

Evaluation of the Impact of the Welsh Government's Annual Grant to Education and Training Standards Wales (ETS Wales)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an Evaluation of the Welsh Government's Annual Grant to Education and Training Standards Wales (ETS Wales). The Evaluation was undertaken by Mark Brierley of *Mark Brierley Consulting* in May and early June 2017.

ETS Wales received an annual grant of **£35,000** for management costs from the Welsh Government during the period covered by this Evaluation (2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18).

The Grant is used to fund the role of the Chair of ETS Wales for an average of four days a month and an Adviser for an average of six days a month, plus office and support costs.

The Evaluation has been conducted against the Objectives agreed for the Grant, namely:

- **Objective 1:** To be responsible for the professional endorsement and recognition of qualifying training for Youth Work, meeting JNC¹ requirements.
- **Objective 2:** Enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Joint Negotiating Committee relating to relative responsibilities and arrangements for the professional endorsement and recognition of qualifying training for youth work and manage organisational requirements.
- **Objective 3:** Represent Wales at UK ETS and respond on behalf of ETS on appropriate matters.
- **Objective 4:** To develop the endorsement of youth support worker qualification (Level 2/3), establishing a Welsh system of peer review.

For 2015-16 only, the following was also an Objective:

- **Objective 5:** To work with the Welsh Government, a consultant and CWVYS² to develop an updated Quality Mark system using learning from existing NYA³ systems and previous pilot projects.

In accordance with the thrust of the *National Youth Work Strategy for Wales 2014-18*, the following assumptions were also made:

- That endorsed youth work qualifications are fundamental to ensuring that there is a qualified workforce able to deliver the Strategy;
- That JNC recognition of qualifications is vital;
- That there should be a Coherent Route for qualifications to provide pathways of learning.

¹ Joint Negotiating Committee for youth and community workers

² Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services

³ National Youth Agency

Objective 1: To be responsible for the professional endorsement and recognition of qualifying training for Youth Work, meeting JNC requirements.

While the conduct of individual endorsements is externally funded by HEIs, the development, maintenance and refreshing of the infrastructure for the endorsement programme comes from the Welsh Government Grant, and through the other functions for ETS Wales (particularly the ETS Wales Committee and Joint ETS (JETS) meetings), the Chair and Adviser are kept apprised on policy and good practice developments both within the youth work sector in Wales and across the UK.

This was reflected in the views of interviewees who variously described the role of ETS Wales as “critical” or “integral”. The endorsement process was felt to work. Although the endorsement process is primarily externally-funded and only a small portion of the Chair’s and Adviser’s time from the Grant goes directly towards this process, the Grant acts like a lynchpin holding it together.

The Grant also funds around 40% of the cost of the production of the annual monitoring reports and the reports are discussed by the ETS Wales Committee.

The maintenance of a national database on qualified youth workers at Levels 5-7 has been reinvigorated, having lapsed when the Wales Youth Agency was absorbed into the Welsh Government in 2005. There have been two drivers for this: the Training Advisory Group and the requirement for youth workers to be registered with the Education Workforce Council (EWC).

Objective 2: Maintain a Memorandum of Understanding with the Joint Negotiating Committee relating to relative responsibilities and arrangements for the professional endorsement and recognition of qualifying training for youth work and manage organisational requirements.

This objective should be revised as the reference to the Memorandum of Understanding is not useful within an Objective as the Memorandum itself does not change and Objective 1 already states a requirement to ensure that JNC requirements are met. This objective should be reviewed: for example it might be changed to: *ETS Wales should demonstrate effective and accountable functioning in its Committee and its day-to-day operations.*

ETS Wales Committee has a busy agenda that is reflective of the Objectives and Targets set for the Grant. As such, the Committee is a central mechanism for ensuring that these Objectives are progressed, while taking on board the views of various sectors that comprise its membership.

Despite the busy agenda, it gets through its business. Attendance of 11-12 people is just over half of full membership but membership composition has only recently been refreshed alongside revisions to the Terms of Reference for the Committee.

Objective 3: Represent Wales at UK & Ireland ETS and respond on behalf of ETS on appropriate matters

If the Grant from Welsh Government was no longer available, ETS Wales would be unable to engage with ETS from other jurisdictions. These meetings are already not happening as regularly as in the past. In the context of devolution and variations in policy and practice, it is important that Welsh policies and the Welsh context are given a voice in JETS meetings.

The Grant enables the Adviser to meet with colleagues from other ETS and join in on initiatives led by others. Developmental work in this area is dependent on external funding.

The Youth Work Strategy tasked ETS Wales with a responsibility to “ensure that programmes of

training for youth workers are of a suitable high quality, relevant to the needs of employers, youth workers themselves and the young people with whom they work” and this by implication requires an awareness and contribution to policy discussions. There was a strong message from interviewees that if ETS Wales no longer received the Grant from the Welsh Government there would be a gap in the provision of a coherent cross-sector voice to Welsh Government relating to the quality and qualifications of the youth work workforce. ETS Wales was seen by the interviewees as having an important role to play in any future strategic developments in Wales relating to youth work.

Objective 4: To develop endorsement procedures of youth support worker qualification (Levels 2&3), establishing a Welsh system of peer review.

The Welsh Government Grant supports coherence in the development of a pathway for youth support worker and youth work qualifications. A co-ordinated approach with NYA ensures cross-jurisdictional coherence, while the presence of both FE and HE members on the ETS Committee ensures that issues around the development of the Coherent Route, from Level 2 Award to a Level 7 Post-Graduate Diploma, can be addressed strategically. The role of ETS Wales Adviser was described by one interviewee as “integral” in supporting the process of producing standardised endorsement procedures.

