at increased risk of victimisation for certain crimes (including violent crimes, child sexual abuse, exploitation, and child abuse) (Youth Justice Board, 2022; ONS, 2022). However, statistics on youth crime and victimisation in Wales are largely unknown. County lines and child criminal exploitation (CCE) are currently notable contemporary crime risks for young people. County lines are defined as the exporting of illegal drugs by organised criminal networks, using a dedicated phone line, while exploiting children and vulnerable adults to sell and store the drugs (UK Government, 2022). It is believed that there are over 1,000 different county lines operating in the UK, with an estimated 100 entering Welsh towns (NCA, 2019; Maxwell and Wallace, 2021). As reported by the National Crime Agency (NCA) (2019), county lines involve the exploitation of local young people, 'out-of-force' young people (those living in different counties, who are harder to detect by services) and CCE and abuse. The transportation of drugs from urban areas to smaller towns is not a new phenomenon (Dorn *et al.*, 1992), but the targeted and prolific nature of county lines is considered relatively new and has become a key government priority (Wroe, 2021). Research conducted in North Wales and Merseyside by Caluori (2020) suggests the pandemic has also impacted county lines. This study, among others, found that the pandemic disrupted the ability to move freely between areas without suspicion and

increased the vulnerability of young people and their susceptibility to grooming and exploitation (Caluori, 2020; Brewster *et al.*, 2021; NYA, 2020b; Wedlock and Molina, 2020). Lockdowns created barriers for professionals such as school staff and youth workers to detect risks and the increase in technology usage, increased grooming risks online (Wedlock and Molina, 2020; Harding, 2020). Like homelessness, although county lines and exploitation are dealt with by statutory services such as the police and social services, voluntary organisations also work to reduce the risk of harm to young people in these circumstances (Williams and Finlay, 2019). For example, St Giles Trust are a national charity working across the UK to help young people at risk or involved in criminal exploitation and gangs, through employing people with lived experiences – proven to help with engagement and effective outcomes for young people (St Giles Trust, 2020).

An influential study was conducted by Maxwell and Wallace (2021) to understand how child criminal exploitation manifests in Wales and to explore effective interventions and prevention approaches. They highlighted that cannabis was used as a 'hook' for involving young people in exploitation, evidencing the clear link between drug use and the risks associated with exploitation. Particular attention was made to current processes for safeguarding young people in Wales, with reference to the need for more 'contextual safeguarding' in understanding the whole picture of a young person's life and background, as well as a call for more safe spaces in communities for young people following cuts to the provision of youth centres (Maxwell and Wallace, 2021). Lefevre *et al.* (2020) also highlighted the importance of involving all key stakeholders in 'contextual safeguarding' for young people to reduce the risks of exploitation. Other key findings from Maxwell and Wallace (2021) included: barriers to service delivery such as staff turnover and the time limited nature of services, the importance and the barriers of multi-agency work such as sharing information and overwhelming young people with professionals, the impact of age and risks of transitional stages to move to 'adult' services, and the heightened risks of exploitation for those on school sanctions or school exclusion. A study by OPCCG (2020) likewise found that disengagement and disruption at school and additional needs enhanced the risk of exploitation. Furthermore, Sturrock and Holmes (2015) found that multi-agency approaches allow for 'pieces of a jigsaw' to be brought together to help with early identification. Despite this, little is known about the VYW response to county lines and exploitation in Wales and the difficulties faced by the sector in responding to this. As well as this, the impact of rurality on exploitation has not been explored.

2.5.4 Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET)

Finally, and linked to the behaviours discussed above, the increase in young people who are NEET is important to understand. The risks associated with young people who are NEET include increased anti-social behaviour, criminal behaviour, substance misuse and exploitation (Public Health England, 2014; Bathgate and Bird, 2013). In Wales, 13.6% of 16-to18-year-olds and 16.3% of 19-24-year-olds were reported as NEET at the end of 2021 (Welsh Government, 2023). As presented throughout the thesis so far, young people who are NEET has been a topic of conversation both within policy and previous research into youth work (Welsh Government, 2019; Welsh Government, 2022b; Williamson, 2007; NAW, 2000; Baldridge, 2020; Ranahan *et al.*, 2015; Cranfield, 1990; NYA, 2021; Jeffs and Smith, 2010). Despite this focus and priority, little is known about the VYWS response to young people who are NEET in contemporary society, how services tackle the risks associated with this and the Welsh context.

2.6 Previous Mapping Research in Youth Work

As presented above, research has been conducted from the perspective of youth workers and young people. However, the Welsh perspective is largely unresearched as well as specific mapping of youth services for both statutory and voluntary sectors. An analysis of previous mapping attempts is necessary to identify the key themes and issues raised by this research approach. It is first important to emphasise that most mapping research, and especially for the voluntary sector, would struggle to be completely comprehensive, as stated in Survey 13 “such is the amount and diversity of youth work that no sample of provision can be claimed as truly representative” (HMI, 1984: 1). This could explain the lack of previous research in this area, but few attempts have been made.

In 2002, Pitts *et al.* undertook a mapping project to scope the coverage of detached and outreach youth projects in the UK. The survey of 500 respondents revealed that only a small minority used traditional forms of detached and outreach youth work. Furthermore, they found that 53% of respondents said that funding was unstable which negatively affected projects, while also reporting that mental health, drugs and alcohol, and crime significantly impacted the 58,153 children and young people supported (Pitts *et al.*, 2002). While these results are relevant to the current research, it was focused on the UK as a whole and given its focus on detached and outreach projects, it excluded the vast and varied range of additional services provided by the VYWS and the maintained sector.

Moreover, in Ireland, a first of its kind mapping study was undertaken to understand the economic value of youth work (NCYI, 2012). It was estimated that over 40,000 individuals volunteer in the youth work sector in Ireland, with 1,397 in paid employment (NCYI, 2012).

Similarly in Scotland, it is estimated that over 450,000 young people were supported by the youth sector (YouthLink Scotland, 2016). Both studies revealed that economically, youth work saves governments money; 1.2 billion euros in Ireland and at least £7 for every £1 spent in Scotland (NCYI, 2012; YouthLink Scotland, 2016). However, both studies were nation-specific (Ireland and Scotland) and thus cannot be generalised to the Welsh context. Moreover, they encompassed both statutory and voluntary sector provision.

A later study conducted in Northern Ireland in 2018, again on both statutory and VYW services, revealed that at least £2.28 million was spent on children and young people (Kemp *et al.*, 2018). However, only two voluntary organisations responded to the survey and thus only very limited conclusions can be drawn.

A low response rate appears to be a common thread in previous research involving voluntary/third-sector organisations. In 2021, the NYA commissioned research to map youth provision in England. This was to include upper tier/unitary LA youth provision as well as the voluntary sector (NYA, 2021). From manual scoping on external public databases, they identified over 8,000 third sector organisations and 152 from local authorities. They had a 28% response rate (2,346 responses) from the voluntary sector and 59% from local authorities (NYA, 2021). This was, arguably, a successful response rate given the time frame over which the survey took place (only two months). Despite this report producing a vast and detailed dataset on youth provision, it is again for England only and therefore further study is required in the Welsh context.

In Wales, little is known about the VYWS. An annual audit is conducted on statutory youth services but there is no equivalent for the voluntary sector. The latest audit released in December 2021, revealed that there are 754 full-time equivalent frontline or management youth work staff working in LA youth services (Welsh Government, 2021a). This means there are 49 young people to every worker, significantly less than the previous year (127 per worker). This is based on the young people registered with youth services and not on attendance, so reliability is questionable. In 1944 the McNair Report argued that there should be one full-time youth worker to every 300 young people, so this progression is encouraging. Economically, core-budget spend per young person was £28 for the last two years and expenditure worked out at £67 per young person in both 2020 and 2021 (Welsh Government, 2021a), again suggesting greater investment in youth work, with budget being only £2.80 per young person in 1995 (Williamson, 1995).

Similarly, a study focusing on the expenditure of LA youth services was published in 2022 by the YMCA. This study aimed to understand the impact the last decade of austerity and subsequent cuts has had on youth services (YMCA, 2022). The study revealed that in

Wales, there has been a 32% real-terms decrease in funding to LA youth services in the last 10 years (real-terms increases/decreases are a measure of general inflation used to understand spending equivalents overtime) (YMCA, 2022). This is compared to a 74% decrease in England, which equates to over one billion pounds in cuts (YMCA, 2022). Although this is useful to provide evidence of the impact of austerity and cuts on available services for young people, it again focuses on LA services, and thus ignores the impact cuts have had on the voluntary sector.

In 2022, a brief summary report was released of a short workforce mapping study conducted by Education Training Standards (ETS) on behalf of Welsh Government that took place in 2021 (ETS, 2022). The study was similar in many ways to this research project. It focused, however, on the whole youth work sector including statutory organisations from 21 of the 22 local authorities (ETS, 2022). The report states that 91 organisations responded to the survey, 70 from voluntary organisations (or any other organisations that identified with the Principles and Purposes but were not the LA youth service (such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)). A total of 19,300 staff and volunteers were reported, 17,700 of which worked in the voluntary sector (ETS, 2022). Over 800 staff held a Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) youth support worker or professional youth worker qualification and over 100 volunteers were also qualified (ETS, 2022). Despite publishing a summary report, Welsh Government decided that the survey findings would not be published in full due to discrepancies in the data. The key points open to criticism included the survey being active for only 2 months, only 21 local authorities responding, the lack of detailed knowledge on the organisations who responded that were neither LA nor voluntary sector (such as CAMHS) and the impact of COVID-19 with the study being conducted in Autumn 2021 when organisations were still in recovery (ETS, 2022). The current project, although focused on the voluntary sector alone, should provide further detail relating to this mapping study and build on existing knowledge.

Despite the lack of previous mapping research, there is clear evidence in the literature of the importance of this data type. As stated by Never (2011), sector maps are important for funders, policy makers, practitioners, and researchers to better target audiences and identify supply and demand conclusions. Similarly, when analysing the economic impact of youth work, Kemp *et al.* (2018) stated that mapping budget spend can help identify if children's rights are being met and their needs addressed. It also provides a current 'stocktake' of available resources and highlights gaps (White, 2004). Mapping can also inform evaluation to assist with future delivery and funding, particularly relevant for organisations like CWVYS. Findings from mapping research can however reveal a 'postcode lottery' where resources and quality of provision is affected by location, with certain areas being saturated and others

lacking in support for young people, influenced heavily by levels of affluence and deprivation (NYA, 2021). Inclusion criteria for sector maps is also contested. Never (2011) also outlines the importance of including information on the issues being tackled and how these measure and match the problem in society, which can be completed by comparing crime statistics, area deprivation data, educational attainment data and can be analysed using GIS mapping (Never, 2011). Norris (2013) states that organisations should be collecting data on participation, attendance, demographics, qualifications of staff and operational plans. This further underlines the importance of building professional standards within youth work, including professional training programmes and career development opportunities to make the sector more sustainable and valued (Hartje *et al.*, 2008).

2.7 Conclusion

Overall, the difficulties in defining and conceptualising youth work in its many forms creates barriers to generalisable research. Despite this, young people continue to experience many issues and difficulties which the VYWS is expected and attempts to tackle, but too little is known about their successes. What is clear is that mapping and evaluative data, that is evidenced as being of the utmost importance to the youth work sector both voluntary and statutory, is not easily achievable, nor is it placed as high priority or researched in the Welsh context. This research aims to fill the gap in knowledge by scoping the VYWS in Wales and evaluating key themes such as barriers to service delivery, sustainability and how the sector respond to the contemporary issues impacting young people discussed above.

2.8 Research Questions and Aims

Therefore, the research set out to identify: “what is the scale, composition and nature of VYW services in Wales?”. Three project aims were established to answer this question, to:

1) Map/scope the VYWS in Wales.
2) Identify how these services tackle contemporary issues impacting young people.
3) Consider the sustainability of the sector in terms of the recent impact of social and economic challenges and future developments.

These aims helped identify the critical knowledge gaps important to CWVYS and partners, and relevant to supporting a national support service for young people. These included: addressing the challenges of mapping the sector, identifying the gaps in sector provision and development, highlighting the value of the sector in tackling existing and emerging contemporary issues impacting young people, and evidencing necessary future organisational developments. The aims also supported the Interim Youth Work Board’s (IYWB) (2021) goal of developing a national youth information exchange. Importantly, the

research built upon an existing academic-practitioner partnership and existing CWVYS research (Jones and James, 2020; Jones, 2021).

3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Critical knowledge and research gaps on the nature and scope of the Voluntary Youth Work Sector (VYWS) across Wales were identified by the Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services (CWVYS) (the KESS partner) and supported in the literature reviewed. The critical literature review informed the mixed methods approach to empirical and secondary data collection. This included mapping existing Voluntary Youth Work (VYW) services for young people aged 11-25 years in Wales, and then conducting questionnaires and focus groups with these services. The scoping exercise was required to establish the scale of the VYWS and the size of the research population, which formed the basis of sampling for the questionnaire and focus groups. This chapter provides an overview of the project design, research methods, analysis, and ethical considerations.

To address these aims, a cross-sectional design was adopted which provided a snapshot of the VYWS in Wales.

3.2 Research Design

Cross-sectional research design uses sample selection of a large number of cases to be examined at a single point in time and allows focus on multiple variables simultaneously while understanding associations between them (Clarke *et al.*, 2021). As the VYWS is a precarious and ever-changing sector that has proven difficult to research and scope in the past (HMI, 1984; Pitts *et al.*, 2002; NYA, 2021; Kemp *et al.*, 2018), a snapshot study was most appropriate due to the project length. Furthermore, the project was specifically interested in the VYWS, identifying a cross-section of the wider voluntary sector and youth work sector. Similarly, cross-sectional research design allows for multiple variables to be explored simultaneously, unlike experimental designs which focus on one key variable (Clarke *et al.*, 2021). Studying multiple variables simultaneously was important as the project aimed to first identify/scope the sector, understand its structure and character and analyse certain elements of it. It is important to note that within social science research, as stated by Ellis *et al.* (2010), types of variables can be clearly defined, including demographic, social institutional, cultural, behavioural/personality and cognitive. While cross-sectional designs can encompass a number of these simultaneously, this project only included cultural and social institutional variables as it was focused on the VYWS and the organisations within it, rather than individual demographics, thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. However, during the qualitative focus groups, some cognitive variables were examined such as opinions and experiences of staff in the sector.

While cross-sectional research designs are commonly linked to quantitative methods such as surveys, Clarke *et al.* (2021) also outlines that semi-structured interviews or focus groups can be used. In this case, a large sample is used to understand experience at a single point in time, differing from longitudinal designs which capture data across a period of time. The VYWS in Wales, as evidenced previously, is under researched, fragmented, and lacking governance and therefore providing a snapshot of its current state will produce a knowledge base with potential for future research and development. Similarly, the research design allowed for the flexibility required given the needs identified by CWVYS (such as closing knowledge gaps in understanding the scale and nature of the VYWS) and the funding requirements (project size, scale, timeliness and completed as part of an Masters by Research). Specifically, providing only a snapshot, exploring variables simultaneously and using mixed methods utilised the flexibility of the design.

During preliminary discussions between the research team, a three-tier typology was developed which detailed the different types of data required. Tier one data referred to critical VYWS data (such as the name, location, type, and structure of organisations) required to map the sector. Tier two data focused on the needs of CWVYS, including Welsh Government priorities such as staff qualifications, Welsh language speakers and the nature of provision. Tier three addressed the data required to examine the sector, in terms of addressing contemporary issues and the sustainability of the sector. Each of these were mapped onto the research aims and a data collection method. The methodology involved collating, triangulating, and analysing data from a variety of sources:

1- Secondary data collection and analysis of existing sources which detail VYWS agencies, using online sources and partner databases. [Linked to Aims one and Tier one]
2- Online questionnaire survey submitted to identified agencies and partners to identify the gaps in existing mapping data. [Linked to Aims one and two and Tiers one, two and three]
3- Focus groups with agencies identified in methods two and three, to analyse the sector. [Linked to Aims two and three and Tier to and three]

Due to the mixed methods approach taken, it was therefore difficult to outline the epistemological (how we know things) and ontological (what we study) approaches (Della Porta and Keating 2008). Traditionally, social science research standpoints are determined by their methodological process (qualitative or quantitative), with qualitative approaches identifying meaning rather than data and measurements (Goertz and Mahoney, 2012). Overall, however, the study took a realist perspective due to the nature and reality of youth

work and young people. While certain concepts, perspectives and debates surrounding youth work in Wales are difficult to comprehend and thus study, there is an existing reality, which can be researched and, in some respects, measured and therefore the project wanted to highlight this and bring it to the forefront of existing research and understanding.

Ethical considerations were also central in developing this mixed methods approach, informed by the guidelines provided by the Research Councils UK, the British Society of Criminology (BSC) and the Universities UK Concordat to Support Research Integrity. When researching social phenomena, risk and benefit must be considered. Reducing the risk of harm both physically and emotionally and understanding the benefits to participants and society as a whole are paramount in research (Brickman and Rog, 2008). As part of the planning process, and prior to conducting any data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the University of South Wales Faculty of Life Sciences Ethics Subgroup.

The specific ethical considerations taken for the project included: informed consent, right to withdraw, duty of care to participants, researcher safety, confidentiality, and anonymity. Access to participants was gained through CWVYS (who acted as a gatekeeper) and also by using publicly available databases and information (including websites, the Charity Commission, Companies House, County Voluntary Councils (CVCs) and CWVYS membership lists). By using only publicly available information this removed the risk of data protection breaches and helped reduce the risk of harm. The ethical considerations and processes will be outlined in detail further in the chapter.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis Methods

Due to the lack of existing knowledge of the VYWS in Wales, a mixed methods approach was taken using both quantitative and qualitative methods to develop a robust knowledge base. Teddlie and Tashakkori (2006) stated that a true mixed methods study involves integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis to answer the mixed research questions. For example, using different sampling techniques (snowball and purposive) or adopting two data collection and analysis approaches (surveys and focus groups, statistics, and written text) (Tashakkori and Creswell, 2007). Each methodological approach, as detailed above, can be linked to multiple research aims and resulting data. The flexibility of a mixed methods approach met the needs of the project both practically (project time respective to aims) and in the data being collected (both qualitative and quantitative). The project used a sequential mixed methods approach as each stage formed the basis and the sample for the next stage (Brickman and Log, 2008). These stages will now be explored.

3.3.1 Scoping

A central database of the VYWS in Wales does not exist, however partial data is held by a number of organisations. To map the sector, the first step involved identifying existing datasets and their owners and requesting access to those not already in the public domain (although the data provided by the owners was solely public information e.g., name of organisation). These databases were collated and analysed using Excel to develop an initial list of the sector. Analysis involved: developing a working definition of VYW in Wales to create clear inclusion criteria (this was an iterative process, details discussed further below); developing a coding schedule which defined key variables which would be used to analyse the databases; creating a database which cross-referenced and combined the various databases and seeking the missing information online to populate the database.

As discussed at length within the literature review, defining youth work has been widely debated and researched. However, for the research project it was essential that there were criteria to work from when deciding if an organisation was to be part of the sample. This was partly developed from the research definition (see section 2.3.4) but was also discussed on an individual basis by the research team when discrepancies arose. For example, sports clubs were discussed on the basis that they are unlikely to have 'youth workers' within the organisation. However, the activities, outcomes and objectives of the work align with many of the Principles and Purposes of youth work (Hermens *et al.*, 2015; Crisp, 2018); in particular, the educative element of learning a new sport/skill, participative (especially in team sports) and inclusive through being in a team of people from different backgrounds. The Principles and Purposes of youth work in Wales also list 'curriculum specialities' including sports in the key methods of youth work (YWWRG, 2022). This was similar for faith-based (religious) groups, as from the literature review it is clear they form an essential part of the voluntary sector and are therefore essential to include in the research.

Due to the time frame and capacity of the project and the vastness of sports (for example, football alone there are over 400 accredited Junior clubs in Wales (FAW Trust, 2022)) and faith-based groups in Wales, it was decided not to include each separate group in this mapping exercise. However, the representative governing bodies for sports such as the Football Association of Wales (FAW) Trust, Welsh Rugby Union and Welsh Gymnastics were contacted to complete the survey on behalf of the whole sport. Faith-group representative bodies such as Cytûn and the Inter-faith Council for Wales were also contacted. Despite no responses being received from this approach, it may nonetheless have assisted with snowball sampling and promotion of the survey link to individual groups. It must be noted that where information was clear during the scoping, such as youth clubs

run in faith-based facilities or sports clubs with an alternative focus on disabilities/mental health or a specific youth work element, these were included on an individual basis. Additionally, Sport Wales regularly conduct research on youth sport provision so some of these services are already adequately mapped by representatives, and thus less essential in this mapping study. It was important to be cautious in the development of criteria for inclusion due to researcher bias. For example, a non-religious researcher may have inherently disagreed with this classification of youth work. To eliminate the impact of researcher bias, decisions were made between the whole research team from a range of backgrounds and predispositions and with different characteristics and opinions.

The databases were analysed in a specific order for efficiency. As charities form the largest proportion of the voluntary sector (Reach Volunteering, 2023), alongside community interest companies and small informal community groups, it was important to analyse a variety of databases. The 22 Local Authority (LA) CVC membership lists were analysed first, as these provided an effective initial area breakdown of voluntary sector organisations in Wales as well as capture both charities and small community groups. As Kendall (1996) stated that the Charity Commission was not a reliable picture of the voluntary sector on its own, it was essential to examine the CVC lists. Next, the Charity Commission and Companies House list of Community Interest Companies (CICs) were cross-referenced with the already identified scoping sample to outline further organisations missed from the CVC lists. Information was also obtained from Dewis Wales, InfoEngine and CWVYS. Triangulation from multiple sources was required due to the lack of centralised information on the VYWS in Wales.

The scoping was an ongoing process, updated throughout the research process to reflect organisations that were uncontactable, had dissolved, identified that they were not a youth work service, discovered to be LA provision or when new organisations were found through snowball sampling. The data inevitably remains only a snapshot of the VYWS in Wales at the point of research.

3.3.2 Survey Approach

To further develop the scoping dataset, an online questionnaire survey was distributed to existing identified organisations to strengthen understanding of their composition (tier one) and their role in responding to contemporary issues facing young people (tier two). The survey took a non-probability sampling approach based on the pre-defined project criteria for the VYWS in Wales. The sampling method was purposive, participants were selected from the population of organisations identified during the scoping stage (Clarke *et al.*, 2021). Snowball sampling was also used, involving extensive promotion of the survey through key stakeholders across Wales, and a section in the survey for participants to detail the names

of other VYW organisations they engage with/are aware of in their locality. Despite snowball sampling being seen to weaken the representativeness of a sample (Clarke *et al.*, 2021), in this case it allowed for any organisations that were missed in the rigorous scoping to be identified and approached to take part, thus strengthening representativeness and reliability.

As stated by Sudman and Bradburn (1982), the most common errors in quantitative research come from the design of the questionnaire. To eliminate this, consideration was made in the development of the questions and structure. Formulation of the questionnaire involved understanding the desired outcomes of the research team and the funding partner (CWVYS), as well as to fill gaps within existing literature. Based on the information required for the project, most of the questions were closed, therefore there was little room for error as the data being collected was inherently reliable and objective (Fowler, 2013). This included nominal (for example, areas of operation, type of setting, method, and specialist provision) and ratio data (such as the number of staff, volunteers, qualifications, and number of young people supported). To capture more subjective topics, such as asking participants to identify if the project definition of VYW in Wales was consistent with that of their organisations, ordinal data scales were used. This type of data is categorical but can be ranked in order (Clarke *et al.*, 2021). Categories included: 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'neutral', 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree'. To expand on other important issues, open questions were provided if respondents selected 'other' or 'I don't know'. This helped ensure that important issues missed by the questions were captured adequately, while also allowing for any different interpretations to be captured (Fowler, 2013).

The questionnaire survey was created using Jisc online surveys, a university approved platform. The online method was determined to be the easiest way to access the wide range of stakeholders located across Wales. However, the option to complete a phone survey was also provided as it was recognised that not all agencies have access to, or confidence in, using online resources.

The survey approach was piloted with five CWVYS members who provided feedback on the questionnaire and it's formation, order, content and their understanding of terminology. This step was essential to ensure the data collected was sufficient and to minimise misinterpretation and confusion (Clarke *et al.*, 2021). A pilot phone survey was conducted with one respondent; cognitive interviewing techniques were used where they were asked to consider each question and discuss their feedback out loud (Padilla and Leighton, 2017). All feedback was considered, but where changes were inconsistent with the core research definitions and aims, amendments were not made. Rephrasing questions and adding further options to multiple choice questions were the main changes made. The feedback received

during the pilot study, further reflects the underlying notion that defining VYW is convoluted and nuanced (Martin, 2003; Rodd and Stewart, 2009; Daughtry, 2011; Coussée and Williamson, 2011; Williamson, 2015; Ranahan *et al.*, 2015; Smith, 2013; Davies and Merton, 2009).

The finalised questionnaire had seven sections (see Appendix 4). Section one and two focused on factual data for mapping the sector linked to aim one, tier one and the literature around defining youth. Section three focused on organisational structure which included a question on how significantly young people informed the work of organisations. This was included due to the literature identifying that 'participation' and youth work were strong concerns in the context of youth work in Wales (Hillman *et al.*, 2010; Children Act, 2004). Section four aligned to tier two and linked to the aims of CWVYS and the wider sector in understanding how the sector is meeting the goals of the National Youth Work Strategy (Welsh Government, 2019) and the recommendations of the Interim Youth Work Board. Discussions between Welsh government and the EWC on the registration of youth workers based on qualifications, the Welsh government's Cymraeg 2050 Strategy (aiming for a million Welsh speakers by 2050) and the importance placed on Welsh culture and identity in the National Youth Work Strategy 2019 were addressed here to determine how these issues were reflected in practice. Section five used multiple-choice questions to understand the key settings, methods and specialist provisions provided by the VYWS in Wales. Opinion-based scale questions were used in section six to link to aim three and explore how recent social (COVID-19 and community changes) and economic (austerity and Brexit) events had impacted the sector. Participants were asked to state if the impact of these events had been 'significantly positive' or 'significantly negative' on a five-point scale. Section seven was the snowball sampling section discussed above. With Wales being a bilingual country, translation was completed for official outputs such as the survey link and main promotional material.

The survey was launched on the 23rd May 2022 using a robust recruitment strategy involving emailing, calling and contacting organisations over social media from the population identified during scoping. To extend the sample and enhance participation, the survey and prepared promotional materials were sent to key stakeholders, including CWVYS, CVCs, Adult Learning Wales, EWC, Welsh Government representatives, University representatives from Welsh university Youth and Community Work degree courses, sports' governing bodies, faith group representative councils and the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) among others. Project social media accounts were also launched to further promote the online survey. Surveying was live for four months, remaining open until the 22nd September 2022. From a population of almost 1,000 identified organisations, 938 were

included in the final scoping sample, all of which were repeatedly contacted through the outlined dissemination plan. A sample size of 103 participants was achieved in the survey, which represented approximately 11% of this population. A 10% response rate in survey research is deemed positive and useful, with Holbrook *et al.* (2007) indicating that studies with response rates as low as 5% still yield valuable and accurate results. As Morton *et al.* (2012) propose, demand, a decrease in social participation and the complexity of contemporary life all impact response rates. The challenges experienced in survey recruitment are explored further in this chapter.

Survey data from Jisc were cleaned, duplicate responses removed, and imported into SPSS. Any organisations that had not been identified during the scoping were added to the excel spreadsheet holding the list of the VYWS in Wales. Data were initially analysed using univariate (single variable) analysis, but bivariate analysis (two variables) was also undertaken to explore the relationships between certain variables. Qualitative comments were either recoded as quantitative variables or input into NVIVO and analysed using thematic analysis.

3.3.3 Focus Groups

Adopting purposive sampling, focus groups were conducted with organisations involved in the first two stages of the research (that is, identified in the scoping and participated in the survey). The focus groups provided an opportunity to explore research aims two and three in more detail. The sample of focus group participants was informed by location and organisation availability over a three-week period, and thereby involved an element of convenience sampling (Clarke *et al.*, 2021). In an effort to represent voices from across Wales, four broad regions, North, Mid, West and South Wales, were identified and organisations from each region contacted. Initial contact involved asking key and centralised (in relation to the region) organisations in each region to host the focus group in their premises. Organisations in West and South Wales volunteered to host the focus group, however, due to struggles with finding a suitable facility in both North Wales and Mid Wales, the decision was made to hold these focus groups online on Microsoft Teams. Once venues were confirmed, organisations involved in the online survey were contacted by email, inviting a manager or senior staff member to take part in a focus group.

Managers from VYW organisations were targeted for the focus groups as their voices were less evident in the literature. The previous research largely represented youth workers' opinions, experiences, and characteristics of the profession (Hartje *et al.*, 2008; Rodd and Stewart, 2009; Daughtry, 2011; Jenkinson, 2011; Hickle, 2020). The ethical issue of taking frontline workers away from their work with young people was also considered in deciding

who to engage in focus groups. Furthermore, the broad themes developed, informed by the research aims and data collected to date, were more relevant to those in a management position (for example, insight into training opportunities, recruitment, and funding). To also link the literature to the discussions had in the focus groups, it was essential that the participants were knowledgeable of the history of youth work in Wales and were strategic in the organisations to comment on the context of the sector more widely. It was also considered that the survey would likely have been completed by a manager or similar which would have provided them with the initial background needed for expansion on key themes.

