

A report on:

How voluntary youth work organisations support young people's development of healthy relationships

Date of inspection: June 2025

by

**Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education
and Training in Wales**

This report is also available in Welsh

Methodology

For this themed inspection, the development of healthy relationships is defined as the following:

Developing healthy relationships in young people involves learning to build respectful, supportive, and safe connections based on trust, equality, and open communication. It includes understanding and maintaining personal boundaries, recognising signs of unhealthy or exploitative behaviour such as grooming or coercive control, and being informed about sexual health and consent. This development is supported by education and guidance to help young people navigate peer pressure and form positive, non-harmful relationships both online and offline.

Four voluntary youth work organisations were identified for this inspection based on the size of their public funding and staff numbers, with two from north Wales and two from south Wales. All four organisations are part-funded by the Strategic Voluntary Youth Work Grant (SVYWOG). The organisations identified for this inspection were:

- Dr Mz- Carmarthen Youth Project
- Maerdy Youth Group (Canolfan Maerdy)
- STAND North Wales CIC
- West Rhyl Young People's Project

The four organisations were visited during the week commencing 9th June 2025. Before the inspection, each organisation provided documentary evidence for the inspection team to consider. During the inspection visits inspectors undertook a range of activities. These included meetings with managers, trustees and advisory board members, youth work staff, and partners.

A sample of provision from each organisation was observed and inspectors spoke with young people at these provisions.

Introduction

Voluntary youth work organisations represent a large part of the youth work sector across Wales. They range from small, local community-based organisations to larger regional and national services. Voluntary youth work organisations play a vital role in supporting young people, helping them develop and navigate relationships safely. The organisations inspected represent examples of local community-based and regionally based organisations in Wales.

Carmarthen Youth Project (Dr Mz)

Dr. Mz Carmarthen Youth Project was established in 1997 and was named by young people. It commemorates the late Dr. Margaret Evans, a local G.P. and Councillor, whose vision, enthusiasm and selfless efforts inspired the project.

In 1997 over 100 people aged 11-25 in Carmarthen attended, taking part in youth work activities. Since then, Dr. Mz has seen thousands of young people come through their doors participating in a wider range of activities, with over 550 young people attending annually. At its heart Dr. Mz is an open access youth drop-in centre run by Carmarthen Youth Project for young people. The project also offers a variety of project-based activities dependent on available funding. Activities take place in a dedicated building in the centre of Carmarthen, which has a fully fitted kitchen and a secluded garden, including a polytunnel, where young people can grow produce and learn how to turn what they harvest into nutritious meals in the kitchen.

Maerdy Youth Group – Canolfan Maerdy

Canolfan Maerdy in Tairgwaith operates in the Upper Amman Valley and provides a multifunction community hub. Its work is focused on the Upper Amman Valley with links and engagement into Carmarthenshire and the Upper Swansea Valley as appropriate. Canolfan Maerdy operates with a Board of Trustees, employs 22 staff and is supported by over 30 volunteers. Canolfan Maerdy was established in 2009 as the successor to Amman Valley Enterprise, which had been active in the community for the preceding 20 years.

Maerdy Youth Group was established in January 2015 and is managed by Canolfan Maerdy, where the group also meets. It is a registered charity, with two full-time youth workers supported by volunteers. It has over 270 registered members aged between 11 and 18. Young people can meet two evenings a week as well as Saturday mornings. Maerdy Youth also operate a youth forum giving young people the chance to come together to discuss and 'have a voice' on various matters affecting them.

STAND North Wales CIC

Stronger Together for Additional Needs and Disabilities; STAND North Wales CIC was formed by two parents as a not-for-profit Community Interest Company in 2018. It is a parent and user led organisation that represents families with children, and young people as well as adults with Speech, Language and Communication Needs, Additional Needs and Disabilities in North Wales.

STAND North Wales CIC's youth work offer includes online youth clubs, Saturday in-person youth clubs, school-based workshops and a range of trips and activities.

West Rhyl Young People's Project (WRYPP)

Established in 1991 and became a registered charity in 1994, WRYPP's vision is to tackle social injustice, inequality and deprivation for young people and families across north Wales, through education, community activism and personal support.

WRYPP works alongside young people, encouraging them to explore their life experiences to enable them to identify and tackle personal barriers, gain the skills that will be beneficial, life enhancing and allow them to make informed lifestyle choices. WRYPP assists young people to break the cycle of poverty and poor health through the provision of programmes such as crisis intervention and early intervention, prevention and education. WRYPP offers a drop-in and information service called Pixel, multi-media, boxing, hillwalking and their Viva LGBTQ+ service which has been running since 1997.