Objective 5 (2015-216 only): To work with the Welsh Government, a consultant and CWVYS to develop an updated Quality Mark system using learning from existing NYA systems and previous pilot projects.

The new Quality Mark has been achieved. The draft revised Terms of Reference for the ETS Wales Committee includes:

Support and advice for the development of:

- *independent, local authority and voluntary organisations’ workforce development strategies and continuing professional development frameworks;*
- *independent, local authority and voluntary organisations’ policies and procedures for quality assurance.*

This may be an area that the Welsh Government might explore further with ETS Wales.

Summary

ETS Wales fulfils the roles that it is funded to provide and does so very effectively and with strong support from the sectors who are represented in the membership of the ETS Wales Committee. These Objectives are complementary to the relevant recommendations of the *Youth Work Strategy 2014-18*. The agenda of the ETS Wales Committee includes the Objectives and key targets for the Grant.

The ETS Wales Committee also provides opportunity for partners to come together and discuss wider strategic issues relating to youth work.

ETS Wales is fit for purpose, has had an important role to play in contributing to the Youth Work Strategy and would continue to have an important role to play if a revised Youth Work Strategy for the future were to continue to place importance on there being a professional qualified youth work workforce. Its primary impact is in ensuring that there is coherence, standardisation and quality in the training of youth workers across Wales.

Any narrowing of focus for the Grant or reduction in funding would probably take ETS Wales under its critical mass for effective functioning. Difficulties experienced in other jurisdictions and for other endorsement bodies as a result of cuts suggest that the Grant has enabled Wales to continue to function effectively.

If the Grant was not to continue it would create significant problems in maintaining a coherent structure for the endorsement of qualifications within Wales and would inhibit the continuing development of the Coherent Route.

1 INTRODUCTION

This report provides an Evaluation of the Welsh Government's Annual Grant to Education and Training Standards Wales (ETS Wales). The Evaluation was undertaken by Mark Brierley of *Mark Brierley Consulting* in May and early June 2017.

The Welsh Government's *National Youth Work Strategy for Wales 2014-18* makes some clear statements on the importance of youth work being delivered by a skilled and professional workforce:

"Young people should rightly expect to be supported by skilled, competent youth work practitioners. Youth work is a skilled profession and strategically we believe we must continue to drive towards an appropriately qualified workforce."

The way to ensure that is also stated:

"... there is a need to develop a clear coherent qualifications route and continuous professional development framework for those involved in youth work provision. Such a framework needs to ensure those engaged in youth work provision and management are supported to develop the required skills, knowledge and competencies relevant to their roles. Pathways of learning and development for youth workers also need to exist which take into account the role and commitment already provided by volunteers."

The Strategy aims not just to sustain a skilled and professional workforce but to enhance that. Recommendations include:

20. Increase the number of youth workers holding a JNC⁴ recognised youth work qualification.
21. A coherent training package for youth workers will be developed by 2016.
22. The Welsh Government will continue to promote and support high-quality nationally recognised professional training for youth workers through ETS Wales.
23. The Welsh Government will work with stakeholders to explore the registration of youth workers.

⁴ Joint Negotiating Committee for youth and community workers

2 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF ETS WALES

2.1 The Broad Terms of the Grant to ETS Wales

ETS Wales was established as an independent body in 2009. The purpose of ETS Wales was set out in a Memorandum of Understanding between the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and the Joint Negotiating Committee for Youth & Community Work (JNC):

...to be responsible for the endorsement, quality assurance, and accreditation of Youth Work, within the voluntary, independent and local authority sectors by encouraging appropriate organisations to open their practice to review and recognition to meet JNC requirements. In addition to this work, ETS Wales continues to provide support to the Playwork and Community Development sectors in line with the terms of reference agreed in 2006 with the Welsh Government.

The *National Youth Work Strategy for Wales 2014-18* stated:

“It is essential that youth work training meets minimum requirements for the profession and continues to be transferable into and outside of the UK. The Welsh Government will continue to fund ETS Wales for the next four years to ensure that programmes of training for youth workers are of a suitable high quality, relevant to the needs of employers, youth workers themselves and the young people with whom they work.”

ETS Wales received an annual grant of **£35,000 grant aid** for management costs from the Welsh Government during the period covered by this Evaluation (2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18).

The Grant is used to fund the role of the Chair of ETS (Gareth Newton) for an average of four days a month and an Adviser (Liz Rose) for an average of six days a month, plus office and support costs (the Adviser uses WLGA offices as a base when not out at meetings). The time was felt to be adequate although work demands may vary across the year and between years (e.g. the Chair gave an example of one month when he worked 7.5 days).

2.2 Functions of the Education and Training Standards Committee (Wales)

ETS Wales's Terms of Reference were revised in May 2017 and the revised draft define its functions in relation to Youth Work as:

The Professional Endorsement of:

- courses and programmes of initial training leading to a professional qualification;
- courses and programmes of post-qualifying training;
- schemes of accreditation and moderation of qualifying training, both full-time and part-time, in the voluntary, independent and local authority sectors.

Support and advice for the development of:

- independent, local authority and voluntary organisations' workforce development strategies and continuing professional development frameworks;
- independent, local authority and voluntary organisations' policies and procedures for quality assurance;
- statements concerning the curriculum, values and professional standards for the sector;
- courses that lead to qualifications in supervision for fieldwork teachers.