Focus groups allow for interactions and dynamics between participants to be part of the analysis (Merton, 1987). Managing the dynamics of the focus groups was carefully considered, in recognition of the complex history of relationships and past employment of many of the workers in the VYWS in Wales which could influence engagement. It was also important to analyse the dynamics of those within the sector, to determine where there is consensus and conflict. This was particularly interesting for the project in relation to the potential differences and experiences of rural and urban parts of Wales as well as from large national organisations and smaller community run organisations. The focus groups also allowed for networking and partnership between stakeholders and academics which was a key aim of the KESS 2 funding initiative, which an interview would not have produced.

As with other qualitative research methods, focus groups have a moderator who guides discussion around themes and topics in order to analyse the spontaneous responses of participants (Cote-Arsenault and Morrison-Beedy, 2005). As detailed above and noted by Cote-Arsenault and Morrison-Beedy (2005), the environment and participants must be carefully considered, and the purpose of the focus group clearly defined. Key themes in policy and academic literature, including barriers to service delivery such as recruitment, funding, experience of staff, staff training, career development opportunities, registration/qualification of youth workers and sustainability of the sector, informed the focus groups. It was also clear from the literature review that young people are impacted greatly by a number of contemporary issues (Ranahan, 2015; Williams, 2020; Fegert *et al*., 2020; Jenkinson, 2011; Wedlock and Melina, 2020) and it was important to understand the involvement of the VYWS in responding to these. The purpose of the focus group was therefore to: develop further knowledge on the impact of recent challenges such as COVID-19, austerity, and the economic/political climate on the VYWS; explore key contemporary issues facing young people such as mental health, homelessness and county lines; and identify how effectively the VYWS responds to these issues and the difficulties in doing so.

The social research literature suggests a minimum of four, but ideally between six and ten participants as appropriate for a focus group (Clarke *et al.*, 2021). This number provides a balance ensuring that everyone can contribute and that a variety of opinions present (Krueger and Casey, 2000; Cote-Arsenault and Morrison-Beedy, 2005). The South Wales focus group had six participants, West Wales had five, and the combined online focus group for Mid and North Wales had four participants, so a total of 15 participants took part in the focus groups. Despite using over-recruiting strategies and timely reminders to participants to remove the risk of cancellations (Wilkinson, 1999), and moving the focus group online for accessibility, it was difficult to recruit participants for the Mid and North Wales focus group. Invitations were extended to others identified in the scoping that had not completed the questionnaire survey to improve participation. These participants were then encouraged to complete the survey prior to, or after the focus group. Nonetheless, those who participated engaged at length with the content of discussion, which was likely facilitated by the small numbers involved (Morgan, 1998). Each focus group was approximately two hours long with input from all participants, the sessions were audio recorded with permission from participants and transcribed. Participants were given pseudonyms by the researcher. Audio recordings were then deleted to ensure ethical guidelines were followed.

NVIVO was used to analyse focus group data, using grounded theory-based analysis. Thematic analysis was based both on the issues which emerged prior to the focus groups and themes which emerged from the data. This combination is important as there are considerable gaps in what is known about the VYWS. Initial analysis was based on the three broad topics detailed above, whereby each focus group was individually coded to these themes and then recoded to hierarchal and more focused emergent themes. The data was then thoroughly reviewed for further emergent themes. The relationships and links between all themes were then considered.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

Ensuring the project was ethically sound, with considerations made for both the participants and the researcher was essential in conducting a responsible, robust, and valid study that could be built upon. To achieve this, the project received ethical approval from the University of South Wales Faculty of Life Sciences Ethics Subgroup prior to data collection. As the scoping data collected was focused on organisations providing a public service and publicly available data (either online or upon request), no risk to individuals or the researcher was identified. Six key ethical issues were considered in the survey and focus groups.

3.4.1 Informed Consent and the Right to Withdraw

Ensuring survey and focus group participants understood the research and their role within it to allow for informed consent to be obtained was essential. This involved providing an information sheet to all participants using straightforward language for clarity and inclusivity (Brickman and Rog, 2008). The information sheet was provided at the beginning of the online survey (see Appendix 5) and participants were advised that by choosing to continue to the survey, they were consenting to participate in the research and for their anonymised data to be used. Those completing a telephone survey, were provided with an electronic informed consent sheet or the consent sheet was read out to them over the phone. They were required to provide verbal consent: "I confirm I have read the information sheet, or it has been read out to me and I consent on behalf of X organisation to answer the questions". Although only one phone survey was completed, verbal consent was obtained, and confirmation made by completing the online consent form. Prior to finalising the online or phone survey, participants were asked to reconfirm their consent. Focus group participants were provided with an information sheet and consent form in advance of the focus group and asked to confirm their consent in writing prior to attending and verbally at the end of the focus group (see Appendix 6). The information sheets provided participants with information on the nature of the study, their role and rights as participants, the potential risks and rewards in their engagement and contact information for the research team and persons relevant to submitting a complaint or data protection query (Brickman and Rog, 2008). This included, for example, details on their right to withdraw from the study up to the point of submission of their survey or once the call had ended, and up to the point at which focus group data had been anonymised.

3.4.2 Confidentiality and Anonymity

Ensuring confidentiality by anonymising data protects participants from their responses, personal or otherwise, being linked to them (Ellis *et al.*, 2009). Survey participants were informed that the questions asked would not require them disclosing personal information, rather it would capture organisational data. Furthermore, as their responses were immediately synthesised with those provided by other organisations, their answers could not be linked back to their individual organisation. The data cleaning process removed any identifiable information (from open questions, for example) prior to analysis.

For the focus groups, special consideration was made to ensure strict confidentiality and anonymity. Confidentiality within focus groups cannot be guaranteed as discussions outside of the group cannot be avoided (Liamputtong, 2011). Focus group participants were asked to adhere to Chatham House rules and not discuss personal information outside of the focus

group to minimize this risk (Institute of International Affairs, 2023). As well as this, participants were given pseudonyms, the list of pseudonyms was stored securely and separately to the empirical data collected. Focus group recordings were filed on a separate secure USW device and transcribed and anonymised at the earliest opportunity. Transcribed audio files were deleted and transcriptions only accessible to the research team. All other information will be stored securely on a USW server for a maximum of five years to support further related research. The research data is thereby held securely at USW in accordance with the Data Protection Acts 1998 and 2018, as well as the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018 and USW guidelines. The information sheet provided to participants detailed the above processes and assurances. They were also advised that in the unlikely event that a participant disclosed information that implied they or someone else was in significant of immediate danger, involved in potential or actual acts of misconduct, or involved in criminal activity for which they have not been convicted, that the information may be passed on to the relevant authorities. Given the focus of the research and nature of participants, this risk was extremely low.

3.4.3 Duty of Care and Researcher Safety

It is essential in research to minimise the physical and emotional risk to participants and the researcher in the planning and execution of a study (Clarke *et al.*, 2021). Researcher and participant safety was not considered problematic in the survey research as this was conducted online. Although, the focus group was also low risk - involving structural/process-based information, additional considerations were made. For example, a risk assessment was conducted on AssessNET to ensure the safety of participants and the research team for the in-person focus groups, including consideration of COVID-19 transmission and stress/anxiety caused by the topic or location. Provision was made to signpost participants to relevant agencies and support put in place by the supervision team in the event of participants or the researcher finding the content distressing or harrowing. Furthermore, for the online focus group, the researcher asked participants to ensure that the conversations could not be overheard by anyone, and the researcher gave the same assurance to participants. To ensure the safety of participants when the study findings were disseminated, traceable information of both survey and focus group participants was either anonymised or removed from the report.

While no conflict of interest was presented in the planning or conducting of the research, it must be noted that the research intended to provide CWVYS with information on VYW organisations who were not currently members. It was understood that these organisations would be invited to become members for which they would be required to pay a membership

fee. However, this is only noted for transparency as the researcher did not engage in this and the data provided from the scoping was publicly available (e.g., name, location, focus and provision).

3.5 Structural and Process Challenges

3.5.1 Structural Challenges

Although detailed consideration was given to the design and execution of the project to eliminate the chances of issues arising, naturally, many challenges did emerge. Firstly, as briefly mentioned before, due to the project being a partnership between a variety of stakeholders including the funding agency (KESS), the industry partner (CWVYS) and the University (researcher and supervisors), managing the expectations, hopes and requirements for each was challenging. Moreover, understanding the relevance of the research at a pertinent time in youth policy in Wales, heightened the pressure to meet sector needs. To regulate this, meetings were held regularly between CWVYS and the research team to ensure the correct data were being collected and potential economic, personal, social, and environmental benefits were appropriately considered. Similarly, with the sector and wider youth policy landscape having a complex history of tensions and partnerships, understanding and managing these was particularly important and time consuming. Knowledge of these relationships was shared amongst the research team by those experienced in the field, and where necessary considerations made on approaches to contact, promotion, and collaboration.

3.5.2 Scoping Challenges

During the scoping stage of the research, many challenges arose while accessing the necessary information. While CWVYS remained the gatekeeper, different data protection policies of the CVCs created barriers to accessing information. Similarly, data was sent in varying formats (Excel sheets, websites, Word documents) which led to further delays in analysis. Despite the challenges, the researcher was successful in obtaining and analysing all CVC lists.

As discussed previously, definitions and the inclusion/exclusion criteria were important, yet challenging discussions. The scoping clearly evidenced that resources were targeted for particular age groups, however some organisations claimed to be ‘adult’ or for ‘all ages’ and thus inclusion was contested. The research used the Welsh definition of young person (11-25 years old), however for most, ‘adult’ implies 18+ and thus falls within (and beyond) the research definition of ‘youth’. If such organisations were to be excluded, support for 18-25-year-olds, would be missing from the data and this for many is an influential and challenging

period of transition (leaving school/college, starting university, new employment). It was therefore decided that 18+ and services for 'all ages' would be included to increase thoroughness, with the option of filtering out more tailored support for 'older youth' if necessary. However, services stating 'adult' but not specifying age were not included to ensure the value and meaningfulness of the data was not lost.

3.5.3 Survey Challenges

During the development and data collection of survey responses, minor challenges arose. The pilot survey proved invaluable to the success of the survey output. However, despite the period between scoping and survey being short, the fast pace of the VYWS proved unmanageable. Consequently, the data changed, contact details failed and organisations were inaccessible. COVID-19 may have impacted access and ability to contact organisations as the study launched during the final months of the pandemic. Some organisations did not have an online presence and thus contact was difficult. Where possible, social media and phone contact was used but the timing of provisions further impacted this (with some only open on a specific evening per week).

Survey participants raised concerns over survey form, structure, and specific questions. For example, participants reported the inability to save and return to the survey (due to being anonymous) as an issue, especially in relation to key information such as staff qualifications and staff numbers. In response, a copy of the survey questions was sent to organisations on request to input into the online link. Ongoing research from other sectors, organisations, and academics, due to the pertinent timing of the research, could have created survey fatigue or confusion for potential participants. For example, research by CWVYS, ETS, Welsh Government and EWC was ongoing alongside the project. Further to this, staff shortages, capacity and resources could also have impacted response rate. Phone calls were made to the sample population to obtain further responses to the survey; however, this was not time efficient due to the large sample size.

3.5.4 Focus Group Challenges

Due to the project time frame and funding limitations, in-depth qualitative research was not possible as the mapping was a necessary priority. Consequently, the focus group findings are a first step only, and require further research involving other stakeholders exploring the themes in more depth. Had more time been available, focus group participation would likely have been more robust. Recruitment for the focus groups presented challenges due to capacity, availability, and accessibility geographically in rural Wales. However, once recruited, the focus groups were successful and invaluable to the project.

3.6 Conclusion

To conclude, the ambitious project aims, necessitated carefully planned and executed research to ensure robust and meaningful data were collected. The cross-sectional design allowed for the flexibility required to meet the project aims and provided a snapshot of the VYWS in Wales at the time of research. Consideration was made throughout to reduce the risks of harm to participants and the researcher adhering to ethical guidelines. The three research stages created a detailed and valuable knowledge base to be built on in future research. It must again be noted that this research is a first step and the data collected from each stage require further research due to the fast-paced nature of the sector impacting the scoping and the low response rate and participation impacting the survey and focus group data. The findings from each stage will now be examined before being reviewed against existing literature and policy.

4 Findings

4.1 Introduction

The following chapter outlines the findings from the data collected in each of the three research stages. The chapter is split into three sections:

1. **The Scale, Nature and Composition of the Voluntary Youth Work Sector in Wales:** understanding the scope of the VYWS in Wales and developing knowledge of its composition, nature, and scale. [Research aim one]
2. **Sector Aims and Priorities: Findings for Policy and Practice:** exploring themes outlined by the Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services (CWVYS) and Welsh Government from both the survey and focus group findings. [Research aim two & three]
3. **The Needs of Young People and the VYWS:** understanding how the sector tackles contemporary issues impacting young people as well as evaluating sustainability of the sector and challenges both socially and economically. [Research aim two & three]

This structure, facilitates data triangulation, creating a greater overall understanding of the VYWS in Wales and analysis of its practice.

4.2 The VYWS in Wales – Scale, Nature, and Composition

This section details the findings from the extensive scoping exercise and survey completed as stages one and two of the research. Findings are categorised by the databases analysed, area of operation, type of provision, young people supported, staff characteristics, setting, time and method of provision.

4.2.1 Database Analysis

The scoping database analysis and the snowball sampling revealed that there were 938 Voluntary Youth Work (VYW) organisations in Wales for young people aged 11-25 (or a more specific or broad age group, as detailed in section 3.5.2) at the time of research. Inclusion in this sample was determined by the criteria developed in the initial stages of the project (see section 3.3.1). During the scoping process, the following information was collected: name of organisation, contact details, address, postcode, type of provision, website link and Local Authority (LA) area of operation.

Figure 1 provides the findings from the different databases analysed including the total number of organisations present on each, and the number identified as VYW organisations. There was surprisingly limited overlap between the different databases, all representing

different aspects of the voluntary sector in Wales. Where duplicates were identified, for example some organisations were present on multiple CVC membership lists (e.g., national organisations), they were discarded so each organisation was represented once in the total number of organisations identified as VYW. The data are presented in order of identification (see section 3.3.1 for rationale): the CVC lists provided the initial sample population followed by the Charity Commission, Companies House and then the snowball sampling. Any organisations identified from the subsequent databases were not present on databases analysed prior. The resulting data are reflected in Figure 1, Total Number of Organisations Identified as VYW.

Figure 1: Total number of VYW organisations identified through scoping of existing databases and survey data.

Database	Total Number of Organisations (all voluntary sector, not just youth work)	Total Number of Organisations Identified as VYW	Percentage of Total VYW Organisations Identified (%)*
County Voluntary Councils (CVCs, all 22 local authorities)	6511	798	**85.1**
Charity Commission	7785	92	**9.8**
Companies House	751	20	**2.1**
Snowball Sampling	N/A	28	**3.0**
TOTAL	15,047	**938**	**100.00**

**Note the percentage of 'total VYW organisations identified' was calculated using the 'total organisations identified as VYW', not the 'total number of organisations' on the databases.*

As can be seen, the CVC membership databases provided a robust initial sample of VYW organisations (n=798, 85.1%). The snowball sampling identified 28 (3%) organisations, five of these organisations were present on the databases analysed prior. These were initially rejected by the researcher due to a lack of available information, but self-identified as VYW in the survey and included in the final sample.

It should be noted here that the scoping was updated throughout the research process. The original number of identified services was 1,013, however 75 organisations were removed for a variety of reasons. For example, organisations were no longer active, were statutory services, could not be contacted by any means attempted or no longer operated in Wales.

These checks and removals were made to ensure the sample represented the most up-to-date snapshot of the VYWS in Wales.

4.2.2 Area of Operation

Figure 2 outlines organisations that work specifically in each LA area only. The table also includes organisations that work nationally (all Wales and UK wide) and organisations that work in various locations (explored regionally in Figure 4). As these locations were determined based on the information provided on organisations' websites or the Charity Commission/Companies House website, they cannot claim to be completely exhaustive and accurate due to missing/incorrect/out-dated information. Organisation addresses were collected during the scoping, with 59 identifying addresses outside of Wales. These reflected mainly head offices, and not the location of delivery. Therefore, further information would be required from organisations, which the survey aimed to collect, in order to map provision effectively. Where possible, organisations with local branches across Wales, for example the YMCA, Street Pastors and Barnardo's were treated as separate organisations and counted in each applicable LA area, and not in the 'national' category. Additionally, the six 'digital' services are counted as 'national' in this data as they can support young people in any location.

Figure 2: Total number of VYW organisations identified in each LA area in the scoping data only.

Local Authority Area	Total Number of VYW Organisations Identified	Percentage (%)
Bleanau Gwent	13	1.4
Bridgend	25	2.7
Caerphilly	17	1.8
Cardiff	106	11.3
Carmarthenshire	22	2.3
Ceredigion	18	1.9
Conwy	23	2.5
Denbighshire	20	2.1
Flintshire	16	1.7
Gwynedd	14	1.5
Isle of Anglesey	22	2.3
Merthyr Tydfil	28	3.0

Monmouthshire	13	1.4
National	207	22.1
Neath Port Talbot	19	2.0
Newport	21	2.2
Pembrokeshire	25	2.7
Powys	42	4.5
Rhondda Cynon Taff	37	3.9
Swansea	44	4.7
Torfaen	40	4.3
Vale of Glamorgan	19	2.0
Various	116	12.4
Wrexham	31	3.3
TOTAL	**938**	**100.0**

As can be seen in Figure 2, 'national' organisations represent the largest proportion of VYW in Wales (n=207, 22.07%), followed by organisations operating in 'various' locations (n=116, 12.37%). These are analysed separately below (Figure 4) and not added to each LA area here so not to detract from these area findings.

Considering each LA separately, there are many more organisations located in Cardiff (n=106, 11.3%), with the majority of other areas possessing between 2-5%. Blaenau Gwent and Monmouthshire had the least organisations (n=13, 1.4% each). According to census data (ONS, 2021), Cardiff and Swansea have the highest population of young people aged 10-24 (85,900 and 47,400) and Merthyr Tydfil and the Isle of Anglesey have the lowest (9,000 and 10,400). While the findings for Cardiff and Swansea are proportionate with the demographic data revealed in the census, other areas, such as Merthyr Tydfil, the Isle of Anglesey, Blaenau Gwent and Monmouthshire suggest disproportionately. When analysing the area of operation from the survey data, similar results were found (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Total number of VYW organisations operating in LA areas from the survey data only

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
$Areas_of_Operation[a]	Blaenau Gwent	7	2.9%	6.8%
	Bridgend	10	4.2%	9.7%
	Caerphilly	10	4.2%	9.7%
	Cardiff	18	7.6%	17.5%
	Carmarthenshire	12	5.0%	11.7%
	Ceredigion	6	2.5%	5.8%
	Conwy	5	2.1%	4.9%
	Denbighshire	10	4.2%	9.7%
	Flintshire	6	2.5%	5.8%
	Gwynedd	8	3.4%	7.8%
	Isle of Anglesey	5	2.1%	4.9%
	Merthyr Tydfil	6	2.5%	5.8%
	Monmouthshire	7	2.9%	6.8%
	Neath Port Talbot	14	5.9%	13.6%
	Newport	9	3.8%	8.7%
	Pembrokeshire	10	4.2%	9.7%
	Powys	9	3.8%	8.7%
	Rhondda Cynon Taff	14	5.9%	13.6%
	Swansea	16	6.7%	15.5%
	Torfaen	10	4.2%	9.7%
	Vale of Glamorgan	10	4.2%	9.7%
	Wrexham	12	5.0%	11.7%
	All Wales	16	6.7%	15.5%
	UK Wide	5	2.1%	4.9%
	International or Global	3	1.3%	2.9%
Total		238	100.0%	231.1%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

**Note, this was a 'select all that apply' multiple choice question including 'all Wales', 'UK wide', 'international' and the 22 LA areas[5], which explains why the total is higher than the number of survey respondents (n=103).*

A fifth of organisations identified as 'All Wales' and 'UK wide' (i.e., national) (n=16, 15.5%, n=5, 4.9% respectively), In line with the scoping data, organisations operating in Cardiff and Swansea were the most common (n=18, 17.5% and n=16, 15.5%), with the Isle of Anglesey, again, having the least provision (alongside Conwy – n=5, 4.9% each). This would again suggest some consistency with the demographic census data presented above (ONS, 2021).

To incorporate organisations operating in various locations and to understand what percentage of the overall sample population were included in the survey, data were

[5] If organisations had selected all 22 LA areas and 'all Wales', these were recoded to reflect just 'all Wales' in the dataset.

combined to regional areas and survey and scoping data compared. The results are presented in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Regional distribution of the scoping and survey sample and the total percentage of the scoping sample included in the survey sample.

Region	Scoping Total by Region	Regional Distribution of Scoping (%)	Survey Total by Region	Regional Distribution of Survey (%)	Percentage of Scoping included in Survey Sample (%)
South Wales	444	46.8	131	55.7	29.5
North Wales	169	17.8	46	19.6	27.2
West Wales	56	5.9	22	9.4	39.3
Mid Wales	73	7.7	15	6.4	20.6
National	207	21.8	21	8.9	10.1
TOTAL	**949***	**100.0**	**235***	**100.0**	**24.8**

**Note the scoping total is higher due to 11 organisations operating in multiple regions which were added to each applicable region. *The survey total is lower due to three organisations working internationally and not included here for the purpose of mapping the VYWS in Wales.*

As can be seen, almost a quarter of the scoping sample were accounted for in the survey sample (24.8%). South Wales had the highest proportion of organisations both in the scoping (46.8%) and the survey (55.7%), this is unsurprising given the size of the region and the number of LA areas therein. However, West Wales had the highest percentage of the scoping sample accounted for in the survey (39.3%). These data evidence the need for further research to capture the large number of organisations that did not respond to the survey and gain a greater overall understanding of the VYWS in Wales.

4.2.3 Type of Provision

Another important way the scoping data can be categorised is by the type of provision. The scoping categories used were formulated in the same way as the survey categories to ensure consistency. This involved looking at the *Principles and Purposes of youth work* (YWWRG, 2022) identifying the different methods and settings of youth work in Wales, while also considering contemporary issues that youth work can target such as mental health, homelessness and crime. As organisations are likely to fall into multiple categories, they were coded to the main focus/element or mission statement provided online that differentiated them from other services, whether that be method, setting or specialist issue.

For example, a sports club specifically focused on young people with disabilities was counted in the ‘disabilities/additional Needs/illness’ category rather than in ‘recreational’. Similarly, the ‘youth club/detached/outreach’ category, encompasses organisations that are framed around using the more traditional methods of youth work, even though they are likely to also provide support targeting specific issues, or have specific clubs for certain issues throughout the week (for example, LGBTQIA+ or girls only youth clubs). For the purpose of mapping the sector these categories have been developed to highlight the distinctive elements of the work carried out, but in practice organisations are likely to touch on multiple categories.

Figure 5 shows each category and how many organisations were assigned to each. Note that there is a category for ‘generalist’, these organisations identify as providing general youth provisions (for example, the YMCA and Youth Cymru).

Figure 5: Researchers categorisation of the scoping data by the 'Type of Provision' provided.

Type of Provision	Total Number of Organisations	Percentage (%)
Advocacy	9	1.0
Care/Adoption/Young Carers	24	2.6
Crime Prevention/Victimisation	7	0.7
Digital	6	0.6
Disabilities/Additional Needs/Illness	145	15.5
Disadvantage/Vulnerable/Disengaged Young People	20	2.1
Diversity/Inequality/Discrimination	44	4.7
Domestic Abuse/ACE's	19	2.0
Employability/Educational Support/Volunteering	77	8.2
Environmental/Sustainable Development	2	0.2
Faith Groups	69	7.4
Forums/Councils/Decision Making	7	0.7
Generalist	22	2.3
Homelessness/Housing Support	30	3.2
International Exchanges/International Work	4	0.4
Mental Health/Wellbeing	85	9.1
Recreational	195	20.8
Refugees/Asylum Seekers	4	0.4
Substance Misuse/Addiction	10	1.1
Uniformed Groups	20	2.1
Welsh Language and Culture	10	1.1
Youth Club/Outreach/Detached	129	13.8
TOTAL	**938**	100.0

The most common form of VYW in Wales was 'recreational' clubs (n=195, 20.8%). This included, sports, theatre groups, choirs, arts, and music. The second largest group was those targeting 'disabilities/additional needs/illness' (n=145, 15.5%), followed by more traditional' forms of youth work including 'youth clubs, detached and outreach' (n=129,

13.8%). ‘Mental health/wellbeing’ was also a common focus for organisations (n=85, 9.1%). ‘Environmental/sustainable development’ (n=2, 0.2%) and support for ‘refugees/asylum seekers’ made up less than one percent (n=4, 0.4%).

Of the 44 categorised as focusing on ‘diversity/inequality/discrimination’, 22 were focused on ‘race/ethnicity/BAME/culture’, seven focused on ‘LGBTQIA+’, 13 focused on ‘gender’ (mainly women’s rights and support for women), one organisation’s focus was ‘Gypsy, Roma and Traveller’ communities and one encompassed all protected characteristics[6].

Additionally, as the age of ‘youth’ has been a key issue in the project process; 17 organisations from the scoping were identified as providing for 18+, while 171 were not age specific and aimed at a broader range of ages, including outside the range of 11-25-years. This distinction was carried into the survey where participants were asked to identify to what extent they deliver youth work, categorised by the following: ‘exclusively a youth work service (only work with young people)’, ‘provision available for young people but not the primary focus (have a separate young people’s service)’ or ‘young people included in all support (not age specific, work with all ages together)’.

4.2.4 Definition of VYW

Organisations were also asked if they agreed with the research definition (see section 2.3.4) and then if this fitted their organisation. All but two organisations agreed with the definition (98%), with two claiming to be neutral or unsure. However, despite agreeing with the definition, four organisations stated that it did not fit their organisation. Nonetheless, it was decided that their data would remain in the research as their participation and initial identification and invitation to take part suggests that they self-identified as part of the VYWS and may have misinterpreted the question/definition provided. The data provided by these organisations would further support this.

4.2.5 Young People Supported

Organisations were asked to estimate, on average, how many young people accessed their service including open access, registered or members. An estimated 183,666 young people accessed the 97 VYW who answered this question, making an average of 1,893 young people per service annually (see Appendix 8). However, the data does not determine if this represents 183,666 different young people or if some young people access multiple organisations.

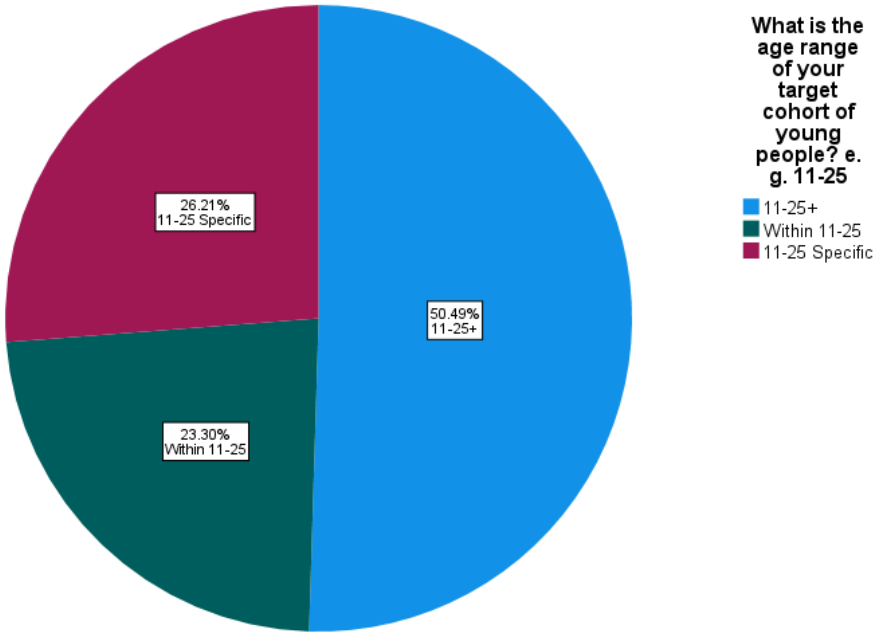
[6] According to the Equality Act (2010), protected characteristics include: age, gender reassignment, marital status, being pregnant, disabilities, race/ethnicity/nationality/origin, religion/belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

Furthermore, the data are not normally distributed as four organisations supported a significantly larger number of young people, accounting for 61% of the total young people reportedly accessing services (see Appendix 8). If these organisations were removed from the data, the new average number of young people supported per service annually would be 771.

All survey respondents self-identified as supporting 'young people', however when asked to identify the age range of their target cohort, participants identified a broad age range, from 0-92 years old. For the purpose of this study youth is defined as 11-25 years, to provide more meaningful data on age, the age range provided was recoded into those supporting young people aged 11-25 years specifically, those who targeted young people within the age range of 11-25 years (e.g. 16-25, 13-17, 18-25) and those who target young people 11-25+ as part of a much broader age range (e.g. unspecified or whose target group overlapped with the 11-25 age range (e.g. 7-25, 3-90, 11-30)). A full list of the age ranges can be found in Appendix 9. Figure 6 shows just over a quarter of organisations specifically targeted young people aged 11-25 (n=27, 26.2%), while just under a quarter supported young people within the range of 11-25 (n=23, 23.3%). The majority of organisations (n=52, 50.5%) provided services as part of a wider age provision[7].

[7] One qualitative answer could not be recoded for Figure 6 as it stated "N/A different projects we work with different age groups", therefore the total is 102 in the data.