Summary

The organisations know their young people well, and strong relationships between youth workers and young people are a defining feature of their work. Young people see youth workers as trusted adults and positive role models. Young people describe youth workers as dedicated, non-judgemental, and trustworthy.

All organisations place the five pillars of youth work at the heart of their planning, delivery, and evaluation. Young people play an active role in shaping the provision they receive, which fosters a sense of ownership. Young people develop this sense of ownership further through co-creating their physical space. In WRYPP, young people worked with a carpenter to build an outdoor shelter and in Dr Mz, young people developed a garden space where they grow ingredients for cooking sessions. This ownership, combined with a psychologically safe environment and trusted relationships, allows young people to explore their identity and engage meaningfully with the world around them.

Youth workers provide content on healthy relationships through a variety of approaches, through workshops delivered in youth clubs and schools, as well as through informal

discussions and debates. When support and provision are working well, young people report positive transformations, including increased self-esteem and greater confidence in managing relationships and their mental health. Young people accessing STAND North Wales CIC talk about how the provision transforms their lives, giving them the confidence to volunteer in the community and produce podcasts about their lives. Young people at Maerdy Youth turn to their youth workers during difficult times for emotional and mental health support.

In areas where the risk of exploitation and grooming from county lines are higher, youth workers work well with other agencies to ensure they can mitigate these risks and support young people appropriately. Youth workers are aware of the risks posed through online gaming platforms, particularly to the many young girls who report being approached by older boys through these platforms. Youth workers provide valuable guidance and support in raising and discussing these issues with young people.

Youth workers in these organisations are either qualified to Level 3 and above or are working towards this standard. A qualified workforce is a clear priority of the organisations, not only to meet Education Workforce Council (EWC) registration requirements but also to ensure that staff are equipped to offer high-quality support to young people. However, beyond Level 3, access to professional learning is inconsistent. Further training opportunities depend on strong partnerships, access to local and regional offers, and critically, the availability of funding.

Where partnerships are strong, these organisations access relevant training and work collaboratively to build capacity. However, partnership working remains inconsistent. Many of these youth organisations, are not widely recognised or understood by schools and other local authority organisations, leading to missed opportunities to collaborate effectively, that negatively impact young people.

Sustainable funding is a significant challenge to these youth work organisations. The organisations rely on multiple, often short-term, funding sources, many of which are one-off grants. Balancing the maintenance of their core identity and purposes with the need to meet external grant criteria is a constant tension.

Organisations work diligently to ensure that provision is accessible to young people. However, despite the best efforts of organisations to provide transport for young people access to transport is still a barrier, particularly in more rural areas, resulting in young people missing out on vital youth work services.

Recommendations for the organisations

- R1 Work with relevant national and regional partners to formulate a consistent professional learning offer, that is funded appropriately and provides the capacity for staff to attend
- R2 Work with the Welsh Government and relevant partners to access consistent funding streams that ensure sustainability and allow for more in-depth strategic planning
- R3 Work with regional partners to improve accessibility to transport to enable young people from rural areas to benefit from services
- R4 Work with regional and national partners to ensure that that staff have access to suitable support for their mental health and well-being

Main evaluation

How does youth work help young people achieve their potential?

Across the four organisations, youth work practice plays a significant role in helping young people develop healthy relationships as part of their broader personal, social, and emotional growth. The most effective organisations embed this theme holistically through planned learning, emotional support, and safe, inclusive spaces.

Maerdy Youth provide highly purposeful educative experiences that explicitly address the development of healthy relationships. Staff challenge misogynistic views, encourage mutual respect, and model positive relational behaviours through a co-created code of conduct. A dedicated mental health programme, including resilience-building workshops and weekly one-to-one sessions, strengthens young people's emotional maturity and ability to manage interpersonal challenges. Support is inclusive of Welsh speakers and young people with English as an additional language, ensuring access to relationship-focused education for all.

STAND North Wales CIC help young people explore complex relationship topics such as boundaries, online behaviour, and emotional regulation through structured workshops, tailored digital content, and thematic group discussions. Youth workers use reflection-based activities very effectively to help build self-awareness and empathy. As a result, young people improve their confidence, resilience, and interpersonal understanding.