The preparation, dissemination and review of criteria, guidelines and procedures for endorsement and accreditation.

The establishment and operation of working parties to examine and assess the proposals and practice of agencies seeking endorsement or accreditation.

To assist in work carried out to ensure equivalence and transferability of Youth Work qualifications in the UK and Ireland and to provide advice to the Welsh Government on these matters on request or as ETS Wales sees fit.

To assist in work carried out to prepare for equivalence and transferability of Youth Work qualifications internationally and to provide advice to the Welsh Government on these matters on request or as ETS Wales sees fit.

To initiate and respond to developments in the standards, recognition and provision of Youth Work, and to provide advice to the Welsh Government, the Education Workforce Council and other relevant and appropriate organisations on request or as the ETS Committee sees fit.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Objectives for ETS Wales

The WLGA hosts ETS Wales, providing office space and support for the ETS Wales Adviser and general management costs to meet the following Objectives, as defined in the letters from Welsh Government to the WLGA's Director of Lifelong Learning for 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18:

- **Objective 1:** To be responsible for the professional endorsement and recognition of qualifying training for Youth Work, meeting JNC requirements.
- **Objective 2:** Enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Joint Negotiating Committee relating to relative responsibilities and arrangements for the professional endorsement and recognition of qualifying training for youth work and manage organisational requirements.
- **Objective 3:** Represent Wales at UK ETS and respond on behalf of ETS on appropriate matters.
- **Objective 4:** To develop the endorsement of youth support worker qualification (Level 2/3), establishing a Welsh system of peer review.

For 2015-16 only, the following was also an Objective:

- **Objective 5:** To work with the Welsh Government, a consultant and CWVYS to develop an updated Quality Mark system using learning from existing NYA systems and previous pilot projects.

These Objectives were used as the focus for the Evaluation of the impact of the Grant. However, it is important to note that the following assumptions were made when looking at these Objectives, which are in accordance of the thrust of the *National Youth Work Strategy for Wales 2014-18*:

- That endorsed youth work qualifications are fundamental to ensuring that there is a qualified workforce able to deliver the Strategy;
- That JNC recognition of qualifications is vital;
- That there should be a Coherent Route for qualifications to provide pathways of learning.

Note that throughout this report, for simplicity, the Objectives are referred to as having been agreed by the Welsh Government and ETS Wales rather than between the Welsh Government and the WLGA.

The Chair and Adviser were asked to estimate how much of their time they believed they spent on each of the four current Objectives. *Note that this was intended to provide the researcher with a general sense of the areas of focus for the two posts: as such, these estimates should be treated as helpful approximations rather than as solid data.*

	Objective	Chair	Adviser
1	Endorsement of HEI Courses	10%	5%
2	Memorandum of Understanding and the Functioning of ETS	25-30%	50%+
3	Strategic impact (Joint ETS, Sector Specialist Body and Contribution to Welsh Government policy agenda)	40-50% (policy)	30% (JETS and SOC)
4	Endorsement of Level 2/3 Youth Support Worker courses	5-10%	15%

The balance between these may vary during the year (e.g. the Adviser will typically use much of the summer to catch up on 'housekeeping' i.e. office-based tasks) and they may also vary from year to year (some examples of this will be given later).

3.2 Methods

The primary method for conducting the review was interviews with a selection of stakeholders involved in the ETS Wales Committee. This included:

- David Algie, Principal Negotiating Officer, Local Government Association;
- Dafydd Baker, Curriculum Development Officer, Agored Cymru;
- Rachel Burton, Co-ordinator, Youth Community and Playwork, Adult Learning Wales;
- Steve Drowley, Vice Chair of ETS Wales;
- Gareth Newton, Chair of ETS Wales;
- Gillian Price, Programme Director for Youth and Community Work, Cardiff School of Education, Cardiff Metropolitan University (Higher Education Training Advisory Group [TAG], representative);
- Grant Poiner, National Development Officer at Boys and Girls Clubs of Wales (representative of the Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services [CWVYS]);
- Liz Rose, Adviser, ETS Wales;
- Joanne Sims, Youth Service Manager, Blaenau Gwent (Principal Youth Officers' representative).

The Chair and Adviser were interviewed together in a face-to-face meeting; the other interviews were conducted by telephone. In addition, there was content textual analysis of a number of ETS Wales documents, many of which will be commented on within the body of this report.

4 OBJECTIVE 1: ENDORSEMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION COURSES

Objective 1 is for ETS Wales: **To be responsible for the professional endorsement and recognition of qualifying training for Youth Work, meeting JNC requirements.**

Three targets on this were agreed between ETS Wales and the Welsh Government (the bold has been added by the researcher):

- Manage the **professional endorsement** of HEI programmes as a self-funded activity.
- **Annual Monitoring** of endorsed programmes conducted and draft report produced.
- **Maintain database** of qualified youth workers as per ETS endorsement requirements and in preparation for Education Workforce Council.

4.1 Manage the Professional Endorsement of HEI Programmes as a Self-Funded Activity

Four HEI's provide eight Youth & Community Degree courses in Wales (Cardiff Metropolitan University; Glyndwr University (Wrexham); University of South Wales (Newport); University of Wales Trinity St David (Carmarthen). The Open University ceased to provide courses during the period covered by the Grant. Endorsements last for five years, and the requirement for re-endorsement provides the core work cycle for the endorsement programme.