Figure 6: Pie chart representing the age range of surveyed VYW organisations target cohort.



Further exploration of age and the exclusivity of services for young people can be found in Appendix 7 where further 'identity' issues in the VYWS were uncovered with organisations defining themselves as youth work organisations.

The age of service users was also a concern among focus group participants, who reported having to split clubs into more specific age groups to ensure the appropriateness of content and to avoid difficulties arising between older and younger youth (for example, distribution of drugs and showing inappropriate online content). This seems to support the importance of services 'within 11-25' in Figure 6 as these services break down the ages further.

4.2.6 Staff Characteristics

The findings on the staffing of VYW organisations revealed that most organisations have a range of full-time (n= 608), part-time (n=718), trustees (n=503) and volunteers (n=22,464). The findings show that in the VYWS in Wales, the majority of the workforce are volunteers. This equates to an average of seven full-time staff, nine part-time staff, six trustees and 244 volunteers per VYW organisation in Wales. However, as seen in Appendix 10, a number of organisations have large staff and volunteer numbers and thus the averages are affected. This only impacted full-time staff and volunteer numbers, with the outliers accounting for 82.6% of the total number of volunteers. If these organisations were removed from the data, the new average number of full-time staff and volunteers per organisation would be five and 43 respectively[8].

[8] These averages are worked out based on the number of responses to each specific question, see Appendix 10 for more detail.

4.2.7 Timing, Setting, Method of Service Provision

To add further detail to the mapping of the sector and make links to key issues such as crime and young people who are depicted as Not in Employment, Education, and Training (NEET), data on the timing of service provision were collected[9]. Figure 7 compares the time of day and time of week in which provision is offered (see Appendix 11 for separate analysis of these variables).

Figure 7: Comparison of time of the week and time of day services are provided from survey sample.

			Time of Day[a]					
			Morning	Day-time	Evening	Overnight	Please detail when your service is provided (select all that apply): - Other	Total
Time of the Week[a]	Service provided All week	Count	18	22	18	3	2	24
	Service provided on Weekdays	Count	21	39	41	3	5	52
	Service provided on Weekends	Count	10	16	20	1	3	22
	Projects/Ad hoc	Count	12	26	27	5	4	32
	Service provided during School Holidays	Count	16	27	29	4	3	33
	What days do you provide a service (select all that apply)? - Other	Count	1	3	6	0	1	8
Total		Count	42	72	73	8	9	95

Percentages and totals are based on respondents.

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

As can be seen here, services are mostly provided on weekday evenings (n=41), followed by weekday daytime (n=39) and school holiday evenings and daytimes (n=29, n=27). This could suggest that evening youth clubs in the 'traditional' sense are still the most common form of youth work in Wales. This will also be unsurprising due to most young people being at school during the day. When asked if they provided a service 24 hours a day, only seven organisations answered yes. Those who answered 'other' referred to providing support when needed which stresses the importance of flexibility given the chaotic lives of young people.

Participants were next provided with a list of predefined youth work settings and methods (from the literature and survey feedback discussed in section 3.3.2) to determine the most commonly used in Wales. Any settings or methods not captured in the multiple-choice lists were recorded in an open question under 'other' and are discussed below.

321 responses were received from the 'select all that apply' question (see Figure 8) identifying 'community (broad range, not age specific)' as the most common setting for youth

[9] Data for this were cleaned if participants had selected 'all week', 'weekdays' and 'weekends' to only reflect 'all week' in the data set.

work (n=67, 65%). ‘Centre based’ was recorded by 58.3% of cases (n=60), with a high number also delivering digitally (n=44, 42.7%) and in schools (n=32, 31.1%). Using digital delivery is evidence that the VYWS is flexible and has responded to young people’s needs, however findings from the focus groups revealed some negative effects of the rise in digital delivery. This included digital poverty and a lack of digital competence impacting those from low-income backgrounds the most. Similarly, the difficulties with youth work in schools were discussed in the focus groups. The key themes that arose in relation to schools included VYW organisations feeling ‘used’ by schools who neither return nor value the work delivered by voluntary organisations and schools dismissing any opportunities for collaboration on projects between sectors and instead developing their own projects.

From the qualitative responses to ‘other’, the main settings that were missed included faith settings (although faith groups were captured in a different question, see Figure 14), recreational settings (e.g., social trips, music studios, theatres) and social care settings (e.g., foster placements, residential homes).

Figure 8: Total VYW organisations delivering in different pe-identified youth work settings from survey data.

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Type of setting youth work delivered in [a]	Centre based	60	18.7%	58.3%
	Community (broad range, not age specific)	67	20.9%	65.0%
	Digital	44	13.7%	42.7%
	Outdoor Activity Setting (sports field/forest etc.)	40	12.5%	38.8%
	Outreach/Detached	27	8.4%	26.2%
	Residential	15	4.7%	14.6%
	Targeted in Health Settings	6	1.9%	5.8%
	Targeted in Schools	32	10.0%	31.1%
	Targeted in Youth Justice Settings	10	3.1%	9.7%
	Work Based Learning	9	2.8%	8.7%
	Please indicate the main delivery settings your organisation operates in (select all that apply): - Other	11	3.4%	10.7%
Total		321	100.0%	311.7%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

Analysis of methods of practice in Figure 9, identified almost three quarters of organisations engaged in ‘group work’ (n=76, 73.8%) and two thirds in ‘project work’ (n=68, 66%). ‘Volunteering opportunities’ (n=60, 58.3%) and ‘education/training/employability’ (n=47, 45.6%) were commonly reported also, suggesting the VYWS is meeting the needs of young people who are depicted as NEET and the aims and priorities of the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (Welsh Government, 2022b). Again, more ‘traditional’ methods of practice such as ‘open access’ (n=41, 39.8%) were commonly used. Importantly, high numbers reported young people are ‘involved in decision making’ (n=46, 44.7%) and the use of ‘youth forums/councils’ (n=34, 33%), further evidencing the importance placed on youth voice and participation in Wales.

Figure 9: Total VYW organisations using different pre-identified youth work delivery methods from survey data.

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Methods for delivering youth work[a]	1:1 Work	49	8.8%	47.6%
	Advocacy	33	5.9%	32.0%
	Curriculum Specialities (Arts, Sports, First Aid)	40	7.2%	38.8%
	Education/Training/Employability	47	8.5%	45.6%
	Group Work	76	13.7%	73.8%
	Information/Guidance/Advice/Counselling	42	7.6%	40.8%
	International Exchanges/International Group Work	10	1.8%	9.7%
	Involvement in Decision Making	46	8.3%	44.7%
	Open Access	41	7.4%	39.8%
	Projects	68	12.3%	66.0%
	Volunteering Opportunities	60	10.8%	58.3%
	Youth Forums/Councils	34	6.1%	33.0%
	Please indicate the methods used to offer services in your organisation (select all that apply): - Other	9	1.6%	8.7%
Total		555	100.0%	538.8%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

The qualitative responses to 'other' for delivery methods, were less recurrent and more specific than settings but included socialising sessions, holistic therapy and apprenticeships as additional methods not accounted for in the question.

The tier one data presented here provides a first in-depth snapshot of the VYWS in Wales, including its nature (methods, settings, time), scale (scoping data, young people supported) and composition (staff numbers, areas of operation, age range of target cohort). However, the research is not without its limitations so care should be taken when drawing conclusions from the data presented. The next section addresses key resources available in the VYWS, which were of particular interest to CWVYS and identified as Welsh Government priorities.

4.3 Sector Aims and Priorities: Findings for Policy and Practice

It is important to understand the nature of staffing, funding, and delivery of the VYWS in Wales to assist with future sector developments and policy. The key aims identified by the wider sector (including CWYVS, Welsh Government and the Education Workforce Council (EWC)) during the research process were staff qualifications, funding, Welsh language, and youth participation.

Discussion on the qualification of youth work staff was pertinent at the time of research due to changes being made by the EWC on the registration expectations of staff and volunteers in the workforce. Consultation was held with the sector in spring 2022 and new legislation and guidance was pending at the time of research (ETS, 2022).

4.3.1 Staff Qualifications

There are four levels of qualifications for youth work in Wales under the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) for youth and community workers. Of the 24,293 staff and volunteers identified during the survey, 301 (1.2%) held a recognised JNC youth work qualification, 212 (70.4%) of these at level two/three (youth support worker) and 89 (29.6%) at level six/seven (professional youth worker). According to the Brimble (2023) from the EWC, there were 651 registered youth support workers (level two/three) and 403 registered youth workers (level six/seven), a total of 1,054 in Wales in February 2023. Therefore, 28.6% of all qualified youth work staff in Wales were captured in the survey data[10].

Figure 10: Total number of JNC Youth Work qualifications held by paid staff and volunteers in the surveyed VYW organisations.

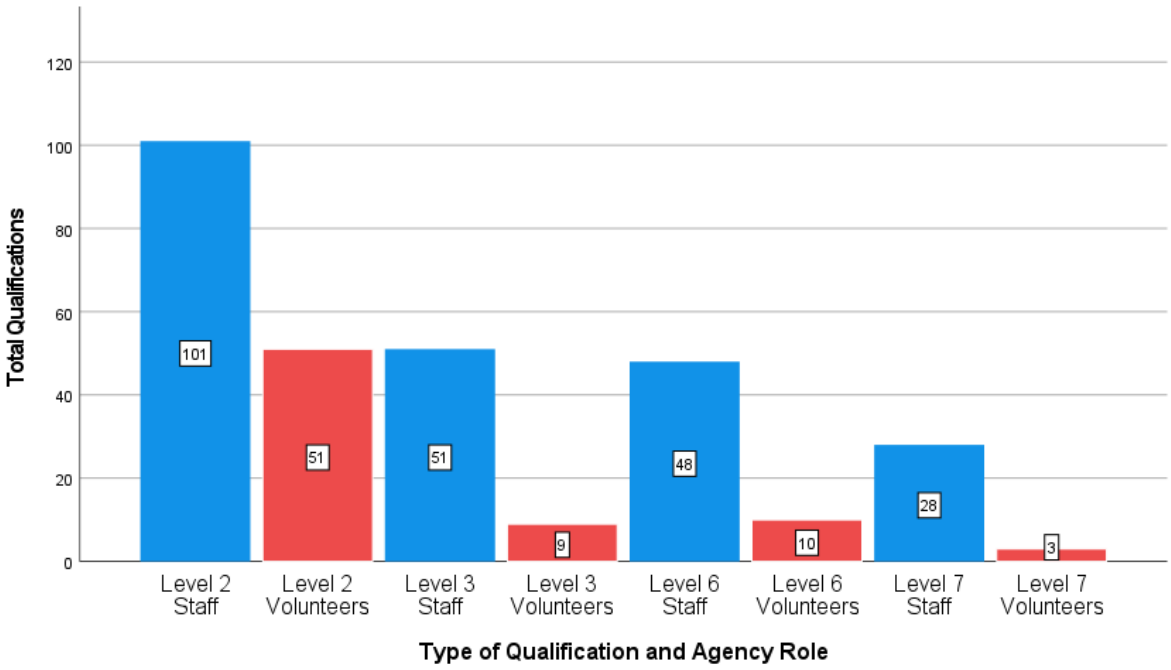


Figure 10 identifies that paid staff are more likely than volunteers to hold JNC qualifications at any level. In total, 228 qualifications were held by paid staff (17.2%) and 73 by volunteers

[10] This was calculated by taking the total captured in the survey (301) and the total in Wales according to EWC (1,054) to create a percentage.

(0.3%). Level two Certificates in Youth Work Practice were most common for both staff and volunteers, and level seven Postgraduate Diplomas least frequent.

The focus groups further explored staff qualifications, with three key themes arising: registration expectations/changes, issues with the current courses/degrees and debates around experience versus qualifications.

One key theme raised regarding the registration of youth workers was the cost of the qualification and registration. This was demonstrated by one participant saying, *"I priced it for us as an organisation, £213,000 a year just to get our staff to degree level"* [VYW Manager 3]. Although, this comment came from a large national organisation, it shows the difficulties that will inevitably be faced by smaller organisations. Another participant stated that *"no voluntary organization could afford to put their staff through what the statutory sector does"* [VYW Manager 4]. Participants disclosed the subsequent recruitment competition with local authorities this results in. As LA services have the resources to pay for staff to be qualified this results in them becoming a more desirable employer, with one stating:

> *"I think when you talk about training and cost, you know, we're going to be left behind again in the voluntary sector because the statutory sector are putting people through these level five-six qualifications that we are not being able to access"* [VYW Manager 2].

These findings could explain why there are a small number of volunteers with qualifications (presented in Figure 10) due to the cost of training and consequently, priority is given to paid staff.

Furthermore, the expectations for registration/qualification on organisations, from the EWC, were reported as unclear. One participant highlighted discrepancies in registration for youth work staff with other expertise who are more issue/skill focused but are still expected to gain generic youth work qualifications. For example, those delivering business, employability or health projects/support. Defining the roles of those involved in sport clubs, theatre groups and choirs, which form a large part of the scoping cohort, may likewise be unclear. Another participant voiced their concerns with registering volunteers by saying "*my understanding is the EWC is still not going to be requiring registration for volunteer youth workers. And yeah, I was concerned that that was even up for debate really"* [VYW Manager 15]. This concern related to the cost of training and instability of volunteers as well as the impact this would have on sustainability.

The survey also looked to capture other relevant qualifications held by paid and unpaid staff delivering youth work. The 98 qualitative responses received, were recoded where possible, into six broad categories shown in Figure 11.

Figure 11: Total number of references to other relevant qualifications made in survey responses.

Type of Qualification	Number of Mentions	Percentage (%)
Education (e.g. PGCE, teaching degrees, teaching assistants)	34	36.2
Issue Specific (e.g. mental health, safeguarding, first aid, nursing, food hygiene, child protection)	10	10.6
Social Work/Care (e.g. health and social degrees, social education, sociology)	9	9.6
Psychology/Counselling/Therapy (e.g. clinical psychology, psychotherapy, counselling, therapists)	10	10.6
Skill Specific (e.g. dance, theatre, music, sports, advocacy)	21	22.3
Young People/Children/Families (e.g. playworkers, BA Working with Children and Families, early years)	10	10.6
Total	94*	100.0

**Note this is NOT the number of qualifications or organisations but the frequency words were mentioned in the open-ended question, thus the total is not the same as the number of responses or organisations.*

As can be seen in Figure 11, education qualifications such as teaching degrees, PGCEs and qualified teaching assistants were the most mentioned qualifications (n=34, 36.2%), followed by skill specific qualifications such as sports, dance, theatre, or music (n=21, 22.3%). This is consistent with the delivery settings and methods presented above. The range of qualifications evidence that despite the importance of training youth work staff and the safeguarding aims of the EWC, VYW organisations rely on a wide variety of qualifications that provide staff with the expertise and experience needed to meet the needs of young people. Interestingly, one respondent highlighted the broader debate on 'professionalising' youth work by responding to the question on other relevant qualifications with "life experience".

This point was also echoed in the focus groups. One focus group participant stated *"that is the best training that they can do, learning how to do it on the job"* [VYW Manager 3].

Another participant claimed, when discussing a person's suitability for the role that *"it is a vocation, isn't it? I really believe it is a vocation"* [VYW Manager 11], suggesting an element of temperament and passion as important in youth work. In contrast, another participant identified the limitation of not holding JNC qualifications, despite 20 years of experience.

It was widely discussed in the focus groups that the level two and three JNC qualifications were onerous, which presents challenges when trying to train staff who are already employed. Some organisations did not feel their staff had the capacity to complete the training and development required, alongside their already highly demanding job. Likewise, organisations providing placements to those completing the qualifications argued it placed a strain on both staff and the organisation, due to increased administrative tasks. One participant said *"I guess it's a lot of pressure on the organizations to take placements on as well. There's lots of paperwork and observations"* [VYW Manager 5]. Another stated:

> *"We had a placement, and they weren't doing it through the university, they were doing it with the other organisation, and we turned around and said we're not taking any more* [redacted] *students for youth work because those assessment tasks are taking up too much of our time."* [VYW Manager 11].

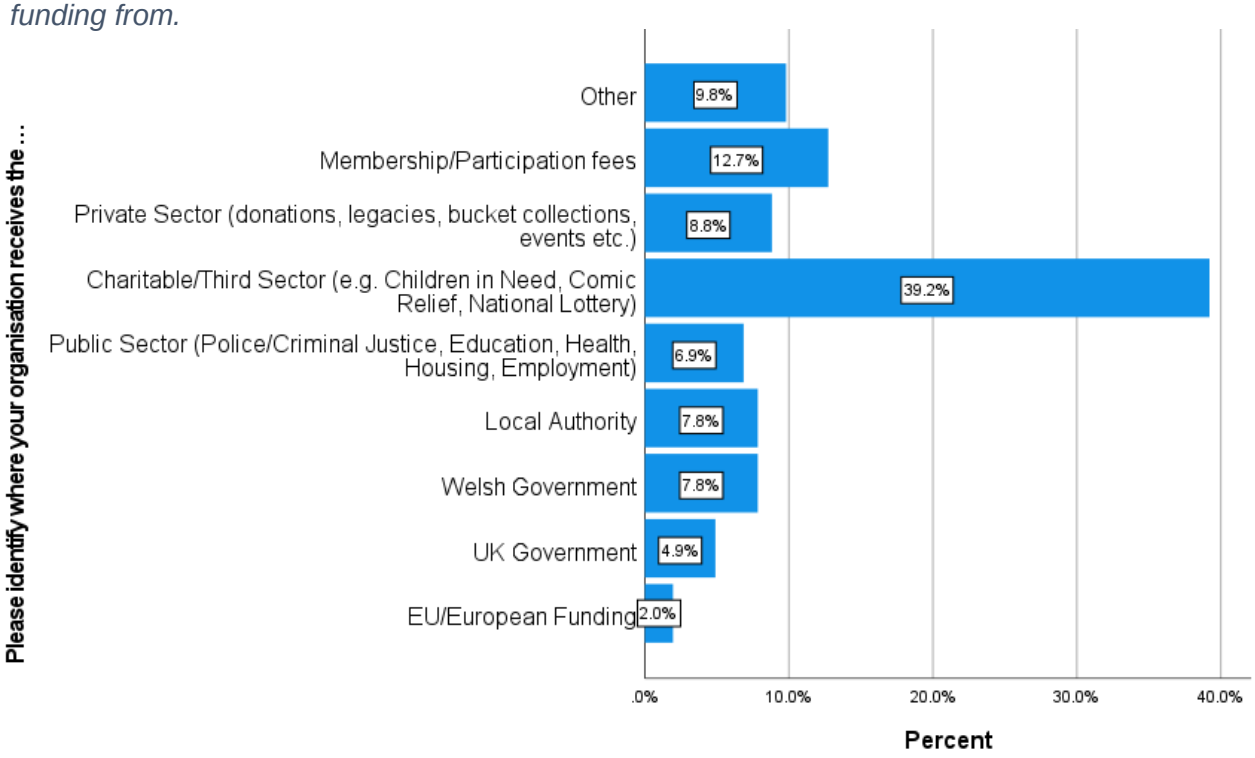
This creates a contradiction and a paradox between the expectation and the resources available. That is, there is not currently enough time, funding, or capacity to train existing staff to the required level, yet there is a need and a desire in the sector to have more registered staff and for organisations to take on placements from external agencies. Subsequently, VYW staff appear under-qualified in comparison to statutory staff despite their experience and range of other relevant qualifications due to the cost of training and the capacity of staff in VYW organisations.

4.3.2 Funding

Funding more broadly, not just in relation to qualifications and training, was also a focus of the survey and focus groups. Survey participants were asked to identify, from a list of common funding sources, where they received the majority of their funding. Of the 102 responses to this question, most (n=40, 39.2%) reported of funding from the charitable/third sector (see Figure 12), with Children in Need, the National Lottery and the Arts Council of Wales being the most common funders reported. Membership/participation fees were also an important form of funding (n=13, 12.7%), followed by 'other' (n=10, 9.8%). 'Other' responses most referred to were church funding (that youth work was part of the church budget), and income generated from sales of goods or hiring of facilities. For seven organisations (n=7, 6.9%) most of their funding came from public sector funding, such as Police and Crime Commissioners. The challenges of securing funding, including the lack of

core funding, the short-term nature of funding and the impact of rising costs and increased competition, were emphasised during the focus group discussions.

Figure 12: Bar chart representing where the surveyed VYW organisations receive most of their funding from.



All focus groups highlighted a lack of core funding (for basic running costs and staff costs), for example, *"the projects are pretty easy to get. It's just the core* [funding] *for running costs and for staff for management and finance, all those kinds of posts, Yeah, they are necessary, but not seen as sort of sexy for funders"* [VYW Manager 8]. Similarly, the lack of staff dedicated to fundraising was expressed by another participant: *"we're quite adept at getting money but to get that money, we need the people* [staff/fundraisers] *there in the first place"* [VYW Manager 2].

Finally, another participant said:

> *"When actually the daily bread and butter of program delivery should be consistently funded to ensure there are no gaps and there are no fall throughs and I think that's not able to happen because of the funding landscape that we're in"* [VYW Manager 1].

This uncertainty of the funding landscape affects organisation's ability to plan, recruit and subsequently support young people effectively. This all feeds into questions about the sustainability of the VYWS in Wales which is explored in more detail below.

Organisational planning, recruitment and sustainability are impacted by the short-term/project-based funding that is available to the VYWS. The nature of third-sector funding provided by Children in Need, Comic Relief, and the National Lottery, which the majority of

organisations relied on (n=40, 39.2%), is project-based for short periods. Figure 12 shows that a small percentage of organisations receive government (n=8, 7.8% Welsh and n=5, 4.9% UK) or LA (n=8, 7.8%) funding, which may provide more long-term support. Funding from the LA arose in all focus groups, with varied experiences reported. Some organisations claimed to have 'very good' support from the LA, receiving over £30,000 a year, while others received minimal or partial support for elements of their service.

The impact of short-term funding on recruitment and retention of staff and the subsequent inability to build sustained relationships with young people, was also highlighted in all focus groups. One participant said *"I think we are a sector of fixed term contracts and that's good for nobody really"* [VYW Manager 1]. The effects of this were evidenced by another participant stating:

> *"And it all has a detrimental effect on the young people because if there is high staff turnover for whatever reason, maybe funding changing or burn out, those relationships for young people are very constantly being broken down. So young people who are coming into us because maybe they don't have secure relationships at home or outside of the youth service, also can't find it in the youth service because the staff turnover is so high, which is no fault to the staff they are giving all they can, but there isn't a place to hold them"* [VYW Manager 5].

Again, the longevity of funding directly impacts the sustainability of the sector, as explained by one participant: *"my concern is people are going to leave the sector and no one else is going join it because there is the lack of stability, especially in the climate that we're living in at the moment"* [VYW Manager 5].

Furthermore, during the period of research, the UK was emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic and entering a further cost-of-living crisis which was set to impact not only the VYWS but many parts of society including young people and their families (explored further below). One participant explained:

> *"And I think with the cost of living that's affecting our families, it's also affecting us affording, you know, to run the community centre so if we can't afford those bills then the youth club won't be able to continue. And then that's again another knock-on effect to the communities we are serving"* [VYW Manager 5].

The economic crisis directly affects the ability of VYW staff to support young people while experiencing their own financial uncertainty and hardship. One manager detailed: "*he's got a family, he's got a mortgage, how can you turn around to your partner and say I am going to do this* [continue working in the VYWS] *but we might not have any money next month"* [VYW Manager 2].

The combination of a lack of core funding, funding instability and the current economic climate creates a precarious landscape for the VYWS. This is further complicated by the

evident competition with local authorities and other voluntary sector organisations. This is not just apparent in the context of qualifications of staff as discussed above, but also in the recruitment and retention of staff. One focus group participant stated, *"competition with the County Councils because the amount of money they pay their youth workers is something that we can't compete with"* [VYW Manager 9]. Similarly, another said *"I think the new graduates tend to go for the local authorities as a preferred job, don't they, for the security of it"* [VYW Manager 8]. Additionally, many participants stated their organisation had lost members of staff to the councils and local authorities in the previous year. This has impacted their capacity, the wellbeing of remaining staff and the subsequent work with young people. There were 21 separate references to competition with the local authorities within the focus group discussions, evidencing the importance of this issue faced by the VYWS. Interestingly, one participant highlighted that, whilst difficult to lose staff to the Councils, it has been positive in raising confidence and aspirations of local people in the rural town. Competition amongst other voluntary organisations when applying for funding bids was also discussed, creating a difficult landscape for collaboration and partnership. However, one participant did report supporting a local group of volunteers in setting up a youth club, evidencing positive collaboration amongst voluntary organisations. Competition was also alluded to in the context of Welsh language speakers.

4.3.3 Welsh Language

In line with Welsh Government aims to have more Welsh speakers in the country, the survey captured the number of Welsh language speakers working in the VYWS and the Welsh medium support/provision available to young people. Appendix 12 provides detail on Welsh language speakers in VYW organisations as well as an exploration of the area distribution across Wales. According to the data from the survey, there are a total of 11,355 Welsh speakers in the VYWS in Wales. Again, it should be remembered that the survey sample was approximately 11% of the identified sector, therefore it could be estimated, tentatively, that there are 103,227 Welsh language speakers in the VYWS. Although, one organisation stated they had 10,281 Welsh language speakers, which accounted for 90.5% of the total and will have impacted the overall findings, thus the estimations should be viewed with caution. Approximately half of organisations had between one and three Welsh language speakers, and a fifth had no Welsh speakers. Just over one in ten organisations (n=12, 11.7%) provided specialist Welsh language provision (either a specific project, club, or the whole service) (see Figure 14).

In the focus groups, one participant expressed difficulty in recruiting Welsh language staff, again linking to competition and the incentive to work in roles outside the VYWS, they said:

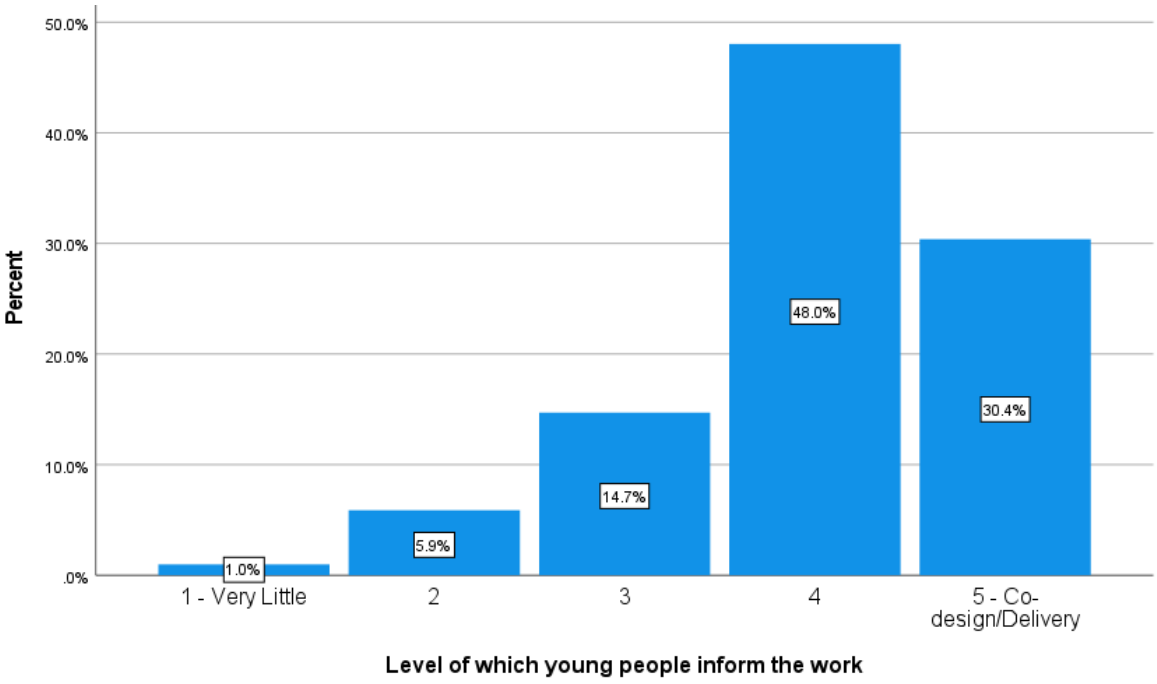
> *"One of our barriers is recruiting Welsh language medium staff because there needs to be a major investment in Welsh medium staff but also they are premium employees and they can get a better job somewhere else. So they might go into teaching or they go into a plethora of Welsh medium comms officers or digital officers that have been advertised at the moment it's incredible"* [VYW Manager 3].

Again, this illustrates the impact that short term funding and low pay has on recruitment and retention of staff. This feeds into the conversations on sustainability of both the sector and organisations themselves, discussed further in the chapter.

4.3.4 Young People's Involvement

The literature review documented the importance of youth voice and participation in youth work narratives in Wales (Hillman *et al.*, 2010; Children Act, 2004). When asked to rate young people's involvement in decision making, over three quarters (78%) of survey respondents stated that young people were significantly (level four and five) involved in the planning/development of youth work, as seen in Figure 13. Level five denotes co-design/delivery with young people, which evidences the importance of youth participation and voice in Wales. These findings support respondents' claims in previous questions to involve young people in decision making, although how involved young people are in practice would require further research and evidence.

Figure 13: Bar chart representing young people's level of involvement in the surveyed VYW organisations.



These tier two findings highlight how those within the sector meet the needs and priorities of Welsh Government (supporting Cymraeg 2050, Welsh language speakers), EWC (staff qualifications, registration consultation) and CWVYS (funding support, young people's

involvement) as well as evidencing the issues and developments needed to improve the sector (recruitment, retention of staff, training, the economic climate and funding issues).