Dr. Mz offer a beneficial variety of structured sessions that allows young people to explore issues affecting them. They also facilitate naturally occurring discussions during sessions which are led by young people. These discussions are particularly effective with older young people, however younger peers do not necessarily have the emotional maturity to explore such issues in an unstructured format.

WRYPP utilises a trauma-informed approach to learning well, using informal conversations and real-life storytelling. An example of this is how a guest speaker from prison, educates young people about the risks and responsibilities involved in relationships. Activities such as cooking, gardening, and hillwalking serve as a practical platform to develop young people's communication and co-operation skills beneficially in a safe environment.

In Maerdy Youth, young people are encouraged to express grief, affection, and solidarity with peers during shared emotional experiences. Staff use emotion cards and dialogue to help articulate feelings, which is critical in supporting emotionally healthy relationships and when providing valuable support following traumatic incidents.

STAND North Wales CIC and WRYPP actively foster expressive learning effectively. Peer-created resources such as podcasts, video making and posters, in STAND North Wales CIC allow young people to share personal narratives and relationship insights with others. In WRYPP, expression through physical activity, music, and informal chats promotes self-awareness and emotional release, which are key components in understanding and managing relationships.

Youth voice is a strong feature in STAND North Wales CIC and Maerdy Youth. Young people co-develop codes of conduct, lead on content creation, and serve on advisory boards. This shared ownership fosters an environment of mutual respect and shared responsibility, mirroring the principles of healthy relationships.

Dr. Mz offers valuable opportunities for young people to participate in a range of activities that improve their understanding and practical creation of healthy personal relationships. For example, they ran an innovative short-term project providing sessions for young people who were elective home educated. This was supported in the last six months of the project by the local authority. This gave the young people vital opportunities to engage socially and develop interpersonal skills while contributing positively to building healthy functioning relationships with other young people.

WRYPP supports participation through group-led routines and decision-making, helping young people develop relational competencies like listening, compromise, and leadership. These opportunities are especially valuable for those who have experienced exclusion or instability, and who may not have had safe spaces to practice such skills.

Maerdy Youth and WRYPP provide particularly inclusive spaces where identity, culture, and language are respected. Maerdy's youth leader communicates in Welsh with young people for whom Welsh is their language of choice and/or medium of education. In addition, the youth leader is TESOL-trained and that, combined with accessibility adaptations, ensure that no young person is left out of critical conversations about safety and relationships. WRYPP's inclusive ethos supports LGBTQ+ youth through their long-standing Viva LGBTQ+ provision, providing identity-affirming spaces for self-expression and community building.

STAND North Wales CIC supports inclusivity through differentiated session delivery, for example ensuring that the content is age and ability appropriate, includes adaptations for young people with additional learning needs (ALN), and targeted engagement of isolated groups. These practices successfully promote a shared sense of value and belonging, laying the foundation for respectful, trusting relationships.

Spotlight: STAND North Wales CIC

Breaking barriers, building Respect: Disability Hate Crime Project

STAND North Wales CIC developed a five-week project aimed at raising awareness of disability hate crime, delivering sessions to three schools and a college. The project was initiated after hearing from young people about their adverse experiences around discrimination due to their disabilities. Youth workers carried out a survey of each school and college group that piloted this project. They discovered that many of the young people surveyed had experienced hate incidents related to their disabilities. STAND North Wales CIC set out to tackle the issue directly.

Throughout the five-week project, young people explored the concept of hate crime and learned about the protections offered under the Equality Act 2010. The project concluded with students using creative methods, such as posters and videos, to promote zero-tolerance approaches to hate crime within their education settings.

The initiative raised awareness and empowered young people to recognise and challenge discrimination. It helped build their confidence while also developing practical skills in areas such as filming and video editing.

Following its initial success, the project expanded into other schools and has included joint sessions between youth groups. These sessions have played a vital role in bringing young people together to increase awareness and respect amongst peers.

Many of the activities offered by Dr. Mz emphasise inclusivity beneficially and other professionals are used effectively to deliver valuable workshops covering topics such as health issues and run a weekly LGBTQ+ group.

The empowerment of young people is strongly evident in STAND North Wales CIC and WRYPP. In STAND North Wales CIC, young people report a sense of transformation, from emotionally withdrawn to confident public speakers, after being supported to explore and understand their relationship dynamics. Youth councils, volunteering, and peer mentoring further reinforce this sense of agency.

WRYPP's promotes relational stability through a consistent staff team, giving young people the security to make choices, voice concerns, and navigate personal risks. Programmes like boxing and outdoor activities build physical and emotional resilience, which assist young people in resisting coercive relationships and asserting boundaries.