The endorsement processes themselves are self-funded as HEIs are charged for this: £3.5k for a single programme, £4.5k for a joint programme. This funding pays for ten days of the ETS Wales's Adviser's time to conduct and support the process. Endorsement Panels involve five people, including statutory and voluntary sectors, chaired by a member of the ETS Wales Committee. Panel members give their time for free but their expenses are covered. The HEIs may also apply to have a modified course endorsed at any time.

Interviewees described the process as highly effective and well organised. Many paid compliments to the role of the ETS Wales Adviser in ensuring the smoothness and effectiveness of this process.

The ETS Wales Chair and Adviser were keen to stress that this is approached as a developmental process, not an inspection. Contact is made with the HEIs months in advance; a defined set of background papers is requested; a Panel is appointed; and the Adviser writes an initial report for the Panel outlining areas for further exploration. The first day of the two-day site visit is spent by the Panel discussing and allocating areas for further questions; and the second day is spent meeting with high level representatives of the HEI, the staff, placement supervisors and students.

Outcomes are that a programme is:

- Endorsed with no conditions;
- Endorsed with conditions (the most common outcome); or
- Not endorsed (rare).

Impact of the Welsh Government Grant

While the conduct of individual endorsements is externally funded (and therefore only a small proportion of the Chair and Adviser's time paid for from the Grant goes towards it), the development, maintenance and refreshing of the infrastructure for the endorsement programme comes from the Welsh Government Grant. For example, the Endorsement Guidelines have not been reviewed since 2010 and are about to be reviewed during 2017-18. Through the other functions for ETS Wales (particularly the ETS Wales Committee and Joint ETS (JETS) meetings), the Chair and Adviser are kept apprised on policy and good practice developments both within the youth work sector in Wales and across the UK: this helps to ensure that the process is not simply a mechanical following of guidelines but stays well informed and relevant.

This was reflected in the views of interviewees who variously described the role of ETS Wales as "critical" or "integral". The endorsement process was felt to work, to "keep universities on the straight and narrow" by ensuring that standards are maintained, and to be "fit for purpose". Comment was made that the HEIs too see the value of the process. One interviewee noted that ETS Wales is well respected for the function it performs while another contrasted the effectiveness and professionalism of the ETS Wales process with their negative experience of endorsement processes for other programmes.

Interviewees were also asked to comment on what would be missed if the Grant to ETS Wales was no longer available and the impact on the endorsement process was mentioned by many e.g.:

"It would be devastating. It would atomise [fragment] the sector around training and qualifications."

"Anyone could come in and do what they want to do."

"It is essential to maintain the quality and professionalism of youth work."

"Youth work qualifications might not reflect what the field thinks is needed and might not commit to *Youth Work in Wales: Principles and Purposes*."

"There would be no independent partnership overview of whether courses meet requirements of the sector and of UK-wide ETS."

"The quality of training for youth workers would decrease and be disjointed."

"Who would provide the level of endorsement we require, providing a Coherent Route?"

In relation to this last question, the Education Workforce Council, with its remit for registering Youth Workers, was *not* seen as a viable alternative by interviewees. Nor was it felt to be viable to have qualifications endorsed by ETS in England: this was seen to be politically problematic; it would involve funding going out of Wales; and it would reduce the likelihood of the specific youth work policy and practice framework in Wales being taken into account.

In short, although the endorsement process is primarily externally-funded and only a small portion of the Chair's and Adviser's time from the Grant goes directly towards this process, the Grant acts like a lynchpin holding it together.

4.2 Annual Monitoring of Endorsed Programmes Conducted and Draft Report Produced

The reviewer was given access to two Annual Monitoring reports commissioned from Courtney Taylor on BA Honours Programmes and on Post Graduate Diploma programmes respectively, both from April 2017 and covering the 2015-16 academic year. Data for these reports is requested in December of the previous year. This is part-funded from the Welsh Government Grant and partly from the HEIs payment for the endorsement process (approximately 40% comes from the Grant). It was felt by ETS Wales to be appropriate to use part of the Grant for this as the annual monitoring includes Further Education and general workforce information on HE.

Some interviewees reported that there had been difficulties in generating the data for these reports in the past, related to different ways of recording information in different HEIs. One interviewee said that they felt that pressure from ETS had helped to produce better information.

The process was felt to hold HEIs to account and was felt to be useful by all parties interviewed. The reports are discussed in ETS Wales Committee meetings; if there are any particular issues relating to an HEI then ETS Wales might write to them about it or include it for further exploration in the next re-endorsement. For example, there was a discussion after the latest report on a trend towards more females than males on courses.

Impact of the Welsh Government Grant

The Grant funds around 40% of the cost of the production of the annual monitoring reports and the reports are discussed by the ETS Wales Committee.

4.3 Maintain Database of Qualified Youth Workers as per ETS Endorsement Requirements and in Preparation for Education Workforce Council

The maintenance of a national database on qualified youth workers was previously the responsibility of the Wales Youth Agency (WYA) but this lapsed when the functions of the WYA were absorbed by the Welsh Government in 2005. TAG (Higher Education Training Advisory Group) asked ETS Wales to reinstate the database and address the gaps from 2005 to the present. The database contains details of the youth work qualifications obtained by individuals. All HEIs are supplying current information and all have been requested to provide the missing information (Glyndwr has done this; the ETS Wales Adviser intends to follow up with the other HEIs over the summer). The database is also used to provide certificates to students. The database mostly covers people with Level 5-Level 7 qualifications.