4.4 The Needs of Young People and the VYWS

This section outlines the effects of key contemporary issues and social affairs on young people and the VYWS, specifically mental health, homelessness, county lines and COVID-19. The VYWS response to these, and the subsequent impact on the sector are analysed. Finally, it explores the notion of sustainability across time both within the sector as a whole, and for individual organisations, including specific reference to the impact of austerity in the last five years.

4.4.1 Contemporary Issues

The literature review provided evidence of contemporary issues young people face and the knowledge gap on how the VYWS responds to these. The key issues identified in the literature review were mental health, homelessness, criminality, and county lines. These were touched on in the survey and explored in more depth in the focus groups, alongside other issues such as poverty and identity (including race, ethnicity and LGBTQIA+) and disabilities and additional needs. Survey results are detailed in Figure 14.

Figure 14: Total number of surveyed VYW services providing specialist provision/support.

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
$SpecialistProvision[a]	Adoption/Care	10	2.8%	11.1%
	BAME/Travellers	16	4.5%	17.8%
	Crime Prevention and Victimisation (Violence/Exploitation)	21	5.9%	23.3%
	Disabilities/Additional Needs	43	12.0%	47.8%
	Environmental/Sustainable Development	21	5.9%	23.3%
	Faith Groups	13	3.6%	14.4%
	Gender Inequality	17	4.8%	18.9%
	Homelessness/Housing	15	4.2%	16.7%
	Intergenerational	18	5.0%	20.0%
	LGBTQIA+	20	5.6%	22.2%
	Mental Health/Wellbeing	55	15.4%	61.1%
	Substance Misuse	16	4.5%	17.8%
	Rural Communities	16	4.5%	17.8%
	Uniformed Groups	12	3.4%	13.3%
	Welsh Language	12	3.4%	13.3%
	Young Carers	19	5.3%	21.1%
	Young Parents	17	4.8%	18.9%
	Please indicate any specialist types of provision and support you offer (select all that apply): - Other	16	4.5%	17.8%
Total		357	100.0%	396.7%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

**Note results are from a 'select all that apply' question thus the total is more than the total participants (103).*

'Mental health/wellbeing' was a focus for over half of organisations (n=55, 61.1%), as well as 'disabilities/additional needs' (n=43, 47.8%), this is consistent with the scoping data presented above (disabilities/additional needs, n=145, 15.5% and mental health/wellbeing, n=85, 9.1%). 'Crime prevention and victimisation (violence/exploitation) (n=21, 23.3%) and 'environmental/sustainable development' (n=21, 23.3%) were also a focus for almost a quarter of respondents. This is interesting as 'environmental/sustainable development' made up only 0.2% of scoping organisations[11], however it seems that the environmental agenda has been taken up by a variety of organisations from the survey. Moreover, given the emphasis placed on homelessness in the literature, services with this focus did not appear as frequently as expected (n=15, 16.7%). All other areas identified were focused on by organisations, but clearly certain issues have received more attention than others.

[11] Scoping categories were based on an organisation's main focus, goal or mission statement. It is likely that organisations deliver on a variety of issues simultaneously.

The 16 ‘other’ specialist provisions included domestic abuse support, support for refugees/asylum seekers, family interventions and bereavement support. The findings also provide evidence that organisations respond to a variety of issues, as seen by the large number of responses.

It is clear from the findings in Figure 14 that young people face a variety of issues and that the VYWS is flexible and adaptable at responding to these. However, understanding the barriers to service delivery is important, which formed a key objective for the focus groups, as now discussed.

4.4.1.1 Mental Health

As detailed in the literature review, scoping and the survey data, mental health is a prevalent and deep-rooted issue for young people. This was emphasised by focus group participants: *“one of the programs that we hosted last week, 20 young people, every single young person in the room, self-identified as having anxiety”* [VYW Manager 1]. Another also stated:

> *“We did a survey and this was before the pandemic back in 2019 and 459 young people answered it and 65% of them said that the biggest issues facing young people today was mental health and that's the support they wanted”* [VYW Manager 7].

Some participants reported an increase in anxiety in young people regarding the current climate (both economic and environmental), and others that finding homes, uncertainty about the future and low self-esteem were impacting young people’s mental health. Links were made to heightened personal insecurities with the increasing use of social media. Another recurrent theme was low aspiration; this was discussed across all regions but particularly in rural areas. For example, one participant said *“a big issue for us is low aspiration by many of the young people we work with, really. But I mean that I think is a problem across rural Wales and lack of opportunity to get out and do anything because of family poverty”* [VYW Manager 12]. These issues illuminated the difficulties for staff in dealing with such severe and growing mental health concerns.

As examined in the context of funding, the inability to work with young people holistically due to the project/issue-based/short-term funding, presented barriers to dealing with mental health and wellbeing for some organisations. This was clearly evidenced by one participant who said *“it's all mixed up. And what people tend to do is to treat it as individual. It's not individual. And one thing spawns another thing spawns another thing”* [VYW Manager 2]. As the findings suggest, the VYWS clearly respond to a wide variety of issues experienced by young people and so may be best placed to provide the necessary holistic approach where young people are seen as a whole rather than for the specific circumstances they find themselves in.

There were 16 references made to using a holistic approach but with an underlying frustration that this was not currently possible due to: *"funders often want to reinvent the wheel as well, the holistic thing is never in the applications"* [VYW Manager 4]. Although some did express concern over the appropriateness, capacity, and ability of the VYWS in taking on certain issues, for example one participant said *"I have been in the voluntary sector for about 15-16 years now and I didn't expect to be doing sort of policing"* [VYW Manager 4]. One participant stated, *"I'm not a psychologist you know, I'm not a psychology expert you know"* [VYW Manager 8]. Others criticised partnership with health services and other more formal mental health services, with many disclosing a lack of information sharing and capacity issues in these services.

4.4.1.2 Criminality, County Lines, Exploitation and Substance Misuse

Almost a quarter of organisations surveyed provided specialist support on crime prevention and victimisation (n=21, 23.3%), and almost a fifth on substance misuse (n=16, 17.8%). The prevalence of these issues and appropriateness, capacity, and ability of the sector in responding to them was also discussed in the focus groups. The use and distribution of drugs among young people was identified in all focus group regions, but the nature and consequences varied. For example, in rural areas it was explained as somewhat hidden and urban areas more overt and prevalent. To evaluate the availability of provision in different LA areas, further analysis was conducted on both substance misuse and crime prevention provisions across Wales, the results are presented in Appendix 13.

The issue of county lines was a key theme for consideration in the focus groups. However, this was not discussed at great length and discussion often digressed towards substance misuse or drug dealing more generally. One participant said *"a lot of them we know are doing recreational cocaine on the weekend, drinking, sometimes they will have a can in front of* [the youth club] *and try to come into club. And we are like no, not happening"* [VYW Manager 10]. Although not always linked, apparent drug use can therefore lead to heightened risks of exploitation and county lines involvement as explored in the literature review (see section 2.5.3). Some reference was made, mainly in South Wales, to signs of exploitation amongst young people and the knowledge of cases of county lines and exploitation (both criminal and sexual). However, focus groups in other areas made little reference to county lines and exploitation. The differences in areas were discussed relating to rurality and deprivation impacting the risk of exploitation.

Some participants considered the impact of COVID-19 on these issues:

> *"And I think we saw a lot more of drug issues didn't we* [post pandemic]*, especially soft stuff, because as I said earlier, that became the norm because nobody was*

> *watching because nobody was there, they were able to do these things and then it didn't even seem to be an issue, you know whereas before* [the pandemic] *they would turn around trying to hide it a bit, they don't bother now it's just in front of you and then they say "alright then, tell me off"* [VYW Manager 2].

Participants also discussed crime and victimisation more broadly, in relation to increased anti-social behaviour post-pandemic and targeted hate crime when specialist clubs for LGBTQIA+ were ongoing. When understanding how the VYWS responds to these issues, the difficulties in partnerships with the police and other agencies were discussed. These complexities of such relationships were captured by participants:

> *"You ring them* [the police] *on a Friday and say there are people outside selling drugs right now and they ring you back on Sunday and say are they still there. And that is the extent of their involvement, they last visited us in March 2012. And promise and promise and promise they will come and support us and never do. We've got a little group of adults in the village who if I ring will come up and chase people away as we don't have enough staff"* [VYW Manager 6].

> *"From our experience, they only come to us when they need us, and we have given in some cases quite important pieces of the puzzle I guess as well, because we are quite an informal setting you know, we have found things out that need to be passed on"* [VYW Manager 4].

Despite this, many did report positive relationships with local PCSOs and evidenced partnership working to tackle certain issues, but this varied across regions. Furthermore, one participant detailed the importance of 'contextual safeguarding' and partnership working that their LA was encouraging in all work with young people, including for youth organisations and other agencies like the police.

As presented here, participants identified that criminality, county lines, exploitation and drug use were visible issues, however as conversations often digressed, it suggests other issues were more prominent, despite the emphasis placed on this in the literature review.

4.4.1.3 Homelessness

The scoping and survey data found that homelessness was a focus for VYW organisations (scoping, n=30, 3.2%, survey, n=15, 16.7%), although again, given the emphasis placed on this in the literature review, it did not appear as frequently as expected. Focus group discussions relating to homelessness ranged from anxiety about rural homelessness due to the economic climate, issues with having to 'present' as homeless in order to receive support, the decline of networks of support due to financial cuts and the hidden nature of homelessness, especially in rural areas with greater geographical spread and lower population density. Homelessness was emphasised as an issue of importance in South Wales compared to other regions (see Appendix 14 for further survey data area comparison).

The hidden nature of homelessness was discussed in all focus groups, but especially in rural communities in North and Mid Wales where participants expressed this issue was 'unseen' but were aware that it was still present. Participants also expressed the barriers to dealing with youth homelessness, one stated:

> *"Some of that is quite hidden as well, homelessness, it's sort of always been there, children sleeping rough if they have been kicked out of the house at a sort of younger age or sofa surfing, and another aspect to the sort of barriers was that they had to 'present' as homeless, so they have to go to an office and tell someone that they're homeless"* [VYW Manager 2].

The limitations of partnership work were also referenced when responding to homelessness in the focus groups. Participants reported 'filling a gap' in provision that should be provided by other sectors and again highlighted their role in delivering a holistic approach to working with young people. Questions of capacity, training, upskilling, and staff wellbeing were examined in the context of 'filling a gap', providing a strong evidence base for arguments of both appropriateness and sustainability which are explored in more detail below.

4.4.1.4 Poverty

What became particularly apparent throughout the focus group discussions, despite the issues explored above clearly impacting young people, poverty was the overarching issue for majority of participating organisations. Alarmingly, young people without basic food and hygiene were problems faced collectively for all focus group participants. One expressed: *"daily we have families, parents on the phone, very distressed that they can't afford their housing and basic food, hygiene"* [VYW Manager 5]. Similarly, others said *"we're feeding a lot more young people now than we ever were before"* [VYW Manager 9]*, and "we do a meal 25p per meal and even the 25p isn't there* [for the young people attending]*"* [VYW Manager 8]. This is particularly problematic when 12.7% of the survey sample rely heavily on membership/participation fees for funding their service, as shown in Figure 12. The subsequent result of poverty on young people was explained by one participant who said, *"it's a barrier for them engaging because if they don't have the right equipment or whatever to come on the trip, then they're not able to"* [VYW Manager 5].

An innovative solution demonstrated by organisations was partnerships with private sector organisations. Most focus group participants maintained an agreement with supermarkets to provide surplus food, employability opportunities and other support, as well as links to local food banks and sport equipment companies to help with access to clubs. Despite the efforts taken by VYW organisations in meeting these needs for young people, participants expressed frustration as no additional funding or recognition is given for this work, leaving them to manage these additional needs alongside the day-to-day work, resulting in

resources draining faster. One participant said, *"I don't think there's much recognition of that* [the work undertaken by the VYWS]*, so the local politicians don't get in touch with us ever, they sort of recognise it but certainly in Welsh Government I know there isn't any real recognition"* [VYW Manager 6]*.* This exemplifies the general frustration between participants in the lack of recognition and value placed on VYW and the low political priority sensed by organisations.

4.4.1.5 Identity

Other contemporary issues impacting young people disclosed by focus group participants included issues surrounding identity (e.g. sexual orientation and gender identity), social media and technology (e.g. a rise in the use and distribution of pornography), and more young people with additional needs or ACE's attending open access youth clubs. The survey found that 22.2% of organisations provided support for LGBTQIA+ young people and the scoping found seven organisations focusing on LGBTQIA+ support, further proving the prevalence of this topic.

The challenge of upskilling staff to keep up with the fast pace of change for certain issues including social media and LGBTQIA+ support presented a key barrier. As one participant stated: *"young people questioning their sexuality and their gender, we can pull on internal staff members who have that expertise, but not everybody will have that opportunity to do that"* [VYW Manager 5]*.*

The need for upskilling was particularly pertinent as many participants reported that LGBTQIA+ specific provisions have had an increase in participation: *"we've got three LGBTQ staff running the group but it started off with 12 and now it's 18 regulars and since April we've worked with 75 young people and it's quite a small town, they come from right outside town"* [VYW Manager 8], and others expressing the wide reach of their provision: *"we've got a 25-mile radius with LGBT that's as far as they come, that's 25 miles to come here and the parents bring them and then the parents go off and have coffees"* [VYW Manager 8]*, "same, our LGBTQ group when we've mapped what areas they are coming from, they're literally coming from like every neighbouring county"* [VYW Manager 10].

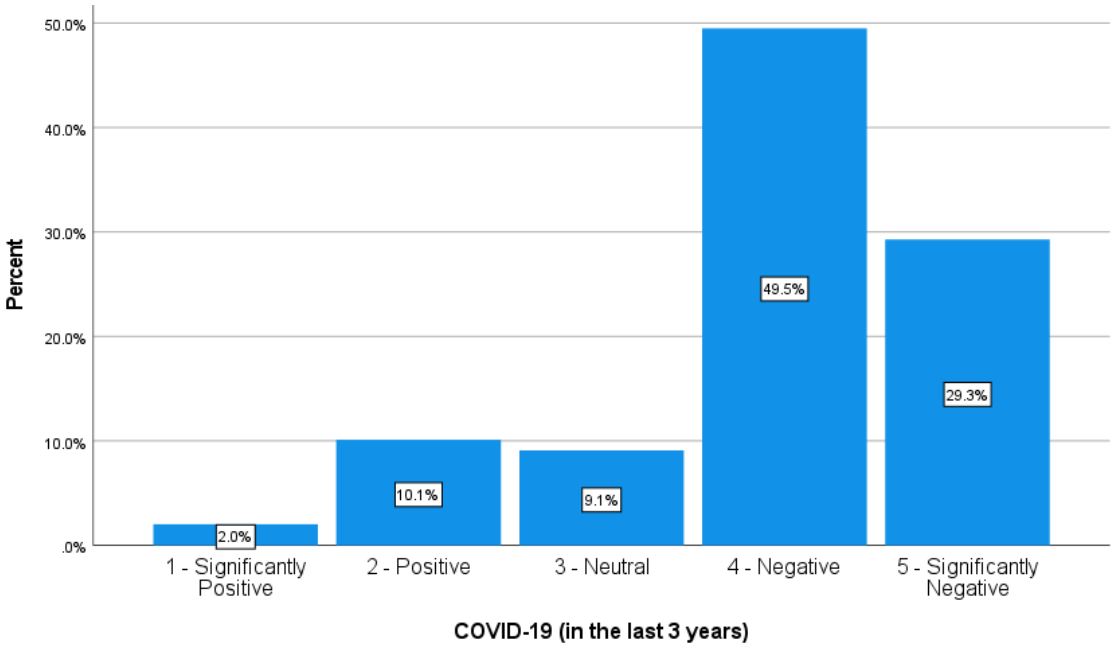
Area comparison was also conducted to corroborate the claims made in the focus groups, the results are found in Appendix 15.

4.4.2 COVID-19 Pandemic

With lockdowns, furlough, isolation, and poor mental health impacting society simultaneously and collectively, it was important to explore the effects of COVID-19 on young people and the VYWS. Survey participants were asked to identify on a scale of one to five how they had

been impacted by the pandemic, with five being significantly negative (Figure 15).

Figure 15: A bar chart representing the impact of COVID-19 on the surveyed VYW organisations.



Most organisations were negatively (49.5%) or significantly negatively (29.3%) impacted by COVID-19. However, it was interesting to find that 12 organisations' experiences of the pandemic were positive or significantly positive. Focus group discussions on COVID-19 highlighted the impact on young people and barriers to service delivery, including changes made to organisational processes, focus and approach.

The main underlying theme was that organisations are in 'recovery', in a multitude of ways including strain, adaptation, burnout and capacity now the pandemic is over, and these impacts were expected to continue for a long time according to participants. One participant expressed this as:

> *"I think that it's worth putting on record that we, like lots of other voluntary organisations, feel like we did something mammoth there through the pandemic and we are as an organisation in recovery from that I think it's been very difficult to achieve what we managed to achieve in terms of the amount of face to face stuff we managed to keep going despite everything and the constant risk-benefit assessments done again and again through the pandemic and trying to work out how the best way to engage with children and families through that was. And I think that that's had a knock on in terms of staff and volunteers being able to, well, just cope, I suppose. Just be able to get by. It's everybody's kind of tired and worn out you know and then everything's kind of opened up again, and it feels like it's gone boom"* [VYW Manager 15].

This also highlights the impact on staff and volunteers, with many losing their jobs, being on furlough or isolating due to the risks associated with COVID-19. What was clear from

discussions was the changing nature of support required during the pandemic and some organisation's ability to be flexible and responsive to young people's needs. This change was illustrated by one participant who said: *"the relationship we got with youngsters after COVID is totally different to how we were working prior to COVID because we lost that continuity"* [VYW Manager 2], and further evidenced by another: *"our open access we have seen less people accessing it. But then our referred projects we have seen a massive increase"* [VYW Manager 5]. An increase in referred projects could be attributed to the rise in mental health issues, isolation and lack of socialisation resulting in a need for more specific/targeted support.

Despite the efforts taken, organisations generally felt that a generation of young people were lost. This included those who did not join youth clubs and those who originally engaged but never returned. One participant said *"we've lost a massive generation I think, because the ones that were with us when we shut, none of them have come back, nor have the ones slightly younger and we've got a new group of younger people coming through"* [VYW Manager 6]. In contrast, another organisation claimed:

> *"We had young people that we worked with before COVID and we've kind of retained them coming back but the one thing we didn't bring in the new generation, you know new young people at 10 and 11 who will usually come to us, we lost because we've not been there"* [VYW Manager 4].

The differences experienced by these participants could be due to area differences with VYW Manager 6 coming from a more rural area than VYW Manager 4. Others discussed the impact of reintegration post-pandemic, with many reporting an increase in challenging behaviour thought to be due to young people forgetting how to be around each other. This was documented by one participant who stated:

> *"This year from January our numbers doubled. So, where we would normally have 20 or 30 turning up, we were getting 50, 60, 65 you know, every evening in the week and the behaviour was dreadful, really dreadful. Worst I've ever seen. And we've had to take measures to split the groups into age groups now so that it's more manageable because you can't just take on more and more staff"* [VYW Manager 9].

The increase in challenging behaviour reported in the focus groups, were largely linked to the negative consequences of COVID-19 including, isolation, loneliness, increased mental ill-health and more time spent in digital spaces. One participant evidenced this by saying *"the inability to access that* [support] *can cause identity issues, isolation, loneliness amongst a lot of young people, people not knowing how to present in a physical space because they've lost such a key element of their socialization during the pandemic"* [VYW Manager 1].

Another key effect considered was digital poverty and increased risks online. When almost all parts of society were forced to move online, those with limited knowledge, ability and

access to these spaces were left behind and struggled to adapt to the 'new normal'. This was particularly apparent for young people with additional needs such as autism, who: *"found it really difficult to stay focused on schoolwork* [online]*"* [VYW Manager 8]. Those with additional needs were also subject to increased risks of abuse and exploitation with more time being spent online, for example one participant said, *"people seek solace, and they are comfortable behind the screen but there's a lot of abuse that comes to lots of members with support needs because they're either putting themselves out there without understanding what the backlash is going to be like"* [VYW Manager 13].

Without pre-existing data from before the pandemic, the impact of COVID-19 was difficult to research. However, the positive effects of COVID-19 were explored in the focus groups in relation to young people enjoying the lack of schooling and some finding safe spaces online to express themselves. One participant said *"I know there were young people who sort of thrived on the lockdown because they didn't have to deal with things in school, like sort of bullying and feelings of inadequacy and things like that"* [VYW Manager 8]. This could be seen as a positive effect of COVID-19 with young people being able to escape the negative side of school. Similarly, young people were able to find communities of likeminded people online to explore elements of their identity, for example it was stated that:

> *"Stonewall did do a lot of research into the effects of COVID and how that's changed LGBT people or just people in general coming out, and it has proven that lockdown has been quite transformational for the community itself, people are feeling a lot more confident now to come out. Because I think they came together online, I think the fact that people being locked down with family members that maybe don't understand. So, I think once they were able to be free and come out, then it was like right, I need to go and find my people, you know, I need to go out and find my community. So there has been a definite increase to the amount of people coming out since lockdown"* [VYW Manager 10].

What is clear from both the survey and focus group findings is that COVID-19 and the other contemporary issues discussed have had varying influence on young people and the VYWS. With COVID-19, mental health and poverty appearing as prevalent and widespread issues across Wales, and homelessness and county lines impacting regions differently. When understanding the findings as a whole, it is clear that the VYWS is flexible in adapting to the needs of young people but that this also creates issues with upskilling, capacity, burnout and compromised staff wellbeing, which subsequently undermines recruitment, retention of staff and the sustainability with the VYWS.

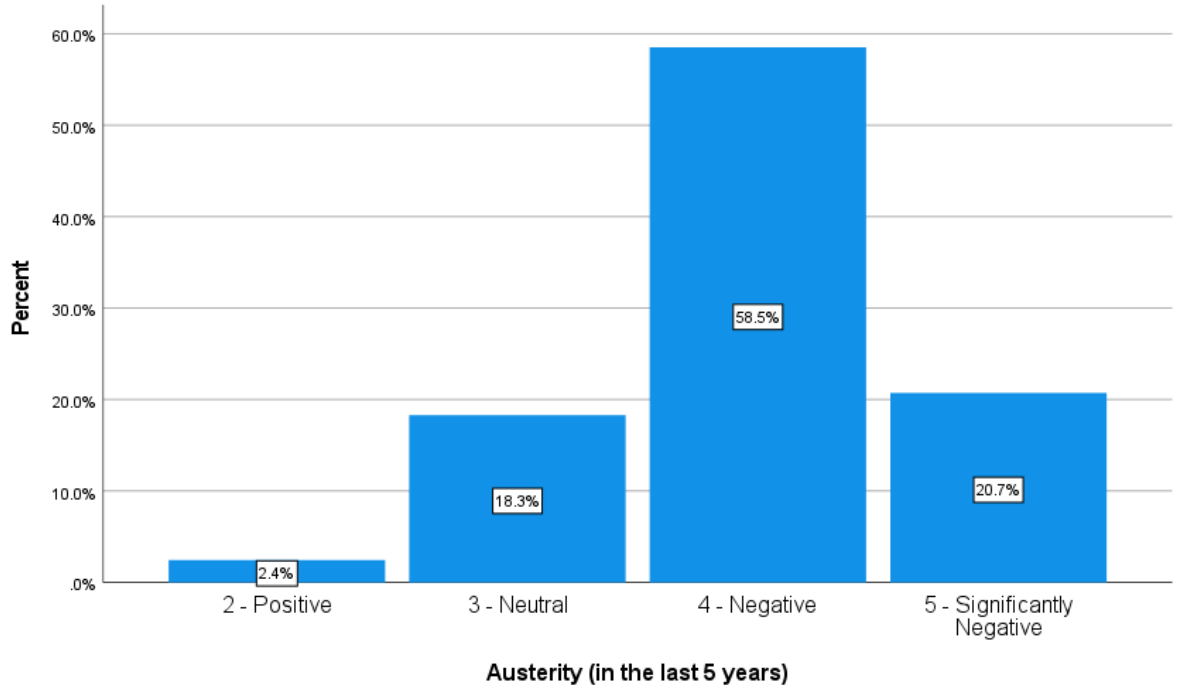
4.4.3 Sustainability within the VYWS

Exploring sustainability within the VYWS was a key project aim, found in all stages of data collection. Three central themes of austerity, unstable funding and the volunteer workforce were identified in relation to sustainability and are discussed below.

4.4.3.1 *Austerity*

Of the 82 participants who answered this survey question (see Figure 16), almost two thirds experienced negative ramifications due to austerity in the last five years (negative = 58.5%, significantly negative = 20.7%). Interestingly, two respondents said the influence of austerity had been positive, but it is not clear from the focus groups in what way organisations benefited from austerity. Focus group participants discussed austerity broadly in terms of the aforementioned cost-of-living crisis, but also in the context of financial cuts to youth services. One participant declared that austerity had 'decimated' the youth service. Participants unanimously discussed however, that austerity was not considered contemporary or new, despite recent economic events. For example, one participant stated that young people have faced these struggles for at least a decade already. The subsequent effects of fatigue on the organisation and staff were expressed by one participant who said, *"I mean the past 15 years, we've essentially been in one drama or another, I think in terms of funding, keeping going and volunteers, and I think a lot of people are quite tired now and these things* [improvements to the sector] *need to happen"* [VYW Manager 14].

Figure 16: A bar chart representing the impact of austerity on the surveyed VYW organisations.



4.4.3.2 *Unstable Funding*

The findings from the scoping provided evidence of the fragmented and unstable nature of the VYWS. As previously discussed, 75 organisations were removed from the scoping data during the research process for a variety of reasons, suggesting a lack of sustainability for VYW organisations. Consequently, and inevitably, relationships with young people become

unstable and unreliable offering fewer positive outcomes attributed to sustained relationships. The survey findings relating to funding (see Figure 12), are also evidence of a lack of sustainability. For example, reliance on membership/participation fees, dependence on the inherently unstable charitable/third sector for funding and those who utilised the sales of goods or hiring of facilities. This was further illustrated in the focus groups by one participant who said *"it's* [the VYWS] *not sustainable, it can't be. They're youngsters. They can't pay the cost of the service we provide they can't pay it and families can't pay it"* [VYW Manager 4]. Though arguably the funding options provided in the survey are all potentially unstable due to economic and political change over time (for example, European Union funding, public sector, and governments). Focus group participants did, however, acknowledge that public sectors also experience similar issues with funding and capacity and that sustainability was precarious for most. Solutions to these issues were seldom discussed, with the underlying feelings being powerlessness and perplexity.

The issues with funding and its contribution to the lack of sustainability were discussed widely in the focus groups. One participant highlighted this by stating:

> *"That whole thing of sustainability is a myth. If the public sector had to make the money they spend, they couldn't do it because they're not built to be a machine for making money, they're built to offer services. Exactly what we do. We're not built to make money, to be able to provide the service, we're not a business. We're there to provide a service to the public that's not available anywhere else"* [VYW Manager 2].

Similarly, another stated:

> *"They think great, we will do summer of fun for 5 weeks, but they don't see any value in sustained youth work, and relationship building and things. In our area everything's pop up, pops up today, gone tomorrow, it's there for a day, nobody gets to know a youth worker"* [VYW Manager 6].

The overall outlook in relation to sustainability within the VYWS was the need for core funding for staffing and resources. Focus group participants (managers from VYW organisations) discussed taking on the roles of multiple staff (such as fundraisers, administration, business management), resulting in less time for young people and leading to burnout, increased stress, mental ill-health of staff and low staff retention.

4.4.3.3 The Volunteer Workforce

The reliance on and recruitment of volunteers – who form a fundamental part of the voluntary sector (as per the survey sample n=22,464) – also impacts sustainability. With paid staff experiencing capacity issues, burnout and taking on multiple roles within an organisation, volunteers are increasingly relied upon to sustain organisations and relationships with young people. However, focus group discussions revealed inherent difficulties with this including recruitment, stability, meaningful relationships, and longevity.

One participant evidenced the reputational consequences of this: *"so it* [the VYWS] *has a reputation, especially when using volunteers and things like that for being not very reliable or long term"* [VYW Manager 15]*.* The perceived unreliability of the VYWS results in a lack of trust, value and recognition placed on the sector in meeting the needs of young people and can result in limited funding, political support, and guidance.

Contrastingly, rural communities reported issues with recruiting volunteers. One focus group participant stated:

> *"I think the issue of volunteers and particularly parent volunteers certainly in our area, is a really difficult one and we haven't managed to recruit any parent volunteers and I think the general attitude is that, you know, parents are willing to bring their young people to a group but they are certainly not willing to volunteer"* [VYW Manager 12]*.*

With rural communities being small and connected, having parent volunteers is often the only option, further suggesting a lack of sustainability. Another participant stated that due to the economic crisis, the volunteer force was dwindling. While others referred to 'growing' their own staff from the young people attending the club and volunteering when they are older as a potential solution to the decrease in volunteer recruitment.

One participant concluded: *"the two things that are sustainable because nothing else really feels sustainable at the moment is the fact that young people are always going to need us and the services we provide and that we will do our best to provide those with passion"* [VYW Manager 1]*,* which clearly highlights the issues and the need for improvement in the VYWS. With an increased reliance on volunteers coinciding with a decrease in recruitment of volunteers, alongside funding instability and austerity, this directly creates a precarious, volatile, and ultimately unsustainable landscape of the VYWS.