Maerdy Youth support the empowerment of young people through emotional support, clear boundaries, and behaviour modelling. Young people are seen to take ownership of their wellbeing and that of others, particularly in raising concerns around online risks and peer safety. Dr. Mz's provision empowers older young people through providing autonomy

to decide upon and regulate their own activities while laying clear and high expectations of the behaviours of both young people and youth workers alike.

Spotlight: Maerdy Youth **The value of youth work practices**

In Maerdy youth club, youth workers place a high emphasis on modelling good relationships to young people. This is vital in a semi-rural, post-industrial area which has struggled to recover from the closure of the coal mines. Although the community around Canolfan Maerdy community centre is vibrant and supportive, there is little local work, and poor transport links. This leads to low aspirations and a lack of role models for many young people. There is a high proportion of young people looked after by the local authority in the area.

Youth workers, many of whom are local volunteers, capably led by a youth leader and a full-time youth worker, foster an ethos of acceptance, understanding and compassion. The centre is well attended by a range of young people aged from 11 to those over 16 who often act as volunteers. Activities are youth led and groups of young people, including a youth council, decide on activities. Young people gravitate to the youth centre as a safe place during times of crisis and stress both in the community and in their own personal lives.

The door of the youth workers' room is always open and with appropriate safeguarding procedures in place, young people feel at ease to unburden their problems and talk through issues. The youth workers are accepting and non-judgemental and take appropriate steps to involve other professionals where necessary.

The youth worker is often the first person that young people turn to, and they often act as advocates for the young people with the wider community.

There are several notable examples of young people with challenging behaviour, who, through their interactions with the club and the youth workers, have matured into young adults who now act as positive role models for other young people.

This club is at the heart of the community and is an example of the highly effective use of core youth work principles, empowering and supporting young people into adulthood.

Overall, all four organisations support young people well in developing healthy relationships as they become young adults within society.

What young people can expect from youth work provision

All four organisations provide youth work that contributes meaningfully to young people's ability to develop and maintain healthy relationships. This is achieved through trusted relationships with staff, inclusive and emotionally safe environments, and structured and informal opportunities for young people to explore relationship-based issues. The strongest organisations embed this theme across the breadth of their offer, from safeguarding and session delivery to family engagement and digital safety.

Youth workers in Maerdy Youth are a trusted, consistent presence in young people's lives. Their non-judgemental, relational approach allows young people to disclose sensitive information and explore relationship-based concerns. For many, staff represent the only reliable adult role models, which enhances young people's ability to internalise respectful behaviour and build trust with others. Older young people are encouraged to mentor peers, strengthening intergenerational learning and promoting leadership through healthy social dynamics.

Youth workers at STAND North Wales CIC relate well with young people, using activities as a tool for emotional reflection and peer-generated resources to foster awareness of emotions, boundaries, and relational wellbeing. Sessions are youth-led, responsive, and differentiated by age, enabling meaningful engagement with complex social issues such as coercion, empathy, and identity. Pre-session introductions and support for young people with additional learning needs are handled thoughtfully, helping the most vulnerable feel safe and included.

In WRYP, the quality of youth work is underpinned by deep, responsive relationships and a trauma-informed approach. Staff offer intensive relational support, including crisis response and family intervention, ensuring that young people with complex needs are safeguarded and empowered to develop trust, regulate emotions, and practice healthy relational behaviours. Creative and sporting activities, including boxing and residential visits, are used effectively to encourage team building and self-reflection.

Dr. Mz provides a youth-led environment where relationships are explored through projects such as digital citizenship, cooking, gardening, and themed discussions on online safety and gambling. Youth workers model acceptance and inclusivity well, and the physical environment, including a monitored gaming suite and kitchen, offers meaningful contexts for holding relevant conversations. Dr. Mz runs a project with the local health board where a nurse holds drop-in sessions and provides valuable information and advice on health issues. Young people can also contact the nurse directly about issues that are concerning them and receive one-to-one support and advice as appropriate.

Spotlight: Dr. Mz: Carmarthen Youth Project
Nurturing healthy relationships with food and the environment

Youth workers skilfully combine gardening and cooking sessions to assist young people to develop healthy relationships with food and a better understanding of nutrition and nature.

Young people volunteer to take part in activities in the vegetable and fruit patch. They learn to take responsibility and benefit from valuable physical exercise through contributing to the maintenance of the garden as well as acquiring useful horticultural skills such as sowing seeds and harvesting produce. They learn to appreciate the rhythm of nature and biodiversity, for example, how specific plants act as pollinators essential to the successful production of edible crops.