ETS Wales maintains a list of JNC-recognised youth work training programmes, current and past, from 1995 onwards and has published a list of these courses on its website. Several interviewees said that it was important that ETS Wales continues in this role so that both individuals and employers can check to ensure that someone has a JNC-recognised qualification: one interviewee described it as "crucial". ETS Wales does not generate reports from the data held on the system. Level 2 and Level 3 data will currently be held by the Awarding Bodies (Agored Cymru and ABC Awards) and the delivery centres.

The Education Workforce Council (EWC) was established by the *Education (Wales) Act 2014* and has been given the task to regulate youth workers and people involved in Work Based Learning from April 2017 onwards by requiring registration to practice. Registration of youth workers has made this database more important and ETS Wales and the EWC have maintained liaison, usually by telephone and email but with a few formal meetings each year too.

The advantages of ETS Wales maintaining a central database rather than leaving this task to individual HEIs are that it provides a single point of contact and it provides a mechanism for a strategic overview.

It differs from what the EWC require in that EWC's focus is on *currently practising* youth workers who are required to register and their fitness to practise whereas the ETS Wales database focuses on youth work qualifications that individuals have attained. While there is substantial overlap, they are not the same.

Impact of the Welsh Government Grant

There have been two drivers for the reinvigoration of the database on qualified youth workers: TAG and the requirement for youth workers to be registered with the Education Workforce Council. Databases can be maintained anywhere: whether with ETS Wales, EWC or somewhere else. There is a logic in leaving it with ETS Wales, given the role that ETS Wales has in working with HEIs to endorse their programmes.

5 OBJECTIVE 2: MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING AND FUNCTIONING OF ETS WALES

Objective 2 is for ETS Wales to: **Maintain a Memorandum of Understanding with the Joint Negotiating Committee relating to relative responsibilities and arrangements for the professional endorsement and recognition of qualifying training for youth work and manage organisational requirements.**

Four targets on this were agreed between ETS Wales and the Welsh Government:

- Building on 2010 version, **ensure MoU reflects current arrangements and any potential changes** to Local Government Employers structures.
- Business meetings of **ETS Wales Committee** prepared for and held in order to achieve impact as set out in objectives.
- Conduct **day to day running and management of ETS**, including timely reporting of grant targets and appropriate financial management.
- Maintain and develop **ETS Wales website** to ensure communication with field and availability of appropriate information.

5.1 Building on 2010 Version, Ensure MoU Reflects Current Arrangements and any Potential Changes to Local Government Employers Structures

The purpose of the Memorandum of Understanding was described in section 2.1. At its heart is the requirement to ensure that the work of ETS meets the requirements of JNC for courses to be recognised. The target agreed by the Welsh Government and ETS Wales was modified slightly for 2016-17 and 2017-18 with the addition of “...*in light of changes to JNC and any potential changes to Local Government Employers structures. Negotiate with JNC and relevant stakeholders to ensure a framework for professional qualifications remains in place.*”

Despite this target, and despite changes within the JNC, this has been addressed with what one interviewee called a “light touch” approach and another as an “arms-length process”. It is “fairly static”. JNC recognition was regarded as important, particularly as it provides for equivalence and transferability approach across jurisdictions. While the JNC terms and conditions are not universally recognised across Wales, one interviewee noted that the MoU meant that both employers and staff sides supported ETS Wales’s role and another that this protected youth work as a profession.

Impact of the Welsh Government Grant

The MoU is important in providing recognition from the JNC for ETS Wales’s role in maintaining professional standards in youth work. But should it be a target? Within this report it has been included in a more over-arching way within section 2.1. If there were more issues in this area then it might have been important but it is the purpose of ETS Wales rather than a target. It is the view of the researcher that the wording of both Objective 2 and this target need revision.

5.2 Business Meetings of ETS Wales Committee Prepared for and Held in order to Achieve Impact as Set Out in Objectives

Support to the ETS Wales Committee is a major component of what the Welsh Government's ETS Grant is used for, for both the Chair and Adviser.

Terms of Reference

The revised Terms of Reference for the ETS Wales Committee are as shown in section 2.2. These were revised in May 2017. The primary reason for the revision was to update them by removing references to bodies that no longer exist, adding in new bodies that have been established, and modernising some sections (e.g. relating to equality and diversity).

Timing and Location

Three meetings are held a year, generally 10.30-3.00 on Wednesdays in Rhyader. The Chair and Adviser will meet for half a day prior to the meetings and for half a day afterwards for a debrief. Relevant papers are circulated in advance.

Membership and Attendance

There are 21 designated members. Membership comprises the Chair and Vice Chair plus representatives from:

- Staff side JNC;
- Employers side JNC;
- Voluntary Sector Employers Wales JNC representative;
- Professional Adviser (Wales) JNC;
- Principal Youth Officers Group (3);
- Higher Education Training Agencies Group (Wales) (2);
- CWVYS (3);
- Further Education Awarding Body;
- Further Education Delivery Centre;
- Community Development Cymru;
- Play Wales (2);
- Wider Field Practitioners (up to 3).

The ETS Wales Adviser provides professional and secretarial support. Observer status is given to the All-Ireland ETS, Education Workforce Council Wales, ESTYN, National Youth Agency, Scotland ETS, Welsh Government Youth Work branch and WLGA.

Between May 2015 and February 2017, all Committee Meetings had 11 or 12 members present plus the Adviser and occasional guests. There is no quorum requirement.

Interviewees said that attendance had improved compared to a few years ago, that meetings were usually very representative, that ETS Wales "had a good reputation" and "people really buy in" to the meetings. It was recognised that the impact of cuts meant that members often had multiple briefs that placed extra demands in their time. The churn of members was described by one interviewee as being "because the sector is churning." Alongside the review of the Terms of Reference, membership has been reviewed and refreshed.