Overall, the tier two and three findings relating to contemporary issues impacting young people and COVID-19 and sustainability provide evidence of the struggles, future needs and developments of the VYWS in Wales. The findings suggest that young people's basic needs are not being met and that VYW organisations desire is to use a holistic approach with young people. The sustainability findings, although seldom positive, provide an evidence base for understanding the issues faced by the VYWS, allowing further research to develop possible solutions such as better core funding opportunities and improvements for future sector developments.

4.5 Conclusion

The findings presented throughout this chapter provide a detailed overview of the composition, nature, and structure of the VYWS in Wales. The scoping and survey data have highlighted the gaps in existing knowledge while also outlining the need for further

research and monitoring of the fast-paced changes to the sector. The findings outlined how the VYWS responds to contemporary issues impacting young people and the barriers in doing so. However, the underlying sentiment was a desire to work holistically with young people based on the complexities of youth work and young people. The VYWS is evidently unstable and fragmented, which was found to impact the sustainability of organisations and the sector as a whole, this is linked to issues with resources, support and capacity. Overall, the findings clearly evidenced the positive contributions of the sector in their support for young people, and thus the importance of reinforcing the sector in making the necessary improvements.

5 Discussion

5.1 Introduction

The following chapter reviews the findings alongside the research aims and existing literature presented in chapter 2.

The study explored three key aims:

1) Map/scope voluntary youth work (VYW) services in Wales.
2) Identify how these services tackle contemporary issues impacting young people.
3) Consider the sustainability of the sector in terms of the recent impact of social and economic challenges and future developments.

The discussion therefore explores four key themes:

1) The Data on the Voluntary Youth Work Sector (VYWS).
2) Concepts, Terms and Criteria – Too Broad or All Inclusive?
3) Key Debates and Contemporary Issues.
4) Resource, Support and Capacity – Can it Survive?

5.2 The Data on the VYWS in Wales

5.2.1 Scope

In addressing research aim one, the lack of prior knowledge and the fragmented nature of existing information on the VYWS in Wales has driven this research from its inception. The findings evidence this and provide a starting point for accurately mapping the sector. Mapping the Welsh VYWS was a considerable undertaking. The resulting understanding of its scale could explain the lack of prior knowledge and the current missing governance structure. The research process revealed a lack of consistency amongst existing databases, organisations falling between these gaps and considerable variation in the ages, issues and approaches targeted which blurred the boundaries of what the VYWS is.

The absence of much concurrency between the three databases analysed (see section 4.2.1), was clear evidence of the fragmented nature of existing information. For example, there was minimal overlap between the databases, despite all representing the wider voluntary sector in Wales, and the 28 further organisations that were either completely absent or initially rejected due to a lack of information and only then identified through empirical data collection. The limited information available on these services, and the difficulty in identifying them, may limit young people's access to crucial services and information and effective multi-agency work if other VYW organisations and governmental

agencies also cannot find such information. Furthermore, the findings support the claims made by Kendall (1996) that the Charity Commission list is not a reliable picture of the voluntary sector in Wales and proves the necessity of this research and the need for further development and monitoring. The onus on organisations to register for membership of the CVCs may be prohibitive and could explain those missing from such databases. Membership costs, such as that for the Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services (CWVYS), may also explain the absence of organisations on some databases (CWVYS membership is currently at 145 VYW organisations). Despite the limitations of the current research, it provides a crucial insight into the scope of the VYWS. It also provides a necessary platform for further research to develop a strategy for accurately mapping this fluid sector and disseminating to key stakeholders. This would align with the Interim Youth Work Board's recommendation for the development of an information exchange for young people in Wales (IYWB, 2021), by evidencing the need for a centralised space for such information.

Importantly, the dataset is robust, especially when compared to previous attempts to map the sector. Whereas the recent ETS (2022) study surveyed 91 voluntary and statutory organisations, this study surveyed 11% (n=103) of the known VYWS. While this is clearly not exhaustive, it provides greater scope for understanding the nature and composition of the sector and thereby, identify its value and needs. By establishing the scope of the sector, it allowed for estimations and predictions to be made of the potential composition of the sector as a whole, not just those who responded to the survey. Although as stated in the findings (chapter 4), estimations should be used with discretion and the data cannot claim to be exhaustive without further research, and due to the fluid nature of the sector, any dataset would struggle to ever claim to be (HMI, 1984).

5.2.2 Staffing

Approximate figures in Wales (known within the youth work sector) project there are 3,000 paid staff and 30,000 volunteers, supporting around 300,000 young people in Wales, in both the statutory and VYWS. While accurate numbers cannot be provided, if the average number of staff and young people identified in the survey were extrapolated to the whole population[12], an estimated 5,527 full-time staff, 6,527 part-time staff, 4,572 trustees and 204,218 volunteers work in the VYWS in Wales. If the same extrapolation was made for the number of young people supported by the VYWS, it reveals that over one million young

[12] This was done by taking the 11% from the survey sample and calculating this to represent 100% of the sector.

people are supported by the VYWS in Wales[13]. While these estimations have limitations due to the outliers in the data (e.g., one organisation having 213 full-time staff but the majority of respondents having none), it does reveal that the VYWS is clearly a much larger workforce than local authority (LA) youth services in Wales, and support more young people annually. For example, the most recent LA data reveals only 754 full-time equivalent staff and only 32,751[14] registered young people with LA youth provision (Welsh Government, 2021a). Therefore, proof of the extent and potential influence of the VYWS, supports arguments for greater governance, funding, and political support.

When further comparing the data found in the research to the LA audit data, clear conclusions can be drawn. The ratio of paid VYWS staff to young people supported reveals that 139 young people are supported by every youth worker, considerably more than the 49 young people supported in the LA data (Welsh Government, 2021a). However, the ratio significantly improves to eight young people per worker when volunteers are included as part of the support. This highlights the value of the voluntary sector and volunteer workforce in supporting young people in Wales, and without them, existing statutory services would be extremely overloaded. Despite this, the precarity and often short-term nature of volunteer relationships was highlighted, as well as difficulties in recruiting volunteers in contemporary society due to economic struggles and people having less spare time to give to voluntary organisations. Therefore, a difficult balance of reliance and utilisation is required.

Additionally, as evidenced in the focus groups, despite the greater numbers supporting young people in the VYWS, participants still reported feeling overwhelmed and under-resourced. The issues with funding, stability and capacity all contributed to the sector's ability to successfully meet the needs of young people. What neither dataset (the LA data and the research findings) are able to report on however, are the intrinsic outcomes such as improved communication, confidence and greater relationships, which provide valuable insight into the benefit of youth work for the young people accessing services (McNeil *et al.*, 2012). The available data therefore only focuses on extrinsic outcomes such as qualifications and economic benefits of youth work, important for funders and evaluative purposes. The focus on extrinsic outcomes risks losing the 'off the cuff' nature of youth work (Norris, 2013) and the findings showed this was the case for many. For example, organisations with a specialist issue focus, targeting specific groups of young people or adopting the work of other sectors (such as health and policing). Intrinsic outcomes, from the

[13] It is noted that according to ONS (2021) there are only 546,200 young people aged 10-24 in Wales, but at least five of the survey sample operated in the rest of the UK so may have accounted for young people outside of Wales in their responses.

[14] Both the survey data and the LA data do not show how many young people access multiple provisions and whether the findings are for individual young people or not.

perspective of young people, would reveal if current processes, structures, and focus were meeting their needs in contemporary Wales, which will be explored further in the chapter.

5.2.3 Impact

While the value of the VYWS is evident in the research findings, the actual economic benefits to government provided by the VYWS were not measured. Previous studies have provided estimates of economic savings for governments from statutory youth services. For example, it was found that in Ireland youth work saves governments 1.2 billion euros and in Scotland, for every £1 spent on youth work, £7 is saved (NYCI, 2012; YouthLink Scotland, 2016). However, few studies have attempted to understand this in relation to the voluntary sector due to the complicated, unpredictable, and widespread nature of the funding landscape. The scoping results of the VYWS in Wales, may be helpful in developing similar results in future research. The work of the VYWS during COVID-19 and in relation to poverty do, however, contribute to economic saving for young people and families.

Another key finding that requires further discussion is the age-range of young people supported by the VYWS in Wales. Consistent with the literature review (Williamson *et al.*, 2021; Batsleer, 2008; Moschou, 2012; Pozzoboni and Kirshner, 2016; Williamson, 2015), the survey found definitions of young people differed across the sector. In Wales, in youth policy and youth work, a young person is anyone aged 11-25 (Welsh Government, 2019). However, as the findings show, this is not reflected as distinctly in practice. The largest proportion of the survey sample provided support to young people from a broader age range (n=52, 50.5%), mainly as part of a generic or combined service with other age groups. Likewise, a significant number of the scoping sample had a broad age range, including those with no specified age range (n=171). Despite this, the focus group discussions highlighted the importance of age and the need to split age groups in youth clubs. Reasons for this included the appropriateness of content and the risks associated with mixing older and younger youth. Therefore, this would suggest that broad services may not be as efficient or effective for young people. It is however likely that limitations with resources result in more broad-range services driven by the lack of alternatives.

The current study did not capture data on young people's demographics. However, it did find characteristics such as gender are important to consider in service provision, but that such data can be difficult to record accurately. The LA annual audits capture data on the gender of registered young people, with 49% and 51% percent reported to be male and female respectively (Welsh Government, 2021a). This, however, does not represent those who identify outside the binary groups such as young people who are non-binary, gender neutral or agender, which, in contemporary society, is becoming increasingly common, as discussed

in the focus groups. One participant expressed the difficulties in capturing this data by stating:

> *"With one of our funders, every quarter, they want to know a breakdown of the young people accessing the service… sexuality, faith that's all in there. So you've got to ask the young person every 3 months if they still identify as that, and that's a whole big conversation in itself" [VYW Manager 5].*

This could explain the lack of this information in the VYWS due to the open access nature of much of the provision provided. It is therefore difficult to understand the demand for services with a focus on gender or sexuality. Only 13 services were identified in the scoping as having a distinct focus on gender and seven on LGBTQIA+. One organisation stated in the focus groups that their LGBTQIA+ group had young people travelling as far as 25 miles to access support. This suggests more provision with this focus is needed, and again implies an issue of capacity. However, without knowing the demand for these services, such conclusions are tentative and need further exploration.

It was stated in the literature review that targeted youth work, focused on young people with a range of issues including those who are Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET), has increased in recent years due to the increased understanding of the associated risks of being NEET and the 'saviour narrative' of youth policy (Baldridge, 2020; Ranahan *et al.*, 2015; Cranfield, 1990; NYA, 2021; Jeffs and Smith, 2010; Williamson, 2007). In Wales, there is an ongoing drive to improve engagement in education and employment with the national Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (Welsh Government, 2022b), with specific clause to broker greater partnerships, early identification and intervention and the importance of VYW organisations in succeeding in this. However, 13.6% of 16- to 18-year-olds and 16.3% of 19–24-year-olds were reported to be NEET at the end of 2021 in Wales (Welsh Government, 2023). While the findings did not directly explore young people who are NEET or how organisations respond to this, some conclusions can be drawn from the data. The timing of service provision is therefore noteworthy, when considering the needs of specific groups of young people. In this study, it was found that most VYW services are provided on weekday evenings, which, as most young people are in education, employment, or training during the day, seems unsurprising. Only 39 services from the survey sample were available on weekday daytimes which would be accessible for young people who are NEET. It could therefore be argued that more services are needed to reduce the risk of increased anti-social behaviour, criminal behaviour, substance misuse and exploitation, associated with being NEET (Public Health England, 2014; Bathgate and Bird, 2013). It could however be argued that this should not fall solely on youth work organisations in reducing these risks. A large number of the scoping sample did have a specific focus on

‘employability/education support/volunteering’ (n=78) which demonstrates how the VYWS are responding this issue.

Furthermore, only seven organisations stated that they provided a service 24 hours a day. These were mainly homelessness, housing, or residential organisations. However, participants in both the ‘other’ section in the survey and in the focus groups stated that support was provided any time if needed. This openness, availability and care apparent in those working in the VYWS, and in general voluntary sector work, was discussed widely in the literature. Morse (1966) stated that always being on call was the best way to work with specifically ‘unattached’ youth, amongst other personal characteristics. The role of the VYWS in relation to housing, social care, and health, requires closer examination, both in terms of who should be providing such services and youth workers’ ability to provide what is needed. What was evident was that despite youth workers undertaking these duties to the best of their ability, it was unsustainable and impacted staff mental health and wellbeing. This was expressed widely in the focus groups in relation to burnout, the need for staff clinical supervision and staff retention due to the pressures of the job, which all subsequently negatively impacted the young people being supported. More support, recognition and value are therefore necessary to improve current services and enable more effective support for young people. This also provides further evidence of the need for improvement in other sectors to take the pressure away from VYW organisations. It also emphasises the importance of collaboration and multi-agency work across voluntary and statutory sectors.

5.3 Concepts, terms, and criteria – too broad or all inclusive?

As previously discussed, the definition of youth work and what this encompasses was a core concern for this project, a concern reflected in existing literature and used to develop the criteria for inclusion and exclusion of organisations throughout the research. The rationale for inclusion/exclusion of VYW organisations was discussed in the methodology chapter (section 3.3.1) and therefore the discussion will embed key concepts and approaches in existing typologies and practices.

5.3.1 Defining Youth Work

Contemporary youth work is difficult to define and categorise. For example, previous typologies such as Nieminen’s (2012) used four categories to group youth work, whereas this research adopted 22 categories (including a ‘generalist’ category for widespread organisations) based on setting, method, goal, and focus. This is backed by Buchroth’s (2012, p.162) claim that VYW organisations are broad ranging and can be classified in a multitude of ways. Similarly, despite the survey using three separate questions (setting, method, specialist provision) with at least 10 potential answers in each, respondents still

answered ‘other’, further providing evidence of the difficulty in categorising youth work. Some of the scoping categories can be grouped within Nieminen’s typology, but others cannot. For example, the ‘hobby-based tradition’ incorporates ‘recreational’ and could include ‘youth clubs/detached/outreach’. The ‘national-idealistic tradition’ captured ‘uniformed groups’ and those championing ‘Welsh Language and culture’. The ‘Christian tradition’ includes ‘faith groups’ but excludes those outside the Christian religion and is perhaps outdated in the significance placed on it. Finally, the ‘political-corporative tradition’ encompasses ‘forums/councils/decision-making’ organisations, ‘environmental and sustainable development’ and potentially ‘diversity/inequality/discrimination’ groups (who use activism to improve discrimination and tackle societal issues, inherent in political spaces). What Nieminen’s (2012) typology excludes are organisations focused on education, health, social care, and crime, presented in the data as ‘mental health and wellbeing’, ‘substance misuse’, ‘disabilities/additional needs/illness’, ‘homelessness/housing support’, ‘care/adoption/young carers’ and ‘domestic abuse/ACE’s’. The exclusion of these within Nieminen’s (2012) typology could be due to debates surrounding ‘traditional’ and ‘new sector’ provision. Brown *et al.* (1995) defined ‘new sector’ as more issue-based and targeted, which captures these categories. However, targeted/issue-based youth work raises issues around choice and agency, which, as widely debated in the literature, is both a key aim of youth work and claims to offer better outcomes for young people if agency and choice remain at the core of practice (EYWC, 2015; Batsleer and Davies, 2010).

5.3.2 Types of Youth Work

Organisations doing targeted youth work, offering support for issues such as homelessness, mental health, and domestic abuse, are criticised for the lack of voluntary participation and removal of agency – critical in distinguishing youth work from other work with young people (Coussée and Williamson, 2011; Williamson, 2015; Ranahan *et al.*, 2015; Smith, 2013; Davies and Merton, 2009). Despite this, it could still be argued that targeted services are creating opportunities to change the current circumstances of the young people accessing support and thus meeting youth work aims to ‘facilitate agency’ and create ‘navigational capacities’ to challenge circumstance (Williamson, 2015). Additionally, as the findings suggest, young people face a wide range of issues in contemporary society, so it is therefore difficult to distinguish which organisations fall within ‘traditional’ and ‘new sector’ as most are reactive to the needs of young people. This was clearly evidenced by the 357 responses to the ‘select all that apply’ for specialist provision offered and in the evidence of adaptation, development, and resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic.

While it is evident that youth work has always responded to contemporary issues, the 'traditional' and 'new sector' typology is useful in categorising the findings from the research. For example, 'youth club/detached/outreach' provision would fall within the definition of 'traditional'; not focused on a specific social problem, group of young people or using new and innovative methods of practice but simply providing a youth centred provision (Brown *et al.*, 1995). It could also be argued that 'faith groups' are 'traditional' provisions as historically youth work stemmed from religious roots, such as church Sunday schools (Davies, 2009, p. 63). Similarly, 'uniformed groups' could fall in this group due to their longstanding influence and inclusion in youth work discourse (Smith *et al.*, 1995). All the other scoping categories would therefore fall into 'new sector' provision, specifically the issue focused categories such as 'substance misuse', 'homelessness/housing support' and those targeting particular groups of young people such as 'refugees/asylum seekers' or 'care/adoption/young carers'. As discussed above, some see 'new sector' as controversial as the ability to participate voluntarily is undermined, introducing more control, coercion, and individualised outcomes (Smith, 2001). However, it could be argued that the scoping data is evidence of the importance to include both when considering contemporary youth work. Such 'new sector' provisions are clearly common, effective, and increasingly necessary in contemporary society due to the complex lives of young people. Moreover, as clearly illustrated throughout, most VYW organisations respond to a wide range of issues, whether 'new sector' or 'traditional', therefore suggesting a false dichotomy. Therefore, it raises the question on the need for a set definition of youth work. As clearly illustrated in the values of youth work and throughout the findings, youth work requires adaptation, tailoring and responsiveness rather than procedures, measurements, and constraints. This therefore suggests that attention should be drawn to the real issues being faced by VYW organisations rather than focusing on the longstanding challenge of defining such a changeable phenomenon.

Furthermore, the findings reveal significant youth participation and voice within the VYWS in Wales, indicating that young people have greater control in contemporary youth work. Pitts *et al.* (2002) uncovered similar findings as only a small minority of their sample used traditional forms of detached and outreach youth work, reinforcing the inclusion of these alternative approaches in this research. Again, Cooper (2018, p.3) supports this claim when stating that youth work can be found in most locations where young people are found. Survey and focus group findings corroborate this claim and strengthens the evidence base that contemporary youth work encompasses and prioritises a variety of issues (including supportive approaches such as social care, education and health, and more regulatory approaches such as policing and crime prevention). For example, mental health and

wellbeing was a focus for the majority of organisations in the survey sample and focus groups.

Additionally, as outlined in chapter 3, developing the scoping criteria was an in depth and thought-out process, involving continuous debate and consideration amongst the research team. These criteria will arguably continue to be debated throughout the wider research field. This is particularly apparent for sports, faith groups, uniformed groups, and more 'formal' youth work settings. Firstly, as can be seen in Figure 5 (see section 4.2.3) 'recreational' youth work including sports, theatre, choirs, and arts were the most common form of youth work found in Wales[15]. Despite the Principles and Purposes of Youth Work in Wales listing 'curriculum specialities' including sports and arts as key methods of youth work practice (YWWRG, 2022), some academics and 'purist' youth work practitioners contest whether such activities are youth work. While unsurprising that sport leaders, dance teachers, theatre group leaders and art practitioners are less likely to have youth work qualifications, the impact, influence, and positive outcomes of these activities closely align to the Principles and Purposes of youth work. For example, there is evidence that participation in sports, especially team sports, improves young people's self-esteem, enhances social inclusion, and can assist with community regeneration (Hermens *et al.*, 2015; Crisp, 2018). Youth work, especially in Wales, aims to provide or facilitate spaces for association, for young people to thrive and to enjoy themselves (YWWRG, 2022; Jeffs and Smith, 2010). Therefore, recreational activities would arguably succeed in meeting these, amongst other aims, including participation, inclusion, and empowerment. Research conducted in the Netherlands explored the possibilities and outcomes of partnership and collaboration between local sports and youth workers (Hermens *et al.*, 2015). The results reveal positive attitudes from both stakeholders and promising results such as increased youth participation and better funding opportunities and therefore demonstrates the importance of this type of youth work for young people and communities.

The literature review explored the prevalence of faith based (religious) youth work as well as the issues with inflicting inequality and decreasing empowerment (Page, 2015; Coburn, 2011; Garasia *et al.,* 2016). While the findings did not examine such issues, it did assess the extent of faith-based youth work in Wales and revealed the importance, influence, and value given to youth work in faith settings. For example, many churches had youth work in their core budget, and 7.4% (n=69) from the scoping and 14.4% (n=13) of the survey organisations had faith-based provision. This would oppose the claim by Bright *et al.* (2018)

[15] This was despite the decision to not include all individual sport clubs, so in reality 'recreational' is even larger than the data show.

that youth work is secularising in modern society and suggests that it remains a significant approach in Wales, again reinforcing the inclusion of these in the research.

The diversification of youth work to 'formal' settings was explored in the literature review and the findings. The survey aimed to explore the scope of these settings for youth work to understand the influence and relevance in society today. Interestingly, 31.1% (n=32) of organisations from the survey sample conducted targeted youth work in schools, 5.8% (n=6) in health settings and 9.7% (n=10) in youth justice settings. As previously discussed, Wales led the way with youth work in schools and this evidently remains a common practice. While the literature did uncover the benefits of multi-agency work such as improved outcomes for young people, community cohesion and greater exchange of ideas (Cheminais, 2009), the challenges such as competing priorities, territorial issues, and different intentions (Cheminais, 2009), once depicted as a 'precarious equilibrium' were also explored (Into, 2022; Williamson, 2017). Furthermore, as discussed in the literature, youth work partnerships with schools are subject to continuous debate due to blurring the boundaries of relationships between staff and young people and the risk of devaluing youth work as a distinct practice (Corney, 2006). It could also be argued that the variety of alternative qualifications presented in Figure 11 (see section 4.3.1) further blurs these boundaries, distancing youth work from its core form and function. The research did not explore the youth work relationship in schools specifically, but it did successfully evidence the issues with partnership/multi-agency working. For example, the focus group participants reported that dismissing of opportunities for collaboration, disinterest in assistance and a lack of reciprocal benefits between sectors to be the key issues with partnerships with both schools and the police. Therefore, the findings are evidence that the closure of the Wales Youth Agency (WYA) in 2006 (Williamson, 2010, p.83) still affects collaboration and partnership opportunities and strengthens the Interim Youth Work Board's (2021) recommendation for the return of a national body for youth work in Wales.

The literature discussed digital youth work as a contemporary concept, defining it as any youth work that uses, includes, or discusses the online world (Kiviniemi and Tuominen, 2017; European Commission, 2018). The research findings evidence the prevalence, opportunities, and challenges with digital youth work in Wales. The timing of the research must be noted here, as the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic were still impacting society at the start of the project, and the digital world dominated society. The findings successfully captured the prevalence of digital youth work with six organisations identified in the scoping as delivering solely digitally such as online helplines, information, advice, and guidance and 44 organisations from the survey reporting to use digital as a delivery setting. While the literature highlighted that digital delivery can be used to address social inequalities by

providing access to digital technologies (Kiviniemi and Tuominen, 2017), the findings suggested that the increased use of digital technologies during the pandemic perpetuated inequalities, amplified digital poverty, highlighted the need for digital competence and impacted young people from low socio-economic backgrounds and those with additional needs/disabilities the most. Despite this, Jones (2021) reported in Wales that the COVID-19 pandemic had improved VYW staff's digital competence and confidence. While this was not directly explored in the research, the findings did reveal positive impacts of the pandemic and clear use of digital technologies in youth work practice.

What is clear from the data collected and discussed is the widespread, fragmented, and complex nature of the VYWS. However, due to the complexities of young people's lives and globalisation and modernisation constantly changing society, it is necessary for services for young people to be flexible to meet their needs. Therefore, fragmentation and wide-ranging services are expected, and a reactive approach required. The next section will explore key contemporary issues impacting young people before understanding the barriers to service delivery and sustainability.

5.4 Key Debates and Contemporary Issues

Research aim two involved exploring how the VYWS in Wales responds to contemporary issues impacting young people including, mental health, homelessness, and county lines. The findings evidenced that the sector is responding, not only to these issues, but also a wide variety of other issues. While the focus of these findings was targeted/issue-based youth work, the overall outlook from all research stages was that services are more reactive to the individual needs of young people, and not commonly focused on one specific issue. These findings are synonymous with wider voluntary sector literature that organisations are flexible and responsive to the 'real-time' needs of communities (Dayson *et al.,* 2022). This idea was discussed in a number of contexts, including 'filling a gap' that is not being met by other sectors, and adopting a holistic approach. The role and ability of the sector to respond to these issues will now be explored.

5.4.1 Mental Health

The findings in relation to mental health and wellbeing showed that this was both a key focus for organisations as well as highlighted the prevalence of mental health struggles in young people. As discussed in the literature review, the impact of COVID-19 increased the risk of poor mental health in young people (Williams, 2020; OECD, 2020; Fegert *et al.*, 2020; NSPCC, 2020), and thus the timing of the project may have impacted the overall results. However, participants argued that young people have been experiencing poor mental health long before the pandemic, but the findings suggest it is now the most pressing issue they are

facing. For example, one focus group participant stated that 65% of a 459 sample of young people said that mental health was the biggest issue and where the most support was required. Participants did however, express concerns over responding to mental health struggles including upskilling of staff, the lack of consistent funding and subsequent unstable relationships, and the desire to work holistically with young people not being possible. The importance of these services for young people are captured in the Welsh Government (2012) statistics stating that 50% of people suffering with mental health struggles will have symptoms by the age of 14. The fact that 9.1% (n=85) of organisations identified during the scoping and 61.1% (n=55) in the survey provided mental health and wellbeing services highlights the significant contribution made by the VYWS and displays the capacity and flexibility of the sector in reacting to the changing needs of young people. This could also be linked back to discussions around the importance of age in working with young people and tailoring support appropriately to their specific risks, needs and issues.

What the literature and findings suggest, is that contemporary issues and needs of young people shift in response to changing political, economic, and social climates. For example, McNeil *et al.* (2012) found that 74% of a sample of 1000 young people said education was their biggest issue, and only 20% said health. Similarly, a 1996 study in Wales found that relationships, policing, school, careers, and social security were the biggest concerns for young people (Williamson *et al.,* 1996). Therefore, the issues impacting young people in contemporary society, according to participants, differ from those expressed previously. To explore this further, it would be crucial to capture the views of young people, which this project was unable to do due to time constraints. Though the researchers recognise the value in doing so, especially in Wales where youth voice and participation is valued and endorsed so greatly (Hillman *et al.,* 2010; NAW, 2002). The findings also support this as a priority, as young people are significantly involved in decision making within the VYWS (see section 4.3.4). This relationship with young people, could imply that this sector is the most capable at recognising their shifting needs and even responding to them with the right resources. Additionally, being expressive of emotions, opinions and ideas is grounded in the five pillars of youth work (YWWRG, 2018), therefore if a young person is experiencing mental health struggles, youth work practice should promote and contribute to support, growth and change.

5.4.2 Homelessness

Homelessness among young people, as a contemporary issue, presented differently in the findings than the literature. It was reported as a focus by 3.2% (n=30) of organisations scoped and 16.7% (n=15) surveyed. However, the focus groups provided important context

of the hidden nature of homelessness and further prove the difficulty in presenting official figures, consistent with the literature (see section 2.5.2) (End Youth Homelessness Cymru, 2022; Pierpoint and Hoolachan, 2019). As stated by Clarke (2016), having to 'present' as homeless significantly affects the reliability of the statistics on youth homelessness. This was supported by one focus group participant identifying that this impacts the support available to those who do not 'present' as homeless. There was clear evidence of the importance of understanding the complexities of young people such as their personal circumstances and associated behaviours when responding to homelessness, linked widely to using a holistic approach. The findings presented by Homeless Link (2018) also highlight the merit in using a holistic approach as they stated that crime, substance misuse and anti-social behaviour are associated with homelessness. However, while some view this as taking a holistic approach to working with young people, others claimed the VYWS to be 'filling a gap' that other sectors are currently failing to achieve and raises the question of whether the VYWS should be filling these gaps and why gaps are there when statutory services are tasked with responding to these issues. Despite this, empowerment is included in the five pillars of youth work which could link homelessness support, in developing young people's personal, social, and political knowledge and skills to become active citizens (YWWRG, 2018). Furthermore, for homelessness in Wales, the third sector have a clear role to play in responding to homelessness and are expected to collaborate to meet this need (Welsh Government, 2021b).

5.4.3 County Lines

Similarly, despite the emphasis on county lines as a contemporary issue impacting young people in the literature (Caluori, 2020; Brewster *et al.*, 2021; NYA, 2020b; Wedlock and Melina, 2020; Harding, 2020; Williams and Finlay, 2019; OPCCG, 2020), neither the survey nor focus group participants highlighted it as such. In the West, North and Mid-Wales focus groups, drug misuse and dealing more broadly was discussed as a relevant issue. South Wales alone referenced exploitation and county lines but again, not in great detail. This can be attributed to a number of factors. Firstly, the hidden nature of county lines and exploitation, especially during the pandemic, make it hard to detect and manage (Wedlock and Melina, 2020; Harding, 2020). This is particularly apparent in rural areas due to wider geographical spread – a distinction that was clearly outlined by participants in the focus groups; while urban areas have higher population density and visibility of such issues. Also, as stated by the NCA (2019) county lines often exploit 'out-of-force' young people (from different counties, with different police forces who are harder to detect) suggesting that local services may be unaware of the young people involved. Additionally, Maxwell and Wallace (2021) highlight that exploiters often use cannabis to trick young people into debt (by

encouraging new use or increasing existing habits) suggesting exploitation may be present but is hidden as participants highlighted increased use of drugs amongst young people. Consequently, the VYWS can only respond to the underlying issues associated with county lines and exploitation and remain responsive to and flexible in meeting the needs of young people.

Despite the finding that the VYWS had very limited focus on crime prevention (0.7% n=7 from the scoping and 23.3%, n=21 from the survey) (including county lines and exploitation) and substance misuse (1.1%, n=10 from the scoping and 17.8%, n=16 from the survey), other services identified could be contributing to reducing the risks associated with both. As identified by Maxwell and Wallace (2021), the OPCCG (2020) and the current study, disengagement, disruption, school exclusion, deprivation and additional needs all increase the risk of exploitation. Therefore, other services identified in the scoping can minimise these risks and arguably in doing so act to prevent the escalation to more serious crime, violence, and victimisation, namely, organisations identified for 'employability/educational support/volunteering', 'disabilities/additional needs/illness' and 'disadvantage/vulnerable/disengaged young people'. However, the VYWS response to these issues, differed between areas. Some were found to be adopting 'contextual safeguarding' approaches, as endorsed by Lefevre *et al.* (2020) and Maxwell and Wallace (2021), and others felt like crucial parts of the process of early identification and prevention. One participant claimed to be providing *"important pieces of the puzzle"* [VYW Manager 4], expressed as an essential part of a multi-agency response by Sturrock and Holmes (2015). This further reinforces the need for a holistic approach addressing the underlying causes of county lines and exploitation.

5.4.4 'Filling a Gap or 'Meeting a Need'

The idea of 'filling a gap' or 'meeting a need' has been a longstanding and widespread notion in relation to working with young people. For example, in *Extending Entitlement* it was recognised that society should 'fill the gap' when a young person's personal circumstances are failing them (NAW, 2000). This was particularly apparent in the focus group findings in relation to poverty. Many focus group participants stated they were increasingly supporting basic needs such as food and hygiene, particularly prevalent in Wales as the Bevan Foundation (2020) found that Wales had the highest level of child poverty in the UK. Similar observations have been made before in the literature, wherein Jones and Rose (2003) wrote that in post-war Wales, 'basic survival needs' were being met by youth work provision. This is alarming evidence that little has changed over time and the pressure and expectation remains for voluntary organisations to undertake the overwhelming burden of meeting the

basic needs of young people. Additionally, as evidenced in the focus groups, no additional funding or recognition is given for this. Furthermore, the National Youth Work Strategy (Welsh Government, 2019) aims for young people in Wales to thrive, however the results from the research would imply they are far from thriving but rather in some cases struggling to survive. While these findings may appear unsurprising given the political and economic landscape in the UK at the time of research, for a sector that is rendered by funding struggles and low incomes, the results were unexpected. However, the commitment and strive of the VYWS to face this ever growing issue was nothing short of exemplary.

The struggles in meeting the needs of young people, expressed in the focus groups, extended beyond just the issue of poverty. It was discussed that the VYWS is increasingly handling issues where some staff feel out of their depth. For example, undertaking responsibilities for policing criminal behaviour, psychological work for mental health issues and working with young people with complex disabilities and additional needs. The literature reviewed revealed the importance of a trauma-informed approach, understanding young people's individual backgrounds and needs (Harris and Fallot, 2001; Jenkinson, 2011). Similarly, Morse (1966) extended this to claim that no one method of youth work works for all young people. However, the findings indicate the difficulties in taking an individualised approach. For example, the increasing demand of young people with additional needs, disabilities, or ACE's utilising open access provision, increase in challenging behaviour between young people with different needs, and decreasing staff capacity and recruitment all impact an organisation's ability to successfully tailor support to meet the specific needs of young people from all backgrounds. This supports focus group findings on the importance of age and tailoring youth work.

What is clear from the literature and the findings is the importance of understanding background, context, and underlying causes in successfully responding to contemporary issues impacting young people. The project successfully shows how the VYWS in Wales responds to contemporary issues impacting young people, as well as evidencing the complexities and challenges faced in doing so. Evidence was also provided of the desired approach for many in working with young people holistically to meet their needs, but capacity, upskilling and funding making this difficult. The complexities presented all subsequently led to higher staff turnover, poor staff mental health and ineffective interventions and support for young people, impacting the overall sustainability of the VYWS.

5.5 Resource, Support and Capacity – Can it survive?

This section discusses sustainability within the VYWS in relation to support and qualification of staff, key economic events that have affected the sector and key discussions around resources, and capacity.

5.5.1 Qualification versus Experience

As clearly evidenced, youth workers are working with young people on a wide range of issues while understanding the complexities of contemporary life. To understand how well-equipped youth work staff are to undertake this role, discussion must be had in relation to qualifications and experience, including debate on the importance of each. As presented, paid staff have more qualifications (17.2%, n=228) than volunteers (0.3%, n=73) in the VYWS in Wales (see section 4.3.1), however, volunteers make up the largest proportion of the workforce. Reasons given for the lack of qualification included the cost of training and the qualification, unclear registration requirements/expectations for organisations, issues with the current courses available in Wales and the continued debate about the value of experience in relation to qualifications. Despite the clear safeguarding aims of the EWC and academics to safeguard young people through increasing qualification and registration of youth workers (Welsh Government, 2022a; Bessant, 2005), the current process is complex and often unattainable for voluntary organisations. This results in voluntary sector staff appearing underqualified despite the variety of alternative qualifications (see section 4.3.1) and extensive experience held by staff. Recent statistics from the EWC state there are 1,054 registered youth workers and youth support workers in Wales (Brimble, 2023). What is important to note is that only 117 of these are from voluntary organisations. This reveals two important issues, firstly the disparity between the findings and EWC data (301 qualifications identified in the findings and only 117 registered with EWC), clearly illustrates the confusion with registration requirements and potentially implies issues with voluntary sector staff paying for registration. Secondly, this supports the claims made in the focus groups that qualification is harder to obtain for the voluntary sector, despite the VYWS being a much larger workforce across Wales (total staff and volunteers n=24,288). The findings are evidence of the need for greater support for the VYWS to qualify staff, as focus group participants voiced their desires to enhance their qualifications if more resources were available to do so.

While the debate around experience and qualification did not form a key research aim at the start of the project, the themes that arose from the findings can be linked to barriers to service delivery and sustainability of the VYWS and so are related to research aim three. There are three key elements of this argument, first focusing on the importance of

personality in youth work, secondly, the idea of experience versus qualification (work experience in youth work) and finally the notion of lived experience when working with young people with specific needs.

The theories and typologies explored in existing literature, including 'practice architectures' theory by Kemmis (2009), Tortendahl's (1990) typology of the key elements of a profession and Nieminen's (2014, p.35) ideas on the professionalisation of youth work provide valuable context for understanding arguments for the value of qualifications and experience. Each presents factors that can be taught through qualification and training including professional vocabularies and specialist knowledge bases. However, Morse (1966) emphasises the importance of personality in detached youth work. One focus group participant highlighted that youth work is a 'vocation', while others stated that training on the job was better than 'classroom' training. Yet, the findings also evidenced that practice experience was often valued less than youth work qualifications in the sector, as expressed by VYW Manager 4 who stated that 20 years' experience is often overlooked. Similarly, the array of alternative qualifications presented in Figure 11 (see section 4.3.1) found in the VYWS, is further evidence of this.

The lived experience of youth workers was also highlighted. Ideas around lived experience had been widely researched in relation to substance misuse services (Eddie *et al.*, 2019) and through notions of 'growing' youth workers in local communities (Rogers and Smith, 2010) but the work of Brierley (2021) specifically can be closely linked to the research findings. Brierley (2021) outlined the notions of 'lived', 'life' and 'living' experience in working with young people involved in crime or the criminal justice system. This theory defines 'lived' experience as direct involvement in the issue or service to provide insight to the current service users. VYW organisations in Wales such as St Giles Trust, outlined in the literature review and identified in the scoping use this notion to assist young people experiencing child exploitation and county lines (St Giles Trust, 2020). Similarly, Hartje *et al.* (2008) found a correlation between lived experience and increased success in building relationships with young people. Brierley (2021) then describes 'life' experience as having a similar life journey based on elements such as class, family, or upbringing, which is thought to improve empathy and relatability, known as a general trait of the wider voluntary sector (Hasenfeld and Gidron, 2005). It could be argued that 'life' experience can be utilised in more open access or 'generalist' provision that is not issue based or targeted. The findings from the research would also support this claim as one participant stated in the survey that 'life experience' was an alternative qualification. Finally, 'living' experience relates to people who are still experiencing the issue in question (Brierley, 2021). The research found examples of this in relation to 'growing' staff from the young people who attend the youth club, as well as

in the LGBTQIA+ groups discussed in the focus groups. The staff for the LGBTQIA+ provisions were mostly from the LGBTQIA+ community themselves and thus likely still experience the discrimination and difficulties faced by the young people. Brierley (2021) identified that 'living' experience risks workers not having the capacity to support others while experiencing their own difficulties. Again, this was supported in the findings when participants were calling for greater staff clinical supervision and highlighted that staff increasingly face their own traumas making it harder to support young people and in turn leading to increased risk of sickness, burnout, and decreased staff retention. All subsequently impacting the overall sustainability of organisations. These findings, plus the clear debate presented throughout the literature, would suggest that it is not as clear cut as EWC recommendations require and that each person's education, work experience and life experience should be accounted for when considering a person's ability and suitability as a youth worker.

5.5.2 Austerity

Survey and focus group participants declared, mostly negative, experiences of austerity on youth services. Existing statistics and research focused on LA youth services, so little was previously known about the impact of austerity on the VYWS. For example, the YMCA (2022) review clearly evidenced the decrease in statutory youth services funding in the last 10 years in Wales. This decline was recognised in the VYWS as focus group participants argued that youth services and subsequently young people have faced at least a decade of struggles. Over half of the survey sample reported negative impacts from austerity, and thus reveal the significance of this on the VYWS. It is clear from the focus groups that funding for the sector was impacted the most by austerity.

5.5.3 COVID-19 Pandemic

A note on the COVID-19 pandemic is imperative here as the findings and previous research conducted by CWVYS (Jones and James, 2020; Jones, 2021) show that organisations took a reactive approach and successfully adapted to the needs of young people and society at the time. This was consistent across general voluntary sector research into the impact of COVID-19 (NCVO, 2021; McCabe *et al.,* 2020). The youth work studies by CWVYS were conducted during the pandemic, revealing the uncertainty and stress placed on the sector but also uncovering the positive factors such as increased resilience, adaptation, and improved communication skills (Jones and James, 2020; Jones, 2021). The current study revealed findings of post-pandemic impact, with many claiming to be in 'recovery' and voicing frustration for the lack of recognition received for their work throughout. While others declared an increase in demand for services and a change in the behaviour of young people

after the pandemic. Focus group participants reported the worst behaviour of young people they had ever seen post-pandemic, an increase in anti-social behaviour in communities, and increased substance misuse of young people attending youth clubs. This is therefore clear evidence to support 'strain theory' (Merton, 1938) discussed in the literature review, where young people's behaviour comes as a response to a societal system that is failing them. As young people, alongside the rest of society, experienced a period of distress, home schooling, isolation, and increased anxiety, this subsequently impacted their behaviour. Many young people missed out on key parts of their socialisation and upbringing such as proms, school leaving days and exams which caused frustration and thus increased challenging behaviour. Despite this, some positive impacts of COVID-19 were uncovered, including escaping the stresses of school and ability to find likeminded people in online spaces, although this will not have been the case for all young people. While positive impacts were cited for young people during the pandemic, this was less so for those supporting them. This arguably strengthens earlier claims that the sector is responding as needed, but in doing so is experiencing harms such as burn out, loss of staff and poor staff mental health and wellbeing. The current research highlights the resilience of the sector during COVID-19, but also that this resilience is in decline and is unsustainable, as expressed by one focus group participant: *"I think we have all lost our resilience a bit haven't we? Due to the lockdown and stuff"* [VYW Manager 9].

Despite the valuable findings relating to the impact of COVID-19 uncovered from the research, it was not possible to draw conclusions regarding the impact this had on funding. This is due to the lack of information available on funding for the VYWS in Wales both before the pandemic and the research. If funding information had been available prior, then comparisons could have been drawn on the longitudinal impact of COVID-19 on funding for voluntary organisations.

5.5.4 Funding

Central to the sustainability of the VYWS is funding. The findings show the diversity, inconsistency, and instability of funding opportunities for the VYWS in Wales compared to statutory youth services. The key observations were the inconsistencies between local authorities and government priorities, issues with outcome focused funding, and the impact on sustainability. The findings evidenced the widespread and continued impact the government reform from the 1990s has had on the funding landscape for local authorities (Williamson, 2010, p.83). While it is known that charities within the voluntary sector do not, and should not, inherently rely on government funding (Kendall and Knapp, 1995, p.65), organisations can receive partial funding from local authorities and national government. For

example, 7.8% (n=8) of the survey sample received the majority of their funding from local authorities. However, what this results in is a 'postcode lottery' between areas and how local authorities prioritise youth work and the voluntary sector. Focus group participants also emphasised this as some received £30,000 a year for their organisation, while others received nothing from local authorities. The Interim Youth Work Board placed this as a key recommendation to strengthen the legislative basis for youth work and ensure local authorities are prioritising youth work in the same way and to assist with local delivery of youth work across the 22 local authorities in Wales (IYWB, 2021). Despite this, it is noted that the voluntary sector cannot be legislated by government although it can encourage adaptation to gain credibility and increase funding opportunities, which was seen in England when ConneXions attempted to corral the voluntary sector (Davies, 2009, p.63). This does however risk veering away from the core aim and function of reacting and adapting to young people's needs in contemporary society. So, while greater governance, support and consistency with funding would be favourable for the VYWS in Wales, it also risks losing the control, flexibility, and autonomy of the current sector structure.

Despite the clear priority youth work had in Welsh youth policy at the time of the research, the findings also revealed a lack of government investment and political support for specifically the VYWS, as seen by only 7.8% (n=8) and 4.9% (n=5) of the survey sample receiving funding from Welsh Government and UK Government (respectively). Nolas (2013) and the NAW (2002) found that young people felt they were low political priority, their needs were ignored and that there was a lack of investment in communities. Focus group participants also spoke of a lack of political support and recognition for the work of the sector. This presents two issues within the VYWS, a lack of investment in young people and the services supporting them. The findings are therefore alarming in the absence of change and how the sector remains feeling unheard, undervalued, and low in priority. The consequences of this, as displayed, are issues with recruitment, as youth workers opt for more stable and valued jobs (in for example, local authorities) and reduced staff retention due to short-term funding. Consequently, the support for young people is impacted by the inability to form longstanding relationships – an essential component of successful youth work, discussed above (Rodd and Stewart, 2009; Morse, 1966; Goetschius and Tash, 1967; Spergel, 1966; Pitts *et al.*, 2002). Again, the needs of young people are at risk of being ignored while the sector experiences turmoil and policy change impends. However as evidenced by one focus group participant, young people will continue to change and require support from an increasingly precarious and unstable sector: *"the two things that are sustainable because nothing else really feels sustainable at the moment is the fact that*

young people are always going to need us and the services we provide and that we will do our best to provide those with passion" [VYW Manager 1].

The impact of short-term funding in the voluntary sector was clearly evidenced in the findings, with focus group participants calling for more core funding. This was particularly apparent for those receiving funding from the public sector, specifically Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC), who subsequently had to adhere to the priorities of crime prevention and reduction – a clear example of organisations adapting their goal to handle partnerships, 'multiple stakeholders' and becoming more 'hybrid' in form (Battilana and Lee, 2014; Hassenfeld and Gidron, 2005; Smith *et al.*, 1995). This resulted in this organisation's work having a crime prevention focus, thus adopting the aims of the state and drifting further away from the core function of youth work. They also reported struggling to receive funding from elsewhere as a result of this.

Moreover, according to Tarrow (1994) and Della Port and Rucht (1995) the development of more hybrid voluntary organisations often happens during times of political divide. It could therefore be argued that due to the political landscape in the UK being unstable and disconnected at the time of research, more organisations may become 'hybrid' and have a social change approach in order to access opportunities for funding, ensure they can sustain and meet the changing needs of young people. However, this again risks organisations ignoring, arguably not by choice, the needs and priorities of young people and the community due to funding requirements and the lack of alternative funding opportunities. The research findings clearly displayed the divide between organisational priority and funding goals and opportunities, the former focused on a holistic, reactive approach based on the needs of young people and the latter requiring data, outcomes, and a clear issue focus to obtain continued funding and resource. Again, providing a clear example of how funders focus on extrinsic outcomes such as qualifications and economic impact, while intrinsic outcomes such as improved confidence, communication and self-esteem are ignored (McNeil *et al.*, 2012). This further supports the claims that funders are opposed to more 'liberal' approaches to youth work and want more structure, which a holistic and reactive approach cannot easily offer (Bradford, 2004; Fine and Sirin, 2007; Belton, 2010; Jeffs and Smith, 2005).

Overall, the research findings in relation to sustainability were seldom positive. Issues with qualifications, resources, austerity, lack of government priority, inconsistencies in local authorities, funding issues, support for and retention of staff, and COVID-19 all impacting sustainability for voluntary organisations. The passion and commitment of staff was however

undeniable, and this should therefore form the backdrop for improvements of the sector in meeting the needs of the dedicated staff and the young people who remain needing support.

5.6 Conclusion

To conclude, the research has produced valuable and potentially influential findings that could assist the sector in improving governance, information sharing as well as strengthen funding opportunities and sustainability. The quantitative data presented has adequately mapped the VYWS in Wales (research aim one), understanding its scope, nature and clear comparisons and developments of existing data on youth work in Wales. Although further detail is recommended to develop understanding further. The key concepts, terms and criteria utilised throughout the project provided clear evidence of 'traditional' and 'new sector' provision and the influence and importance of both. These findings reaffirmed the inclusion and exclusion of certain areas of youth work in the research and linked these to existing literature and debate, including targeted, recreational, digital, faith-based, and the diversification of youth work to 'formal' settings. While also highlighting the need for direction away from debates on defining youth work and a focus on the issues staff, organisations and young people are facing. The research also successfully displayed how the VYWS in Wales responds to contemporary issues impacting young people (research aim two) including mental health, county lines, homelessness, and the sheer impact poverty is having on the sector and young people, which was an unexpected finding from the research. Although the difficulties in doing so were also uncovered such as 'filling a gap' and 'meeting a need', upskilling of staff, capacity, and the desire to use a holistic approach. Additionally, the findings were able to successfully produce data and evidence of the issues with sustainability of the VYWS in Wales (research aim three). This introduced the debate around qualification of youth work staff in relation to competition with the statutory sector and the importance of life and work experience alongside this. The impact of COVID-19, austerity, and funding including government and local authority priorities were also documented to develop understanding of sustainability within the VYWS in Wales. Finally, the overall conclusion on sustainability was negative, but there was an unquestionable commitment from the staff and organisations involved in the research to improving the sector, if greater support and resource was available.

6 Conclusion

This section draws conclusions based on the analysis of findings and outlines how the research aims were met. The overall focus of the study was to map and analyse the voluntary youth work sector (VYWS) in Wales due to the gap in prior knowledge identified by the Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services (CWVYS). This was important and pertinent at the time of research due to the continuous development of policy and practice for youth work in Wales.

While the research met the desired aims and provided a valuable dataset and knowledge base required to fill existing gaps, further research and exploration would substantiate claims, examine in more detail, and complete missing information. Overall, the aims were ambitious and extended across a variety of disciplines (social policy, criminology, voluntary sector studies, youth work studies and the work of CWVYS, the funding partner). This was due to the KESS 2 funding involving an industry partner and in the development of the research team. While this did allow for much deeper understanding and broadening of knowledge, as advice and guidance was shared from a variety of specialists, it at times led to competing interests and different expectations for the research. For example, as an industry partner, CWVYS hopes for the projects outcomes were significant in relation to the potential impact on the sector. Often though, academic requirements or styles were not compatible with these aims, resulting in contradiction. Similarly, as the project was positioned within criminology at the university, inclusion of this element was important. However, at times, it did not feel suitable or necessary in relation to the overall direction of the thesis. Managing this was difficult at times and decisions had to be made to limit the detail, inclusion, and discussion of certain elements in order to meet academic requirements and fulfil the Masters degree. Therefore, while the study was robust and thorough in its approach, it had to take into consideration several additional variables in order to fulfil the ambitious aims, while also delivering a high standard academic publication. Thus, as presented throughout, the research was only a snapshot of the VYWS at the time and so the following are recommended to ensure information remains up to date and missing elements explored.

6.1 Recommendations for Future Research and Development

- Continuous governance of VYWS data in relation to its scope, nature, and composition; a centralised governance system and regular updating, plus further detail on the size and breadth due to the research only obtaining approximately 11% of this detail.

- Research focusing on the economic value of youth work in Wales as well as specific research understanding the funding landscape and how this has changed over time due to austerity and COVID-19. This would come at an influential time as the UK is experiencing a cost-of-living crisis and has recently left the European Union. The Interim Youth Work Board (2021) support the need for this and recommended conducting a full funding review of the youth work sector in Wales, including the statutory and voluntary sector.
- The need for research involving young people in Wales to understand the issues they are experiencing and the intrinsic outcomes of youth work practice such as improved relationships, communication, and confidence.
- Further research including greater demographic details relating to the young people supported by the sector, this is to include age, sex and gender identity, sexuality, and religion, to help understand demand for certain services and the importance of tailoring support.
- Research focusing on digital youth work before and after the COVID-19 pandemic in order to understand the changes and whether these are permanent or interim changes.

Despite this, the results showed there were approximately 938 voluntary youth work (VYW) organisations in Wales for 11-25-year-olds as of November 2022 and according to the research definition (see section 2.3.4).

The further detail obtained through the survey of 103 organisations revealed the scope, composition, and impact of the sector, from the perspective of approximately 11% of the overall population. This data showed the importance and reliance on the large volunteer workforce, the coverage of support across Wales and the number of young people supported by the sector (183,666). Further key findings related to mapping the sector included the importance of, and difficulty in, identifying the age range of young people supported and how the timing of provision influences the impact on certain target populations such as young people who are Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET).

The study also reinforced debates around the difficulties in defining youth work in contemporary society. The literature review outlined key distinctions in the UK (Cranfield, 1990; NYA, 2021; Education Scotland, 2019; Department of Education, 2019; Education Authority, 2018; YWWRG, 2022; Welsh Government, 2019; NOS, 2019), and across Europe (Nieminen, 2014, p.35; Into, 2022; EYWC, 2020b; EYWC, 2020a; EYWC, 2010; Williamson,

2015; EYWC, 2015) in definitions of youth work and VYW. Further key debates were uncovered in the literature relating specifically to uniformed groups, faith groups, 'formal' youth work settings and targeted youth work.

Conclusions from the research positioned the VYWS in Wales as all-inclusive for young people. The findings showed the breadth and widespread nature of the VYWS in Wales and the coverage across a range of issues, methods, and settings. The distinction between 'traditional' and 'new sector' was revealed but critiqued for the risk of being too restrictive in categorising youth work in this way. However, the overall conclusion stressed the importance of flexibility, responsiveness, and adaptation to the needs of young people in contemporary society and the need to draw attention away from definitions of youth work and to the amazing yet difficult and struggling work of the VYW sector. This was found to be inherent in voluntary organisations and a characteristic of youth workers. The difficulties in using this flexible and holistic approach were however uncovered, relating to funding, capacity, and upskilling of staff.

The study also aimed to explore how the VYWS is responding to specific contemporary issues impacting young people as the literature outlined that mental health, homelessness, county lines and exploitation and young people who are NEET were prominent issues at the time of research (Ranahan *et al.*, 2015; Williams, 2020; Jones and James, 2020; Jones, 2021; Welsh Government, 2012; Pierpoint and Hoolachan, 2019; End Youth Homelessness Cymru, 2022; Clarke, 2016; Caluori, 2020; Brewster *et al.*, 2021; NYA, 2020b; Wedlock and Melina, 2020). Little was previously known about the VYW response to contemporary issues and how equipped the sector felt in responding to these. Overall, the research found that the VYWS is responding to contemporary issues such as mental health, homelessness and county lines but that other issues were more prevalent and at the forefront of current practice in youth work spaces. For example, poverty and the cost-of-living crisis overwhelmed organisations and the difficulties in responding to identity issues relating to young people questioning their sexuality and gender identity.

While it was clear that organisations responded to the needs of young people, whatever they were, it was concluded that the sector feel a gap is being filled that should be the responsibility of other sectors and a society that includes and considers young people's needs, desires, and issues.

Finally, the study aimed to explore sustainability within the VYWS. This was explored in the context of staff qualifications and experience, the impact of austerity and COVID-19 and the funding landscape within the VYWS. Overall, the findings were seldom positive in relation to sustainability. Organisations and the wider sector felt overwhelmed, understaffed, under-

resourced and unsupported by governments and politicians. Analysis of staff qualifications revealed the competition for recruitment with statutory sectors and the importance of staff experience.

Austerity and COVID-19 greatly impacted organisations due to funding cuts, low staff retention, poor staff mental health and increased burnout which all reduced the sustainability of organisations. Predominantly though, the funding landscape of the voluntary sector was found to impact sustainability the most and fed into all other aspects discussed above.

Short-term, targeted or issue-based funding led to instability and unease amongst staff and resulted in less reactive youth work and more ‘hybrid’ organisations working to the aims and goals of funders and policy makers. The lack of core funding and the varying support from local authorities across regions in Wales reinforced the ‘postcode lottery’ of support and had a negative impact on staff retention.

However, it was evident that, despite the negative perspectives unveiled about the sector, those within the VYWS share a collective passion, commitment, and drive to support young people in Wales which ultimately improves sustainability.

Overall, the research successfully revealed the scale and range of the VYWS in Wales, its contribution to young people’s lives within the principles and practices of youth work: despite significant challenges to funding and staffing, and the difficulties in securing any long-term sustainability.

7 Reference List

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8 APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 – List of Search Terms

Youth Work

Youth Service

Youth Services

Youth Workers

Voluntary Sector

Voluntary Youth Work

Voluntary Youth Work Sector

Voluntary Youth Work Service

Voluntary Youth Work Services

Voluntary Youth Work Organisation

Voluntary Organisations

Third Sector

Non-Governmental Organisations

Work with Young People

Youth Work Wales

Youth Work in Wales

Wales Youth Work

Welsh Youth Work

Youth Policy

Informal Education

Informal Learning

Non-formal Education

Non-formal Education and Learning

APPENDIX 2 – Global Landscape of Youth Work

The breadth, detail and understanding of youth work differs globally. For example, conceptions of youth work in America are placed within youth employment programmes for issue-based work, with limited organisational structure or defined career trajectories (Fusco, 2018, p.44). Attempts have been made to conceptualise youth work in America based on the settings, methods, or underlying goals including moral, educational, or social justice aims (Fusco, 2012). Historical American youth work initiatives were often rooted in religious and philanthropic ideals, shaping youth into 'honest and decent people' (Brace, 1872, cited in Fusco, 2018, p.44). However, youth character development was key in American culture and reflected in youth work practice (Fusco, 2018, p.44). By the 1950s support increased for community centres for young people on the streets and there was an increase in understanding of the need for a space for young people to express themselves outside of dominant structures (Fusco, 2018, p.44). By the 1990s, youth organising (encouraging young people to become active agents of change in society) and civic activism became dominant in the youth work context in America (Delgado and Staples, 2008).

In contrast to America, British colonialism largely influenced the way Australasian youth work developed. Neoliberal political ideologies that imposed the monetisation of youth work practices and youth being viewed as a national resource during the Cold War and Vietnam War impacted Australian youth work conceptions (Cooper and Baxter, 2019, p.109; Irving, Maunders and Sherrington, 1995). However, Australasian youth work did detach from the 'cultural cringe' of British traditions eventually, focusing more on homeland culture and relationships with inhabitants (Cooper and Baxter, 2019, p.109). In recent years, youth participation has become integral in Australasian youth work. In 2009 the Ministry of Youth Development (MYD) in New Zealand published a series of resources to assist youth workers with youth participation, confirming its importance (MYD, 2009). However, this sparked debate within the youth work domain in relation to the boundaries of youth participation and whether this notion was synonymous with youth and community work in itself or a separate idea contributing to co-production, co-design and co-creation (Corney *et al.*, 2021; MYD, 2009).

In Europe, youth work has had diverse traditions overtime. For example, in Finland, the professionalisation of youth work has a strong and longstanding influence. Emphasis on professionalisation was made in the 1930s by the 'father of Finnish youth work', Guy Von Weissenberg (Nieminen, 2014, p.35). In early Finnish youth work, community-based youth work was already seen as an occupation, these employees being the precursors to today's professional youth workers. Education for youth workers was introduced in Finland by the

1940s and the state began investing the necessary resources, faster than many countries worldwide (Nieminen, 2014, p.35). For example, inclusion within policy for the training of youth workers was not apparent in the UK until the Albemarle Report in 1960 (Ministry of Education, 1960; Department of Education and Science, 1969). In more recent years, due to government reforms, Finnish youth work has been subject to debate around professionalisation. Many argue that over-professionalising diminishes the value and work of the voluntary sector and volunteers, who form a substantial workforce. Moreover, boundaries have been further blurred through a national call for multi-professional cooperation between youth work and more 'formal' sectors such as health, social care and education (Into, 2022). Despite this, professionalisation remains the dominant notion in Finland, as illustrated by Howard Williamson in an interview with lead Finnish youth work researcher Tomi Kiilakoski "Finland is an outlier, it's an exception with a strong body of professional practitioners" (Into, 2022).