Chair

The Chair has rewritten the job description for the post of Chair and developed an appraisal process to generate stronger accountability to the members of the committee. The job description includes a statement of competencies against which the Chair is required to write a self-assessment report that will then be subject to a three-person peer review.

The Chair has also initiated a process of separate meetings with representatives of the different sectors on the ETS Wales Committee in order to ensure that he is fully aware of the particular issues in each sector; and this process has been welcomed.

Agenda

The ETS Wales Committee has a set agenda.. Typically it involves:

- **Introduction / Chair's Report / Minutes / Matters Arising.**
- **Welsh Government Developments:** items discussed have included: the Audit of Youth Work; EWC/registration of youth workers; outcomes framework; registration of Childcare workers; the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework; the Youth Work Reference Group; the Youth Work Strategy.
- **ETS Work Programme:** Has included: Certification; Chair Appraisal; HEI Guidelines refresh; Quality Mark update; Review of the ETS Wales Terms of Reference; Youth Support Worker Guidance.
- **Endorsement activities.**
- **Other Updates:** e.g. on the Annual Monitoring Reports or JNC developments.
- **Sector Skills Council.**
- **Joint ETS.**
- **Sector feedback:** opportunity for each sector present to provide feedback to the group.

Strategic Networking

ETS Wales has performed an additional function for its members by providing an opportunity for strategic networking. Comments from five different interviewees included:

"We have suffered over the last 10 years because of the lack of strategic/lead bodies in Wales. ETS Wales is unique in being representative across the whole youth work sector."

"It is one of the few representative groups within the sector."

"It is probably *the* most representative youth and community body in Wales. It has TAG, HEIs, a good range of statutory and voluntary sector organisations."

"You tend to get engrossed in your job. It's great to get out of your silo and take feedback from different people – we can hear the views of the field."

While such discussions add to the length of meetings, as had already been noted they do not appear to have detracted from the core business of the ETS Wales Committee. As the Chair said “We feel we have a legitimate interest in wider issues.”

Impact of the Welsh Government Grant

ETS Wales Committee has a busy agenda that is reflective of the Objectives and Targets set for the Grant. As such, the Committee is a central mechanism for ensuring that these Objectives are progressed, while taking on board the views of various sectors that comprise its membership.

Despite the busy agenda, it gets through its business. Attendance of 11-12 people is just over half of full membership but membership composition has only recently been refreshed alongside revisions to the Terms of Reference for the Committee.

5.3 Conduct Day to Day Running and Management of ETS, including Timely Reporting of Grant Targets and Appropriate Financial Management

ETS Wales was described by many interviewees as being well run. It submits timely reports on grant targets and on its spending. There are no issues in this area.

5.4 Maintain and Develop ETS Wales Website to Ensure Communication with Field and Availability of Appropriate Information

Because of their involvement in the ETS Wales Committee, most of the interviewees were not a target audience for the ETS website. The website was felt to be adequate for its purpose: “It’s not earth-shattering but it doesn’t need to be: it has a limited audience.” One interviewee however did comment that they themselves made extensive use of the website.

While the ETS Wales Adviser noted that it would need some updating over the summer, the reviewer was able to find information that he required on the website and has no issues with it.

The Grant provides capacity for periodic refreshing of the website at appropriate intervals.

6 OBJECTIVE 3: STRATEGIC IMPACT

Objective 3 is for ETS Wales to: **Represent Wales at UK & Ireland ETS and respond on behalf of ETS on appropriate matters.**

Four targets on this were agreed between ETS Wales and the Welsh Government:

- Attend **Joint ETS meetings**. Practice and policy shared and promoted across jurisdictions to ensure parity in standards of provision across the UK and Wales issues reflected in UK-wide arrangements.
- Work with Joint ETS colleagues as **Sector Specialist Body** to complete activities for Youth & Community SOC code.
- Contribute to **Welsh Government policy agenda**.
- Represent ETS Wales at **Youth Work Alliance Wales** and other business meetings and events.

6.1 Attend Joint ETS Meetings. Practice And Policy Shared And Promoted Across Jurisdictions to Ensure Parity in Standards of Provision across the UK and Wales Issues Reflected in UK-Wide Arrangements

Joint ETS (JETS) meetings with other ETS across the UK and Ireland began in the 1990s, prior to the establishment of the Welsh Government under devolution. JETS is a standing item on the agenda of the ETS Wales Committee.

Reported benefits have included the share of information and practice around policy and technical elements of the ETS role; trends around youth work and youth work provision; the development of a mutual recognition protocols; and a more general opportunity for networking and mutual support.

Given that workers might work in different parts of the UK during their careers, this has been important for youth workers.

The impact of devolution and the resultant variations in policy objectives, funding and experiences means that, as one interviewee put it “It is really important that Wales is represented and provides a Welsh perspective.”

Pressures and structural changes have meant that JETS has not been meeting as often as in the past and this is seen as a negative. A planned meeting in March 2016 was postponed for two months and the one planned for October 2016, due to be hosted by England ETS, was cancelled.

Impact of the Welsh Government Grant

If the Grant from Welsh Government was no longer available, ETS Wales would be unable to engage with ETS from other jurisdictions. These meetings are already not happening as regularly as in the past.

In the context of devolution and variations in policy and practice, it is important that Welsh policies and the Welsh context are given a voice in JETS meetings.

6.2 Work with Joint ETS Colleagues as Sector Specialist Body to Complete Activities for Youth & Community Standard Occupation Classification (SOC) Code

Added to this for 2016-17 was "...depending on funding available from UKCES, this may include and update of the Apprenticeship Framework to reflect new SASW⁵ requirements and preparatory work on the Youth Work NOS" and for 2017-18 "...depending on funding available, this may include an update of the Youth Work NOS."

With the demise of the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UK CES) in March 2017, JETS has bid to do work for youth work on National Occupational Standards (NOS) as a Sector Specialist Body. The Welsh Apprentice Framework has been developed but further joint development work has ceased in the absence of funding. The agenda for ETS Wales Committee includes a standing item entitled Sector Skills Council.

Impact of the Welsh Government Grant

The Grant enables the Adviser to meet with colleagues from other ETS and join in on initiatives led by others. Developmental work in this area is dependent on external funding.

6.3 Contribute to Welsh Government Policy Agenda

As noted in section 5.2, the ETS Wales Committee has a standing item on its agenda relating to Welsh Government Developments and members have used these meetings to explore and discuss policy issues.

Interviewees were positive about the processes that are in place to ensure that ETS Wales provides a shared and unified response across a range of policy agendas. As well as discussing such issues in ETS Wales Committee meetings, the Chair will draft papers as a starting point for feedback and circulate these for people to contribute to. Three interviewees specifically said that this process was very effective, with one saying that the Chair is "scrupulous in taking views into account."

Changes made to the Job Description for the Chair include competencies that relate to:

- Managing the ETS Committee meetings in a collaborative way so as to ensure that sectoral views are heard and that members have the optimum opportunity to contribute to discussions and decisions.
- Facilitating a timely ETS response to such consultations as may appear from time to time which are relevant to the work of ETS.
- Conveying, where appropriate, the views of the Committee to relevant organisations, including the Welsh Government, the Joint Education and Training Standards Committee (JETS), and the Education and Workforce Council.

Impact of the Welsh Government Grant

Note that the Youth Work Strategy tasked ETS Wales with a responsibility to "*ensure that programmes of training for youth workers are of a suitable high quality, relevant to the needs of employers, youth workers themselves and the young people with whom they work*" and this by implication requires an awareness and contribution to policy discussions. There was strong message from interviewees that if

⁵ Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for Wales

ETS Wales no longer received the Grant from the Welsh Government there would be a gap in the provision of a coherent cross-sector voice to Welsh Government relating to the quality and qualifications of the youth work workforce. ETS Wales was seen by the interviewees as having an important role to play in any future strategic developments in Wales relating to youth work.

6.4 Represent ETS Wales at Youth Work Alliance Wales and Other Business Meetings and Events

Youth Work Alliance Wales has not met for two years. Several interviewees regarded Youth Work Alliance Wales as a potentially important body for providing a unified voice for youth work and said that ETS Wales should continue to be a member of it. The speed and extent of change across youth work, particularly the impact of cuts and challenges faced by those responsible for youth work provision in Local Authorities, was seen to be behind the absence of meetings rather than a lack of will. Certainly ETS Wales would have the capacity to attend and play a full role (view of ETS Wales).

Impact of the Welsh Government Grant

The Grant creates the capacity for ETS Wales to attend and make a full contribution to Youth Work Alliance Wales, if it begins to meet again. Its failure to meet has been outside the control of ETS Wales.

7 OBJECTIVE 4: ENDORSEMENT OF LEVEL 2/3 YOUTH SUPPORT WORKER COURSES

Objective 4 is for ETS Wales: **To develop endorsement procedures of youth support worker qualification (Levels 2&3), establishing a Welsh system of peer review.**

Three targets on this were agreed between ETS Wales and the Welsh Government:

- Attend meetings with NYA, Agored Cymru and England Awarding Bodies to **finalise developments relating to the new Youth Work Practice qualifications at Levels 2&3.**
- Produce **guidelines for the endorsement of YSW** qualifications.
- Conduct **endorsements of Awarding Bodies in Wales** (Agored Cymru) and collect data on courses delivered by all relevant Awarding Bodies.

7.1 Attend Meetings with NYA, Agored Cymru and England Awarding Bodies to Finalise Developments Relating to the New Youth Work Practice Qualifications at Levels 2&3

Meetings with NYA, Agored Cymru and England Awarding Bodies to finalise developments relating to the new Youth Work Practice Qualifications at Levels 2 and 3 have occurred approximately three times a year. The workload on this Objective for the ETS Wales Adviser has varied from year to year.

A new suite of youth work qualifications at Level 2 and 3 have been developed to replace those that expired in January 2015. These provide JNC Youth Support Worker recognition to those who complete them. The development has been led by the NYA ETS Committee since June 2013 in partnership with ETS Wales, and has involved meetings with Awarding Organisations (AOs) from England and Wales along with a range of consultation activities to involve the youth work field.

Since 2015 the focus has been on developing an Assessment Strategy: this was finalised in January 2017 and, in addition to the content that is relevant to both England and Wales, includes some requirements that reflect the specific Welsh context (e.g. the requirement for trainers to be registered with the Education Workforce Council as a tutor, trainer or lecturer in the FE sector where relevant).

Targets for 2015-16 were adjusted to include the development of the new assessment strategy, and for 2016-17 and 2017-18 they were adjusted again to add the phrase “including additional units”. The additional units include, for example, Welsh language and culture.