APPENDIX 3 – Detailed History of Youth Work in the UK and Wales

- *Historical context in the UK: youth work and the wider youth service*

Youth work in contemporary Britain is characterised by some top-down governance in the form of funding support or direction. However historically, across the UK, youth work was delivered exclusively by the voluntary sector dating back as late as the 18th Century in church Sunday Schools (Davies, 2009, p.63). This was followed by the establishment of the now global VYW organisation, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), in 1844, from which also emerged the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) in 1855 (Davies, 2009, p.63; Jeffs, 2010, p.15). Up until the Second World War, state involvement was limited in what is now termed youth work but was previously known as 'youth leadership'. Post-war, there was an urgent call for support, guidance and funding put to the state to assist with youth work (Jeffs and Smith, 2010, p.1; Davies, 2009, p.63). It must be noted that while 'youth leadership' is presented here as an historical concept, the Commonwealth Alliance of Quality Youth Leadership was formed in 2022, providing contemporary evidence of this notion (The Commonwealth, 2023). Interestingly, these long-standing VYW organisations are the very organisation collaborating with the Commonwealth Secretariat in achieving their goals.

From the 1880s, Boys and Girls Brigades emerged, followed by Scouts and Girl Guides by the 1900s and Boys and Girls Clubs by the early 20th Century (Davies, 2009, p.63). This style of youth club was pioneered by Robert Baden-Powell who believed that 'youth' could be seen as a generalised group of prospective citizens needing guidance without dictation. Baden-Powell was famously opposed by Josef Cardijn, however, who believed that working class youth should be the focus of youth work as they have "their very own problems" (Coussée, 2010: 14).

Historical discussions of youth work in Britain, do however echo contemporary debate. Early expressions of 'informal education', voluntary participation, "learning through the knowledgeable friend, relation or neighbour", participation and personalisation are still clearly illustrated in modern youth work (Davies, 2009: 66). Reassuringly, there are no longer references to the drive of shaping and moulding the working-classes to fit in with the upper-class ("bringing the public-school spirit to the masses"), or the encouragement of 'manliness' and shaping women to be better wives for their husbands (Davies, 2009, p.63; Berry, 1919: 9; Booton, 1985).

With state involvement in youth work increasing, by 1944, the Education Act was published with a specific clause on local authorities' duty to provide leisure time activities for young people, provided in partnership with voluntary organisations who were likely already doing so

(Davies, 2009, p.63). This expectation was conspicuously unsuccessful which, just over a decade later, led to the appointment of Lady Albemarle to conduct a review of the new 'Service for Youth' and the subsequent Albemarle Report (1960) (Davies, 2009, p.63). Alongside its three pillars of 'association', 'training' and 'challenge', it also called for new purpose-built youth centres, better professional training and development of youth work staff, and highlighted issues including inconsistency, poor leadership, low political priority and lack of resources/funding (Clements, 2019; Williamson, 1995). Despite the somewhat pessimistic view portrayed here, the Albemarle Committee (which included academics and representatives from VYW organisations) and its report did reaffirm traditions of youth work including association, social education, and participation, defining youth as 'the fourth partner' in the youth service (Davies, 2009, p.63; Prynn, 1983). The youth service saw further struggles in the decades thereafter. The contradictory Milson-Fairbairn Report (1969) was criticised by many for lacking any real and tangible proposals (Davies, 1999). Thatcher's concentrated focus for youth work on those form 'demonstrable disadvantage' during the 1970s as Secretary of State for Education led to the voluntary sector facing threat for being too liberal and inclusive (Davies, 2009, p.63) and The Thompson Report (1982), which focused only on England and saw the earliest signs of separation between England and Wales in youth policy (Williamson, 1995).

As the UK nations diverged from central government, an unsuccessful attempt to provide a universal youth support service to all young people in England was launched, called ConneXions. This brought together the careers service, the education welfare service and some parts of the youth service (Davies, 2009, p.63). Importantly, ConneXions could not corral the voluntary sector as it cannot, by definition, be legislated by government. Though the voluntary sector can of course be persuaded and encouraged through withdrawal of funding, for credibility, or quality assurance so inevitably some parts of the voluntary sector did align with the ConneXions policy. Furthermore, ConneXions applied only to England, which strengthened Wales separating from English policy (Davies, 2009, p.63).

- *Historical context in Wales: youth work and the wider youth service*

As seen above, historically, Wales has been umbilically attached to English social policy and practice, including youth policy. Differences between communities in Wales and England were largely ignored and practices perpetuated the long standing middle-class philanthropic ideals of English society (Jones and Rose, 2003). Post-war Wales differed greatly from England; poverty, unemployment and disadvantage overwhelmed rural towns and villages and basic survival needs were being met by youth work provision, such as food and shelter,

compared to England with more prosperity (Jones and Rose, 2003). In 1974, CWVYS[16] became the independent representative in Wales for VYW, which still, despite times of uncertainty and precarity, remains a leading body in the youth sector in Wales (CWVYS, 2023). Due to the lack of Wales specific youth policy, in 1984, Survey 13 was published by Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI), focused on Wales' Youth Services and impact (Williamson, 2010, p.83). The 1985 Wales Youth Forum and the establishment of the Wales Youth Work Partnership to ensure a Welsh perspective on youth work beyond that of England's National Youth Bureau (NYB), detached Wales further from English policy and practice (Williamson, 2010, p.83). While the NYB's ambitious youth work 'statement of purpose' was to 'redress all forms of inequality' facing young people, Wales' emerging youth work policy: *The Youth Work Curriculum Statement for Wales* (Wales Youth Agency, 1992), aimed to be educative, participative, expressive, and empowering (akin to England's emerging curriculum and restructured curriculum statement). After inclusion was later added, this is now known as the five pillars of youth work (Williamson, 2010, p.83; YWWRG, 2022).

The 1990s were momentous for youth work in Wales. The Wales Youth Agency (WYA) was established in 1992 (dissolved by 2006). The Youth Work Excellence Awards began in 1994, and still run to this day to recognise and enhance the value and importance of youth work and gain political support for the sector (Williamson, 2010, p.83). The 1990s were not, however, without their challenges and tensions. Local government reform saw eight local authorities become 22 unitary authorities, with separate and independent local networks, introducing difficulties within funding streams for VYW organisations. Tensions also grew between CWVYS and the WYA. While CWVYS remained a separate agency, it did not have funding, leading to the WYA delivering the CWVYS work plan. Conflict grew thereafter on whether the WYA was a more broad-based youth agency, serving wider needs such as health promotion or economic development, or a youth work agency and how this would reduce the amount of resource available to youth work in Wales if the former were true (Williamson, 2007). Momentum and faith around youth work grew in the late 1990s, with the launch of many partnership programmes for tackling young people who are Not in Employment Education or Training (NEET), strategies for tackling substance misuse and the development of youth participation programmes underlining the key strengths and aims of youth work in Wales (Williamson, 2007).

- *Youth Policy in Wales: a short history*

[16] It is important to note that CWVYS began in 1947 under the name The Standing Conference in Wales of Voluntary Youth Organisations, it was renamed in 1974 when it became the independent representative for VYW in Wales.

With the exception of youth justice, most policy areas affecting young people became devolved functions following the establishment of the National Assembly for Wales (NAW) in 1999 (Williamson, 2010, p.83). After devolution, a specific Wales Youth Strategy was produced, *Extending Entitlement (EE),* with youth work discussed as a key driver for the provision of many entitlements for young people in Wales (Williamson, 2007). *EE* recognised the responsibility of society to support young people and 'fill the gap' when personal circumstances were not meeting their needs (NAW, 2000). *EE* also identified the need for young people to be supported as a distinct group up to the age of 25, as well as the lack of current policy focusing on prevention and support rather than 'fixing societal' problems (NAW, 2000). The publication strengthened the argument for why Wales needed to be distinguished from England in its youth policy, by identifying specific issues facing young people in Wales. This included the high number of NEET young people and the lack of qualified young people to take over the retiring workforce each year (NAW, 2000). Unlike ConneXions, *EE* stressed that there was no need for new structures or professions but rather a need to build on and improve existing methods, practices and policies (Williamson, 2007). As stated in *EE*: "we should strengthen the fences that prevent people from falling over the cliff, rather than providing more ambulances and police vans when they do" (NAW, 2000: 5).

EE was a core goal of wider Welsh Assembly policy being advocated at the time. It aided the reach of young people within policy and practice to tackle the polarisation of communities and society as a whole, through challenging social exclusion, diversity, and disadvantage practically and within policy (Williamson, 2007). After Welsh Assembly Government funding for the WYA was withdrawn in 2006, youth work in Wales further dispersed across local, statutory and government contexts and the field became weakened with support no longer coming from one central body (Williamson, 2010, p.83). While youth work lost a central champion, and collaboration and partnership between the statutory and voluntary sectors struggled, it could be argued that the voluntary sector specifically, gained a stronger advocate with CWVYS remaining an independent representative for the VYWS and harnessing greater endorsement for its work.

Today, with no central governing body for youth work and youth policy in Wales, governance comes from generalised statutory policy for young people. Most notable, the Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015) which set out seven wellbeing goals for Wales: prosperity, resilience, health, equality, cohesion, vibrant culture and language, and global responsibility. Similarly, the Children Act (2004) illustrated the importance of youth voice and participation

(a strong narrative in Wales[17]), and the Children and Families (Wales) Measure (2010) placed duty on local authorities to provide sufficient 'play opportunities' for children and young people. Emphasis on the development of future generations and sustainable development of the country was seldom seen in policy in the UK prior to these Welsh policy developments. Specifically, the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (2015) was seen as a 'ground-breaking' piece of legislation with key indictors and milestones evaluated annually (Messham and Sheard, 2020). Youth policy in Wales has, however, been ambivalent about the role of youth work. The volatile history of funding cuts and threats to wider networks such as CWVYS and the WYA led to the emergence of campaigns such as *In Defence of Youth Work*[18] which aimed to defend the youth work profession and its accompanying educational practices, processes, and agendas against policy changes that could undermine its distinct practice (IDYW, 2011). The history of youth work and youth policy in Wales clearly shows that despite clear times of divergence, tension and conflict, there are also times of convergence where optimism and potential underpins policy and practice, such as in the current context.

- *Current Context in Wales: Policy and Practice*

A number of recent policy and practice developments have taken place in the youth work context in Wales. For example, the *Principles and Purposes* of youth work in Wales (2018, and updated in 2022) (YWWRG, 2022) built upon notions of the UNCRC and the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure (2011) to set the key aims, goals, and delivery of youth work in Wales. Alongside this, Welsh government National Youth Work Strategies were published in 2006, 2010, 2014 and 2019, detailing the national priorities of the youth service in Wales. The 2019 strategy set out the five key aims of youth work in Wales: that young people thrive, accessibility and inclusion, improve career development of youth work staff, the value of youth work being recognised, and sustainability of the youth work sector (Welsh Government, 2019). Similarly, the Youth Work National Occupational Standards (NOS) in 2019 highlighted the key functions and competencies required of youth workers in Wales, including performance criteria and youth work values (NOS, 2019). Uniquely, in Wales, qualified youth workers and youth support workers are amongst teachers, schools and learning support staff on the Education Workforce Council's (EWC)

[17] The inception of Llais Ifanc (young voice) in the early 2000s, which later became the Welsh Youth Parliament (Funky Dragon) is another example of the importance of youth participation in Wales (Williamson, 2007; Williamson, 2010, p.83).

[18] The In Defence of Youth Work campaign ended its work in October 2022 after deciding that much had been achieved and a loss of energy had become apparent for those leading the campaign (In Defence of Youth Work, 2022): https://indefenceofyouthwork.com/2022/10/09/in-defence-of-youth-work-closes-its-books-in-sadness-but-with-much-pride/

list of registered practitioners, thereby making Wales one of the only countries globally to value and regulate youth work in the same vein as formal education (YWWRG, 2022). Furthermore, Wales was the first UK country to appoint a Children's Commissioner in 2001, and a decade later, the first country in the world to implement a Children and Young Person's (Wales) Measure (2011) further demonstrating Wales' commitment to bettering the lives of children and young people (Towler, 2013).

However, as recently as 2016, the practice, value and governance of youth work in Wales was subject to a spot inquiry by the NAW's Children, Young People and Education Committee, where the value of the voluntary sector especially was questioned by policy makers (Glaze, 2022). During the inquiry, CWVYS was notified by Welsh Government officials via a short letter addressed to 'CWVYO' that its core funding would be withdrawn and CWVYS was thanked for its work over the 'previous 10 years', despite CWVYS being active for 69 years this was later reversed, and funding reinstated (Glaze, 2022). Paradoxically, this later strengthened CWVYS' standing in Wales, particularly through advocacy for more 'open' youth work – the terrain most occupied by those in the voluntary sector and supported by CWVYS (Williamson, 2022; Glaze, 2022). This moment of concern proves, nonetheless, that youth work and the voluntary sector are inherently precarious and unstable terrains, difficult to manage and research. This could explain the gaps in knowledge on the scope of the VYWS in Wales and lack of research. Despite this, most youth work continues to be delivered by voluntary organisations or Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). The Welsh Government conducts an annual audit of the 22 local authority youth services in Wales which shows trends in finances, staffing, support, and key methods undertaken in Welsh youth work (Welsh Government, 2021). However, this does not incorporate the vast and varied support provided by the voluntary sector, a gap which forms a key aim of this study.

In contrast to the jeopardy of youth work in Wales presented above, the Interim Youth Work Board (IYWB) was formed in 2018 to continue and enhance the work of the Youth Work Reference Group from 2014, through providing advice to Welsh Government on young people and the youth sector (Welsh Government, 2018). The role of the Board was varied and vast, including advising on grants, partnership improvement between voluntary and statutory services and implementation of the youth work strategy (Welsh Government, 2018). In 2021, the IYWB released its final report - *Time to Deliver for Young People in Wales*, detailing 14 recommendations for youth work in Wales. Those of particular relevance to the voluntary sector and the research included: to conduct an audit on funding expenditure on youth work services, the establishment of a national body for youth work services, commitment to support the development of youth work as a career and to launch a

Young Person's Entitlement Scheme assisting young people's access to services, information, and opportunities (IYWB, 2021). To operationalise these recommendations, it was advised that an Implementation Board be formed to action the points discussed in the report. In 2021, Education Minister Jeremy Miles announced that the new Youth Work Strategy Implementation Board (YWSIB) would begin in January 2022 with a budget of £11.4m over three years. The Chair of the YWSIB was later appointed in June 2022 and the board members announced in October 2022.

APPENDIX 4 – Survey Questions

Section 1

1 - Name of organisation - Required

2 - Address of organisation (Head Office/Main Address/Registered Address) - Required

3 - Postcode - Required

4 - Areas of operation - please select specific areas (listed) OR if you cover the whole of Wales select ‘All Wales’ - Required

Please select at least 1 answer(s).

Blaenau Gwent

Bridgend

Caerphilly

Cardiff

Carmarthenshire

Ceredigion

Conwy

Denbighshire

Flintshire

Gwynedd

Isle of Anglesey

Merthyr Tydfil

Monmouthshire

Neath Port Talbot

Newport

Pembrokeshire

Powys

Rhondda Cynon Taff

Swansea

Torfaen

Vale of Glamorgan

Wrexham

All Wales

UK Wide

International/Global

5 - What is the age range of your target cohort of young people? e.g. 11-25

6 - What days do you provide a service (select all that apply)?

All week

Weekdays

Weekends

Projects/Ad hoc

School Holidays

Other - Please Specify

7 - Does your organisation provide services 24 hours a day?

Please select – Yes or No

If no, Please detail when your service is provided (select all that apply):

Morning

Day-time

Evening

Overnight

Other (please specify)

8 - Number of staff who are:

Full-time =

Part-time/Sessional =

Trustees/those with a governing role/responsibility =

Volunteers (not including Trustees/those with a governing role/responsibility) =

9 - On average, how many young people access your service ANNUALLY (can be members, registered or open access)?

Section 2

The working definition of Voluntary Youth Work Services, that has informed the study so far is as follows:

In Wales, a voluntary youth work service is a national, regional or local organisation which operate independently of national, regional or government, thought it may collaborate with or be part funded by those levels of government. It may be staffed by both paid workers and volunteers, and works in the interests of young people through adherence to core youth work values, expressed in the principles and purposes of being educative, participative, empowering, expressive and inclusive. Beyond these values, it may also pursue other elements within its mission and engage with young people in a variety of ways, across different settings/contexts, on a range of issues, and through both individual and group relationships. Its overall goal is both to provide spaces for young people's autonomy and voice, and bridges towards the next positive steps in their lives.

* The key purpose of youth work is to...'enable young people to develop holistically, working with them to facilitate their personal, social and educational development, to enable them to

develop their voice, influence and place in society and to reach their full potential' (Youth Work National Occupational Standards).

For the purpose of this research, a young person is defined as anyone between the ages of 11-25 years of age.

10 - To what extent do you agree with this definition of voluntary youth work in Wales?

Please select –

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neutral/I don't Know

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

If you do not agree, what would you suggest is missing/needs removing?

11 - Does this definition fit with your organisation?

Yes

No

I don't know

Other (please specify)

Section 3

12 - How best would you describe your organisation (select one):

- Exclusively a youth work service (only work with young people)
- Provision available for young people but not the primary focus (have a separate young people's service)
- Young people included in all support (Not age specific, work with all ages together)
- Other (please specify)

13 - How best would you describe your organisation (select all that apply):

- Support for the youth work sector (training for staff)
- On behalf of young people (advocacy)
- Direct delivery with young people
- Other (please specify)

14 – To what extent do young people inform the work that you do?

Young people's Involvement:

1 – Very Little

2

3

4

5 – Co-design/delivery

Section 4

15 - Please identify how many STAFF in your organisation have the following qualifications:

JNC Level 2 Certificate in Youth Work Practice =

JNC Level 3 Diploma in Youth Work Practice (Youth Support Worker) =

JNC Level 6 Bachelor's Degree with Honours (Professional Youth Worker) =

JNC Level 7 Postgraduate Diploma (Professional Youth Worker) =

Any other RELEVANT qualifications held by staff (please specify):

16 - Please identify how many VOLUNTEERS in your organisation have the following qualifications:

JNC Level 2 Certificate in Youth Work Practice =

JNC Level 3 Diploma in Youth Work Practice (Youth Support Worker) =

JNC Level 6 Bachelor's Degree (Professional Youth Worker) =

JNC Level 7 Postgraduate Diploma (Professional Youth Worker) =

Any other RELEVANT qualifications held by volunteers (please specify):

17 - Please identify where your organisation receives the MAJORITY of its funding from (select one that is most applicable):

Please select:

EU/European Funding

UK Government

Welsh Government

Local Authority

Public Sector (Police/Criminal Justice, Education, Health, Housing, Employment)

Charitable/Third Sector (e.g. Children in Need, Comic Relief, National Lottery)

Private Sector (donations, legacies, bucket collections, events etc.)

Consortia-style funding (applications for funding led by organisations such as CWVYS)

Membership/Participation fees

Other (please specify)

18 - How many employees or volunteers in your organisation are Welsh Language speakers?

Please enter a whole number (integer).

Section 5

19 - Please indicate the main delivery settings your organisation operates in (select all that apply):

Centre based

Community (broad range, not age specific)

Digital

Outdoor Activity Setting (sports field/forest etc.)

Outreach/Detached

Residential

Targeted in Health Settings

Targeted in Schools

Targeted in Youth Justice Settings

Work Based Learning

Other (please specify)

20 - Please indicate the methods used to offer services in your organisation (select all that apply):

1:1 Work

Advocacy

Curriculum Specialities (Arts, Sports, First Aid)

Education/Training/Employability

Group Work

Information/Guidance/Advice/Counselling

International Exchanges/International Group Work

Involvement in Decision Making

Open Access

Projects

Volunteering Opportunities

Youth Forums/Councils

Other (please specify)

21 - Please indicate any specialist types of provision and support you offer (select all that apply):

Adoption/Care

BAME/Travellers

Crime Prevention and Victimisation (Violence/Exploitation)

Disabilities/Additional Needs

Environmental/Sustainable Development

Faith Groups

Gender Inequality

Homelessness/Housing

Intergenerational

LGBTQIA+

Mental Health/Wellbeing

Substance Misuse

Rural Communities

Uniformed Groups

Welsh Language

Young Carers

Young Parents

Other (please specify)

Section 6

22 – Does your organisation have a Quality Mark for Youth Work?

Yes

No

I don’t know

22a - If yes, what level?

Bronze

Silver

Gold

23 - Has your organisation and service delivery been impacted/changed by the following:

Austerity (in the last 5 years)

Please select:

yes

No

I don’t know

COVID-19 (in the last 3 years)

Please select:

Yes

No

I don’t know

Brexit (in the last 2 years)

Please select:

Yes

No

I don’t know

Community Changes (e.g. demographics like race, age, ethnicity, gender identity)

Please select:

Yes

No

I don’t know

24 - If you answered Yes to any of the above: In your opinion, have these changes been positive or negative for your organisation?

Austerity (in the last 5 years)

1 - Significantly Positive

2 - Positive

3 - Neutral

4 - Negative

5 - Significantly Negative

COVID-19 (in the last 3 years)

1 - Significantly Positive

2 - Positive

3 - Neutral

4 - Negative

5 - Significantly Negative

Brexit (in the last 2 years)

1 - Significantly Positive

2 - Positive

3 - Neutral

4 - Negative

5 - Significantly Negative

Community Changes (e.g. demographics like race, age, ethnicity, gender identity)

1 - Significantly Positive

2 - Positive

3 - Neutral

4 - Negative

5 - Significantly Negative

Section 7

25 - What other voluntary youth work services are you aware of in your community? Please provide up to 5 including name of organisation and a website OR address.

APPENDIX 5 – Participant Information Sheet and Consent (Survey)

p. 1 Page 1

Mapping and Evaluating the Voluntary Youth Work Sector for Wales.

CONSENT FORM – Survey Consent and Information

Introduction

I would like to invite you to take part in a survey conducted as part of a Masters by Research project. Please note that once submitted, this survey cannot be altered or withdrawn. As a result, please read the following information carefully before submitting so that you understand the purpose of the research as well as your rights as a potential participant.

Background and aims of research

The study aims to map/scope and evaluate voluntary youth services in Wales to create a better understanding of the provision available, gaps in provision and future developments of the sector (e.g. effectiveness, sustainability, challenges faced). The research also aims to identify how voluntary youth services tackle contemporary issues impacting young people such as: county lines, COVID-19, austerity and mental health.

Can I take part?

In order to take part in this study you must be a member of staff in an organisation that you or the research team has deemed a voluntary youth work service, this can include services that are not predominantly youth work but offer a service for young people.

Do I have to take part in the study?

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and therefore, you do not have to take part if you do not wish to. If upon starting the survey you decide that you no longer want to participate then you can exit the survey as your answers will only be saved once you click the ‘Submit’ button at the end or once the call has ended with the research team. Please note that as this survey is completely anonymous and confidential, once you click submit you will not be able to withdraw your data as there will be nothing to identify your data from that of other participants.

What will happen if you agree to take part?

This survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Should you agree to take part in the study, you will then be asked to answer a range of questions. The survey is mainly made up of closed questions whereby you will select an answer from a set list.

However, there are also some open-ended questions where you will be able to answer in more detail, should you wish to do so. This survey will remain completely anonymous and confidential. However, should you not wish to answer any of the questions, there is no requirement to do so and, in many instances, there will be an option to select 'prefer not to say'.

Will my information be stored securely, confidentiality and anonymously?

The design of this study has ensured that all data collected will remain anonymous. This means that only the researcher will be aware of who you are and you will be given a pseudonym. Whilst your data will remain anonymous and confidential, it is advised that you do not include any names or identifiable information in your answers. In the rare case that your data are identifiable to either the researcher or supervisor, they will be immediately excluded from the research.

Ethical approval

This study has been approved by the Faculty of Life Sciences and Education at the University of South Wales.

Data Protection Privacy Notice

No personal data will be collected or processed about you or any of the people you work with. However, the university formally acts as a data controller for the project. The University of South Wales Compliance Manager is Mr Rhys Davies (rhys.davies@southwales.ac.uk).

The legal basis on which this task is being performed is public interest, approved by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee.

Details of your individual rights are available on the ICO website at: https://ico.org.uk/fororganisations/data-protection-reform/overview-of-the-gdpr/individualsrights/

Consent

• By continuing with this study, I confirm that I am a member of staff for a voluntary youth work service in Wales.
• By continuing with this survey, I understand that I am giving my informed consent for the researcher to collect and use my fully anonymised data.
• By continuing with this survey, I understand that once my answers are submitted, they cannot be altered or withdrawn.

If you want more information or have a concern about any aspect of this study, you should ask to speak to the researcher, Elizabeth Bacon, Elizabeth.bacon@southwales.ac.uk (07506111552) who will do their best to answer your questions. If you remain unhappy or wish to complain more formally, you can do this through my supervisor, Dr Jennifer Maher, Jenny.maher@southwales.ac.uk, University of South Wales

If you remain unhappy or have a serious complaint you can contact the USW Research Governance Manager:

jonathan.sinfield@southwales.ac.uk

p. 2 Final page

Thank you for reading and confirming the consent information.

PLEASE NOW RETURN TO THE SURVEY TAB TO COMPLETE THE SURVEY.

APPENDIX 6 – Participant Information Sheet and Consent (Focus Groups)

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET – Focus Groups

September 2022

1. Study Title

Mapping and Evaluating the Voluntary Youth Work Sector [VYWS] for Wales.

2. Invitation paragraph

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Your contribution will be to take part in a focus group with other VYWS organisations. Before you decide, you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully and please contact me with questions if anything is not clear or you would like more information.

3. What is the purpose of the study?

This research is being undertaken as part of my Masters by Research at the University of South Wales. The study aims to map/scope and evaluate voluntary youth services in Wales to create a better understanding of the provision available, gaps in provision and future developments of the sector (e.g. effectiveness, sustainability, challenges faced). The research also aims to identify how voluntary youth services tackle contemporary issues impacting young people such as: county lines, COVID-19, austerity and mental health.

4. Why have I been invited?

You have been invited to take part in this study because you are a manager in a voluntary youth work organisation in Wales. You have been invited to take part in the focus group stage of the research as you will be able to provide further in-depth information for the evaluation of the sector and provide contextual input to the already conducted analysis of statistics.

5. Do I have to take part?

It is completely up to you to decide to take part. You may withdraw your consent at any point before the 31/12/2022 when the research will be submitted to USW. You will be provided with a pseudonym in case you wish to withdraw your information once it has been anonymised and transcribed. You do not have to take part in the discussion if you do not wish to do so and you are welcome to take a break or stop the focus group at any time without explanation.

6. What will happen if I take part?

You will be invited to a VYWS organisation in your region to participate in a focus group which should last for two hours. You and your fellow participants will be asked to discuss key issues/topics relating to the voluntary youth work sector in Wales. Attached is an informed consent form detailing your rights and ensuring you have been provided with all the relevant information required. If you agree to participate, please sign (a digital or typed signature will suffice if the form is returned from a personalised, professional email) and return to the researcher via email at: Elizabeth.bacon@southwales.ac.uk. With permission the focus groups will be audio/video recorded. The recording will later be transcribed and fully anonymised (removing all names and places) and you will be provided with a pseudonym. Once transcribed, the recording will be immediately deleted. The transcription will only be analysed by the researcher and no information or comments that could be traced back to you as an individual will be used in any publication. Once the research study has been completed, all transcripts will be destroyed.

7. Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

Yes, any information you provide to the researcher will be kept strictly confidential. Participants in the focus groups will be asked to adhere to the Chatham House Rule which allows them to use the information discussed but requests them not to reveal who made any particular comments. Individual participant data such as names will be anonymous and given a pseudonym and any information about you which is used in publications (e.g. quotes) will have any personal details removed so that you cannot be identified. No hard paper data will be collected. No reference to identifiable individuals will be made in the thesis.

The only circumstances in which we would not be able to guarantee confidentiality would be if you provide information that: (1) led us to believe that you, or someone else, was in significant or immediate danger, (2) indicated potential or actual professional misconduct,

or (3) outlines criminal activity for which you have not been convicted. In such cases, we will discuss with you that we will have to pass on the information to the relevant authorities (likely someone within your agency/organisation).

9. What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

We do not foresee any risks to you in taking part, and it is not expected that you will find the focus group upsetting or distressful. However, if you do find it distressing or you want to stop, just let me know. If you are affected in any way by the research after taking part, please contact me so I can signpost you to places where you can find help such as the Samaritans. A risk assessment has been conducted to ensure participants safety, you will receive guidance on this prior to the focus group.

10. What are the possible benefits of taking part?

We cannot guarantee that the study will help you directly/individually, but the research findings may be of help to the voluntary youth work sector and in turn your organisation and your specific role within it. By providing an overall audit to Welsh Government and local authorities, with in depth analysis of the services provided and the challenges, risks, future developments needed, it is possible that this will encourage future changes and improvements to the sector as a whole from those with influence and hopefully will result in positive changes to the sector as a whole.

11. What if there is a problem or I want more information?

If you want more information, want to withdraw or have a concern about any aspect of this study, you should contact the researcher using the following contact details: email: Elizabeth.bacon@southwales.ac.uk or phone: 07506 111552 who will do their best to answer your questions.