There have been challenges in developing the Coherent Route for recognised Youth Work Qualifications. Levels 2 and 3 are offered at FE level and Levels 6 and 7 by HEIs. Students may obtain a Level 4 Certificate or a Level 5 Diploma as part of their Level 6 BA (Hons) degree course; however, if they do not continue to the full BA (Hons) Degree at Level 6, this is classed as non-completion by the HEs.

Impact of the Welsh Government Grant

The Welsh Government Grant supports coherence in the development of a pathway for youth support worker and youth work qualifications. A co-ordinated approach with NYA ensures cross-jurisdictional coherence, while the presence of both FE and HE members on the ETS Committee ensures that issues

around the development of the Coherent Route, from Level 2 Award to a Level 7 Post-Graduate Diploma, can be addressed strategically. There are challenges in this area: with the funding of the ETS Wales Grant, they can be solved; without it, they would be much harder to resolve and would be more dependent on good will.

7.2 Produce Guidelines for the Endorsement of YSW Qualifications

Full Guidelines will be developed in the light of the finalised Assessment Strategy. This process was about agreeing and formalising expectations rather than addressing any deficits and ETS Wales's approach in valuing the skills and knowledge of its partners was described as "refreshing" by one interviewee in comparison to other endorsement bodies.

The role of ETS Wales Adviser was described by one interviewee as "integral to taking this forward."

7.3 Conduct Endorsements of Awarding Bodies in Wales (Agored Cymru) and Collect Data on Courses Delivered by All Relevant Awarding Bodies

ETS Wales quality assures Awarding Bodies processes for endorsement rather than getting directly involved in the endorsement of Level 2 and Level 3 courses. This was viewed as a positive and constructive approach by those interviewees who commented on it.

A paper has been prepared on data collection for Level 2 and Level 3 courses using the same external consultant who produces the annual monitoring reports on BA Honours Programmes and Post Graduate Diploma programmes, so this is work in progress.

8 OBJECTIVE 5: DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL QUALITY MARK

Objective 5 is for ETS Wales: **To work with the Welsh Government, a consultant and CWVYS to develop an updated Quality Mark system using learning from existing NYA systems and previous pilot projects.**

This Objective was only present for 2015-16. It had one target:

- Work with CWVYS and Welsh Government consultant from NYA to **finalise a single Quality Mark system for Wales**, appropriate for voluntary and local authority youth work organisations at all levels.

ETS Wales and CWVYS both had their own Quality Marks. The Welsh Government awarded a contract to Atkins Associates to roll out and deliver the Quality Mark for Youth Work in Wales. The Quality Mark for Youth Work in Wales was developed with input from voluntary and statutory organisations that support or directly deliver youth work and built on the Quality Marks developed by ETS Wales and CWVYS. So this task was achieved.

Should ETS Wales have a role in the Quality Mark in the future? There was no particular appetite for this and the interviewees generally had not considered whether ETS Wales should have a role.

Nevertheless the draft revised Terms of Reference for the ETS Wales Committee includes (under section 3.3):

Support and advice for the development of:

- *independent, local authority and voluntary organisations' workforce development strategies and continuing professional development frameworks;*
- *independent, local authority and voluntary organisations' policies and procedures for quality assurance.*

Neither of these roles are covered in the existing Objectives for the Grant. The Welsh Government may wish to consider what potential role ETS Wales might play in workforce development, CPD frameworks, and policies/procedures for quality assurance (which presumably includes Quality Marks?).

9 SUMMARY

Analysis of the Objectives and their associated targets suggests that ETS Wales fulfils the roles that it is funded to provide and does so very effectively and with strong support from the sectors who are represented in the membership of the ETS Wales Committee. These Objectives are complementary to the relevant recommendations of the Youth Work Strategy 2014-18. The agenda of the ETS Wales Committee includes the Objectives and key targets.

The ETS Wales Committee also provides opportunity for partners to come together and discuss wider strategic issues relating to youth work. As well as these discussions being relevant to the achievement of Objective 3 (strategic impact), interviewees noted that the Committee has been providing a useful cross-sector forum in the absence of other forums (e.g. the Youth Work Alliance Wales).

ETS Wales is fit for purpose, has had an important role to play in contributing to the Youth Work Strategy and would continue to have an important role to play if a revised Youth Work Strategy for the future were to continue to place importance on there being a professional qualified youth work workforce. Its primary impact is in ensuring that there is coherence, standardisation and quality in the training of youth workers across Wales.

In addition to office costs, the Grant funds the Chair for four days a month and the Adviser for six days a month. Even though Objective 1 (endorsement process) is primarily paid for by HEIs, the design and maintenance of infrastructure for endorsement is paid for directly from the Grant and is complemented by the other functions paid for by the Grant. Any narrowing of focus for the Grant or reduction in funding would probably take ETS Wales under its critical mass for effective functioning. Difficulties experienced in other jurisdictions and for other endorsement bodies suggest that the Grant has enabled Wales to avoid similar problems.

If the Grant was not to continue it would create significant problems in maintaining a coherent structure for the endorsement of qualifications within Wales and would inhibit the continuing development of the Coherent Route.

Should the Grant continue, there would be benefits in reviewing the Objectives and Targets. Objective 2 might be improved by removal of the reference to the Memorandum of Understanding, for example:

ETS Wales should demonstrate effective and accountable functioning in its Committee and its day-to-day operations.

Also there are elements in the drafts Terms of Reference for the Committee (see section 2.2) that are not addressed in current Objectives and targets around workforce development strategies and quality assurance. This may be an area that the Welsh Government might explore further with ETS Wales.