If you remain unhappy or wish to formally complain, you can do so through the research supervisor: Jennifer Maher: jenny.maher@southwales.ac.uk University of South Wales.

If you remain unhappy or have a serious complaint, you can contact the USW Research Governance Manager: Jonathan Sinfield, Jonathan.sinfield@southwales.ac.uk

12. Data Protection Privacy Notice

No personal data will be collected or processed about you or any of the people you work with. However, the data controller for this project will be the University of South Wales. The University's Data Protection Officer provides oversight of university activities involving the processing of personal data. The University of South Wales Data Protection Officer can be contacted at dataprotection@southwales.ac.uk

Your personal data will be processed for the purposes outlined in this information sheet. Standard ethical procedures will involve you providing your consent to participate in this study by completing the consent form that has been provided to you. However, the legal basis on which this task is being performed is public interest, approved by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee or University Ethics Sub group.

If you are concerned about how your personal data is being processed, please contact the Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@southwales.ac.uk.

Details of how the University manages your personal data are described in our privacy notice: https://uso.southwales.ac.uk/information-compliance-unit/data-protection/privacy- notices-and-use-personal-information/

Details of your individual rights are available on the ICO website at: Your data matters | ICO

13. Who is organising or sponsoring the research?

The research is organised by the University of South Wales and the Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services (CWVYS). This is part of the KESS 2 programme.

Knowledge Economy Skills Scholarships (KESS) is a pan-Wales higher level skills initiative led by Bangor University on behalf of the HE sector in Wales. It is part funded by the Welsh Government's European Social Fund (ESF) convergence programme for West Wales and the Valleys.

This is your information sheet to keep. Thank you for taking time to read it.

Research Consent Form – Focus Groups

Title of Project: Mapping and Evaluating the Voluntary Youth Work Sector for Wales

Name of Researcher: Elizabeth Bacon

Name of supervisor: Jennifer Maher

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated September 2022 for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time until December 2022 (submission of thesis) without giving any reason, without any consequence to myself.	
3. I agree to my participation being video/audio recorded and it has been explained how this data will be stored, destroyed, anonymized, who will have access to it, and how long it will be kept.	
4. I give permission for my data to be stored and processed in accordance with the GDPR (2018)	
5. I agree to my anonymized data being used in an academic thesis, for reports, (if they are produced), subsequent articles in academic journals and disseminated to the wider sector (Welsh Government, CWVYS, local authorities).	
6. I understand the limits to confidentiality and that information will need to be passed on to the relevant authority if I provide information that (1) led the researcher to believe that you, or someone else, was in significant or immediate danger, (2) indicated potential or actual professional misconduct, or (3) outlined criminal activity for which you have not been convicted.	
7. I agree to take part in the above study.	

Name of participant	Date	Signature
Name of researcher taking consent	Date	Signature

Please initial all boxes

APPENDIX 7 – Exclusivity of Practice for Young People

To further explore the exclusivity of services for young people, survey participants were asked to identify how they would best describe their organisation from the list in Figure 1. 26% (n=27) clarify that they exclusively provide a youth work service, which is consistent with the number who identified as a service for those aged 11-25 years specifically in Figure 6 in the Findings chapter. However, the majority of organisations claimed that young people were included in all support (n=32, 31.1%), further showing consistency between data. Those who responded with 'other' provided qualitative answers referring mainly to organisations providing whole family support or further detail on how the service was inclusive of young people.

Figure 1: Data on Organisations' Exclusivity of Practice for Youth Work

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Exclusively a youth work service (only work with young people)	27	26.2	26.2	26.2
	Provision available for young people but not the primary focus (have a separate young people's service)	27	26.2	26.2	52.4
	Young people included in all support (not age specific, work with all ages together)	32	31.1	31.1	83.5
	Other	17	16.5	16.5	100.0
	Total	103	100.0	100.0	

It is clear from Figure 2, however, that there is inconsistency with organisations' target cohort and identification of exclusivity of practice. This is evidenced by seven organisations stating that young people were 'included in all support' but then identified they supported 11–25-year-olds specifically. Similarly, over a third of those who saw themselves exclusively as a youth work service, claim they target 11-25+ (n=11). Therefore, the data suggest further definitional or 'identity' issues in the VYWS, despite majority of respondents identifying that the proposed definition fit their organisation.

Figure 2: Comparison of Age-Range Category and Exclusivity of Practice

Count

		How best would you describe your organisation (select one):				
		Exclusively a youth work service (only work with young people)	Provision available for young people but not the primary focus (have a separate young people's service)	Young people included in all support (not age specific, work with all ages together)	Other	Total
What is the age range of your target cohort of young people? e.g. 11-25	11-25+	11	15	20	6	52
	Within 11-25	7	10	5	2	24
	11-25 Specific	9	2	7	9	27
Total		27	27	32	17	103

APPENDIX 8 – Young People Supported

Figure 1: Descriptive Statistics Results for Number of Young People

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
On average, how many young people access your service ANNUALLY (can be members, registered or open access)?	97	56998	3	57000	183666	1893.46	6673.132	44530686.84	6.564	.245	50.127	.485
Valid N (listwise)	97											

**shows descriptive statistics for the number of young people supported on average annually by the 97 respondents who answered this question*

Figure 2: Results from Anomaly Test for Young People

Reason: 1

Case	Reason Variable	Variable Impact	Variable Value	Variable Norm
103	YoungPeople	1.000	57000	1893.46
77	YoungPeople	1.000	23000	1893.46
78	YoungPeople	1.000	18000	1893.46
60	YoungPeople	1.000	14000	1893.46

**shows the anomaly cases impacting the data for the number of young people supported annually.*

The above Figures detail the results from the descriptive statistics test and anomaly test run on the data relating to the number of young people supported annually by voluntary youth work organisations. The anomaly test shows that four participant response accounted for 61% of the total young people reportedly accessing services and thus make the data not normally distributed. The Skewness and Kurtosis results in Figure 1 also show that the data is not normally distributed as the score needs to be less than +1.0 to be considered normal (Kanji, 2006) and as can be seen, the results are significantly higher (6.564 and 50.127).

APPENDIX 9 – Age Ranges from Survey Responses

13-17
14-19
16-25
11-25
7-25
8-20
11-25
7 to 24
11-25
7-18
5 - 25
0-18
5-25
0 - 25
16+
11-24
10-25
10-18
18-24
11-16
3-90
16-25
10-25
5-18
7-25
11-16
16-35
11-25
11- 25
11 - 25
11-17
11 -19
4-20
18+

14-25
16 - 25
5-18
3-18
11-25
18-25
2-92
11 - 25
0-25
3-25
9-25
11-25
5-18
12_18
11-25
16+
11-25
3-24
14-18
4-25
11 - 25
3-19
5-18
5-25
8-20
4-24
12-25
8 -16
11-36
5 - 25
5-25
11-25
4-18
11-25
11 - 22

0 - 25
11-25
11-25
all ages
14-25
11-25
11-25
11-25
11-18
11-25
10 - 18
7 - 16
7 to 18
N/A different projects we work with different age groups.
5-25
11 - 25
11-25
5-25
11 - 25
11-30
7-25
11-17
16+
16-25
5-25, Adults too
11-25
11-25
5-25
5 - 18
11-25
11-16
14-25
8-11 and 11-25

APPENDIX 10 – Staff Characteristics

The following Figure provides an overview of the staffing of voluntary youth work organisations who responded to the survey. As can be seen, 83 organisations provided information on full-time staff amounting to a total of 608 staff, creating an average of 7.33 full-time staff per organisation. However, the standard deviation of 24.175 indicates that the data is widely distributed and varied, due to the small number of outliers (seen in Figure 2). Of the 88 who answered for part-time staff, 718 part-time staff were identified, with an average of 8.16 per organisation. The standard deviation for part-time staff was lower (12.610) than full-time staff so can be seen as closer to the mean and thus more reliable. Similarly, for trustees, 503 were identified from the 86 responses, with a mean of 5.85 per organisation and a low standard deviation of only 3.948. An anomaly test was therefore not necessary for part-time staff and trustees. However, for the 92 responses regarding volunteers, 22,464 were reported and an average of 244.17 per organisation, but the standard deviation was significantly high at 1229.922, evidencing clear outliers and thus a wide range of responses. These outliers are presented in Figure 3. These outliers accounted for 82.57% of the total number of volunteers. The skewness and kurtosis test results presented in Figure 1 are further evidence that this data is not normally distributed. For a dataset to be considered normally distributed, there must be a score of less than +1.0 (Kanji, 2006), therefore it is clear that distribution is outside the range of normality and thus cannot be considered normal. This could be due to the size range of organisations with some being national organisations with a larger workforce and others being small community organisations often run by one or two individuals. This shows that most organisations have a range of full-time, part-time, trustees and volunteers. As is to be expected, the majority of the workforce are volunteers. The issues with answering this question, might explain why there are missing values for each category, as displayed in column one of Figure 1 (N statistic not totalling to 103).

Figure 1: The Number of Agency Staff and their Roles Identified

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Full-time	83	213	0	213	608	7.33	24.175	584.442	7.765	.264	65.736	.523
Part-time/Sessional	88	68	0	68	718	8.16	12.610	159.009	2.945	.257	9.174	.508
Trustees/those with a governing role/responsibility	86	25	0	25	503	5.85	3.948	15.589	1.408	.260	5.377	.514
Volunteers (not including Trustees/those with a governing role/responsibility)	92	10000	0	10000	22464	244.17	1229.922	1512707.420	6.646	.251	47.748	.498
Valid N (listwise)	69											

**shows the descriptive statistics for the staff, volunteers and trustees of the survey sample who responded to these questions.*

Figure 2: Results from Anomaly Test for Full-Time Staff

Reason: 1

Case	Reason Variable	Variable Impact	Variable Value	Variable Norm
103	FullTimeStaff	1.000	213	7.33

**shows the anomaly case impacting the data for the full-time staff variable.*

Figure 3: Results from Anomaly Test for Volunteers

Reason: 1

Case	Reason Variable	Variable Impact	Variable Value	Variable Norm
103	Volunteers	1.000	10000	244.17
60	Volunteers	1.000	5549	244.17
67	Volunteers	1.000	3000	244.17

**shows the anomaly cases impacting the data for the volunteers variable.*

APPENDIX 11 – Time of Provision

Figures 1 and 2 show the frequency of responses for the time of the week (n=191) and the time-of-day youth work occurs (n=204).

Figure 1: Total Data for When VYW Services are Provided: Time of the Week

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
When a service is provided[a]	Service provided All week	29	15.2%	28.2%
	Service provided on Weekdays	57	29.8%	55.3%
	Service provided on Weekends	26	13.6%	25.2%
	Projects/Ad hoc	34	17.8%	33.0%
	Service provided during School Holidays	35	18.3%	34.0%
	What days do you provide a service (select all that apply)? - Other	10	5.2%	9.7%
Total		191	100.0%	185.4%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

Figure 2: Total Data for When VYW Services are Provided: Time of Day

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Time of day service is provided[a]	Morning	42	20.6%	44.2%
	Day-time	72	35.3%	75.8%
	Evening	73	35.8%	76.8%
	Overnight	8	3.9%	8.4%
	Please detail when your service is provided (select all that apply): - Other	9	4.4%	9.5%
Total		204	100.0%	214.7%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

** Note data is from a 'select all that apply' question (explaining the totals equally more than 103 in Figures 9 and 10).*

The majority of organisations (n=57, 55%) provided services on weekdays, followed by school holidays (n=35, 34%) and through projects (n=34, 33%). Weekend support for young people was lower, with just over a quarter of organisations providing weekend services or services all week. Similarly, services were mostly provided in the evening (n= 73, 76.8%), closely followed by daytime services (n=72, 75.8%). Comparison was completed to identify the most common provision times.

APPENDIX 12 – Welsh Language Speakers

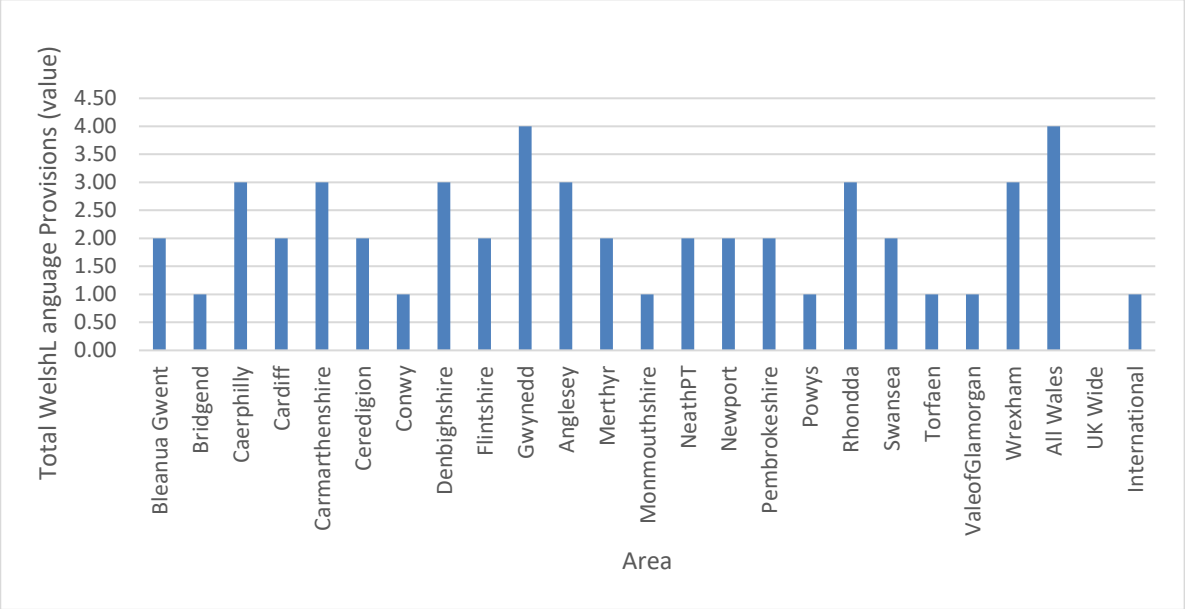
Figure 1: Number of Welsh Language Speakers in VYW Organisations

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	21	20.4	21.6	21.6
	1	23	22.3	23.7	45.4
	2	18	17.5	18.6	63.9
	3	8	7.8	8.2	72.2
	4	5	4.9	5.2	77.3
	5	3	2.9	3.1	80.4
	6	1	1.0	1.0	81.4
	7	2	1.9	2.1	83.5
	8	1	1.0	1.0	84.5
	9	1	1.0	1.0	85.6
	10	3	2.9	3.1	88.7
	12	3	2.9	3.1	91.8
	18	2	1.9	2.1	93.8
	20	2	1.9	2.1	95.9
	25	1	1.0	1.0	96.9
	52	1	1.0	1.0	97.9
	700	1	1.0	1.0	99.0
	10281	1	1.0	1.0	100.0
	Total	97	94.2	100.0	
Missing	System	6	5.8		
Total		103	100.0		

**shows the frequency of responses for the number of Welsh language speakers in organisations.*

To understand the distribution of Welsh language staff across Wales, bivariate analysis evaluating Welsh language provision by LA area is detailed in Figure 2. According to census data, the highest percentage of Welsh speakers are in Gwynedd (76.3%) and the Isle of Anglesey (62.1%) and the lowest percentages in Blaenau Gwent (16.6%), Torfaen (17.3%) and Swansea (17.6%).

Figure 2: Graph showing the Number of VYW Welsh Language Provisions compared to Area



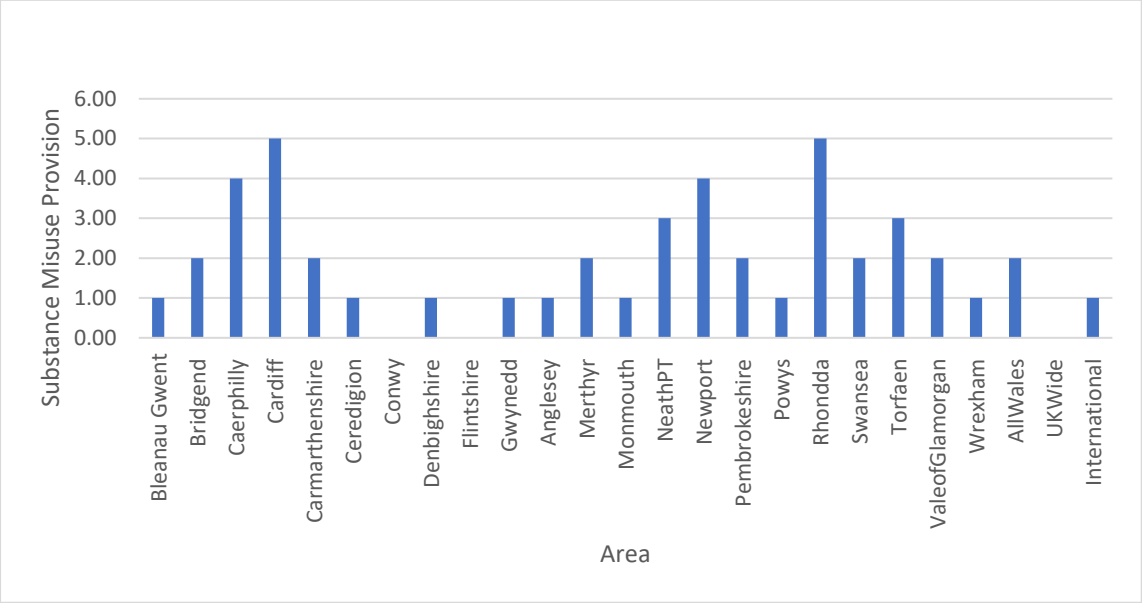
**Shows the value number of Welsh language provisions in each area. Note that organisations can appear in several areas so the total number of provisions here is more than in Figure 20, but the total provisions in each area here do represent separate organisations.*

Figure 2 shows that Gwynedd has the most VYW Welsh language provision (n=4) in Wales which is proportionate to census data, as well as all Wales services (n=4). Bridgend, Conwy, Monmouthshire, Powys, Torfaen and the Vale of Glamorgan all only have one Welsh language provision. Unsurprisingly, UK wide services had no Welsh language provisions as the rest of the UK do not use the Welsh language. According to LA data, Gwynedd and Conwy youth services provide 99% of their services in the medium of Welsh (Welsh Government, 2021). Therefore, the findings reveal some consistency between the VYWS and LA youth services, in Gwynedd, but inconsistency in Conwy. However, only five organisations delivering VYW in Conwy responded to the survey so this could explain this disproportionality.

APPENDIX 13 – Crime Prevention and Substance Misuse Services

The below Figures show the results from bivariate analysis of VYW provisions for substance misuse and crime prevention and local authority areas in Wales. Official statistics on youth crime rates and substance misuse rates in local authorities in Wales are not available. So while important to understand in terms of access and availability, without official statistics on crime and substance misuse across Wales, conclusions are unable to be drawn.

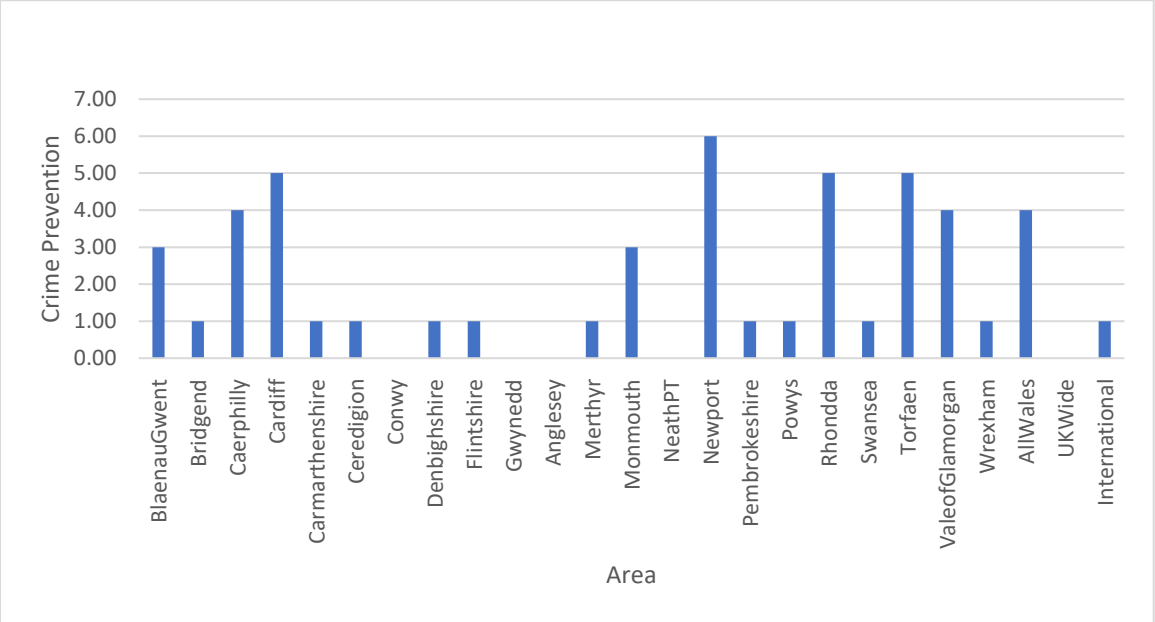
Figure 1: Total Number of VYW Substance Misuse Provisions by LA Area



**Note that one organisation may appear in several areas, so the total number of VYW provisions here is more than the total presented in the findings in Figure 14. However, the total VYW provisions in each area in this Figure represent separate organisations.*

From the survey sample Cardiff and Rhondda Cynon Taff had the most VYW substance misuse provisions in Wales (n=5), followed by Newport (n=4), Neath Port Talbot (n=3) and Torfaen (n=3). It is known that South Wales has higher levels of recorded crime than other regions in Wales, however it is not known what percentage of this involves young people (ONS, 2023). This is a significant finding as these are all in South Wales. Both Conwy and Flintshire had no VYW services for substance misuse, both of which are in North Wales. Similarly, none of the UK Wide provisions provided support for substance misuse. The same analysis was conducted for services tackling crime prevention/victimisation (violence/exploitation) and the results are shown in Figure 22.

Figure 2: Total Number of VYW Crime Prevention/Victimisation Provisions by LA Area



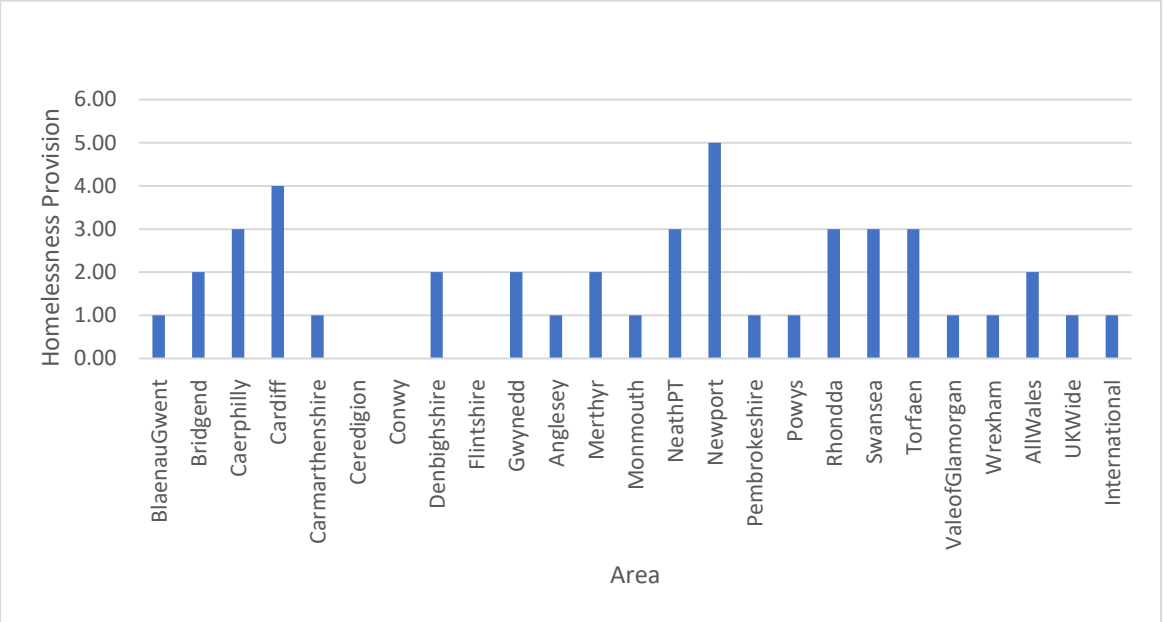
**Note that one organisation may appear in several areas, so the total number of VYW provisions here is more than the total presented in the findings in Figure 14. However, the total VYW provisions in each area in this Figure represent separate organisations.*

Again, VYW organisations in South Wales provided more crime prevention services for young people (Newport, n=6, Rhondda Cynon Taff, n=5, Torfaen, n=5, Cardiff, n=5, Vale of Glamorgan, n=4 and Caerphilly, n=4). Gwynedd and Anglesey had no services for crime prevention, and UK wide services that responded to the survey. These findings however, only present the available provisions and not the needs of young people so conclusions cannot be drawn on the necessity or importance of crime prevention, county lines and substance misuse in different areas.

APPENDIX 14 – Homelessness Provisions

The below Figure shows the results from bivariate analysis on local authority area and the number of VYW homelessness provisions. Official statistics on youth homelessness in Wales are not available and thus limited conclusions can be drawn from this data. Despite this, it is still important to consider the availability of services and accessibility across Wales.

Figure 1: Total Number of VYW Homelessness Provisions by LA Area



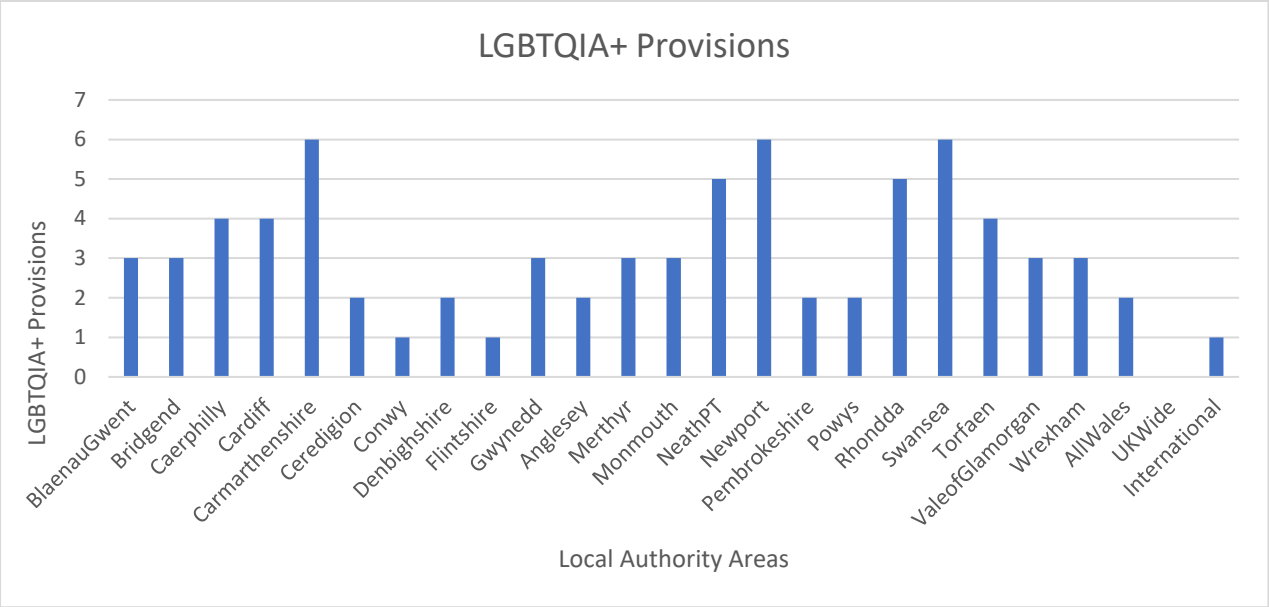
**Note that one organisation may appear in several areas, so the total number of VYW provisions here is more than the total presented in the findings in Figure 14. However, the total VYW provisions in each area in this Figure represent separate organisations.*

Newport and Cardiff had the most VYW provisions for homelessness/housing support in Wales (n=5 and n=4 respectively), followed by other South Wales local authorities including Caerphilly (n=3), Rhondda Cynon Taff (n=3), Swansea (n=3) and Torfaen (n=3). Ceredigion, Conwy and Flintshire had no services for homelessness from the survey sample of organisations, which are all in Mid or North Wales. According to official homelessness statistics, Cardiff, Newport and Swansea have the most households at risk of homelessness in Wales (Welsh Government, 2022). Although this does not reflect youth homelessness and so little can be drawn from this.

APPENDIX 15 – LGBTQIA+ Provision

The below table shows available LGBTQIA+ provision across Wales, by local authority area.

Figure 1: Total Number of VYW LGBTQIA+ Provisions by LA Area



**Note that one organisation may appear in several areas, so the total number of VYW provisions here is more than the total presented in the findings in Figure 14. However, the total VYW provisions in each area in this Figure represent separate organisations.*

Carmarthenshire, Swansea, and Newport (n=6) had the most VYW LGBTQIA+ provisions. With Conwy and Flintshire having the least (n=1). UK wide services did not provide any LGBTQIA+ support for young people. Clearly there are LGBTQIA+ provisions across Wales, however it seems that there are more provisions available in South Wales areas than North Wales, and thus young people travelling to access services appears likely.