Ingredients from the garden are used during cooking sessions to promote healthy eating. Through creating meals such as stir fry, young people learn of the benefits of seasonal produce and begin to comprehend the precarious nature of the food chain, and the amount of labour, time and resources required to produce relatively small amounts of food.

Through this and initiatives such as the Free Meal Friday project and cooking on a budget sessions young people are empowered to take responsibility, choose the healthy meals they wish to create from fresh ingredients and work collaboratively to cook for themselves and others. These practical and young person-led activities deepen the level of participants' understanding of environmental issues while developing their personal, social and life skills in an enjoyable, communal context.

STAND North Wales CIC's hybrid delivery model, online and in-person, is designed to be inclusive, flexible, and responsive to rural isolation and anxiety-related barriers. This adaptability ensures all young people, including those with ALN or transport challenges, can access relational learning and support. Leaders demonstrate a commitment to cultural inclusivity through the recent employment of a Welsh-speaking youth worker and the use of bilingual and accessible resources.

WRYPP offers a wide range of provision that includes young adults over 25, LGBTQ+ groups, and traumatised or excluded youth. Their Viva LGBTQ+ provision is particularly impactful in offering consistent, identity-affirming support for young people in the LGBTQ+ community. WRYPP have adapted effectively over time in response to external factors, such as changes to funding. This is evident in the transition of their Pixel service, which started as an alternative education programme and has become their current drop-in service. This transition has ensured continuity of their daytime offer which is valued by young people.

Maerdy Youth also provide accessible, community-rooted youth work open to all. The use of a disability-friendly minibus improves physical access, and the centre provides a welcoming environment for a broad range of young people. Peer-led roles create a sense of ownership and allow older participants to model healthy social interactions.

Dr. Mz offers a diverse menu of activities within the building, many of which promote social interaction, expression, and group-based discussion effectively. Overall, the long-term impact of the various initiatives can be limited by the short-term nature of much of the funding available.

Support for vulnerable young people is a clear strength in STAND North Wales CIC and WRYPP, where tailored, proactive approaches ensure that those at risk, such as young people with ALN, young people who identify themselves as LGBTQ+, and those experiencing trauma or exclusion, are well supported in developing healthy relationships. In STAND North Wales CIC, families are engaged through autism-specific support and social media groups, while in WRYPP, youth workers offer practical and emotional support that extends to young people's wider families. This wrap-around approach ensures that young people receive consistent messaging about respect, boundaries, and empathy both inside and outside the youth setting.

Spotlight: West Rhyl Young People's Project **Beyond the role: youth workers as trusted adults**

Youth workers at WRYPP play a vital role in the lives of the young people who access their services. The relationships they build are rooted in care and compassion, while maintaining clear professional boundaries. To many young people, these youth workers become trusted adults and positive role models, often filling a gap left by the absence of such figures in their lives.

Vulnerable young people with complex needs, those navigating the care system, homelessness, or experiences of exploitation, often find sanctuary at WRYPP. It is regarded as a psychologically safe space. Young people describe the Pixel drop-in sessions not as a youth group, but as a family. This supportive environment empowers them to overcome adversity and provides space to grow, build confidence, and re-establish themselves in society.

The relational behaviours modelled by youth workers set a positive tone, encouraging young people to form new friendships, participate in a wide range of activities, and engage in accredited opportunities that prepare them for their next steps.

From offering emotional support and steering young people away from risky behaviours, to helping them engage with educational and personal development activities, and even accompanying them to medical appointments, the staff at WRYPP demonstrate the pivotal role youth workers play in the lives of the young people they serve.

Maerdy Youth provide vital support for vulnerable young people by fostering safe and trusting adult relationships where such role models may be lacking. Staff are sensitive to the dynamics of peer-on-peer abuse and grooming and particularly through online gaming platforms. However, the lack of multi-agency communication and co-operation across local authority boundaries can hinder the efforts of the organisation to ensure continuity of care and intervention.

Dr. Mz demonstrates a strong awareness of the specific relational challenges faced by local young people, including body image issues, exposure to online misogyny, and gaming platform related grooming. Youth workers also undertake valuable training in issues such as ASSIST suicide prevention.

All four organisations offer young people opportunities to engage with youth work that promotes healthy relationships. STAND North Wales CIC and WRYPP provide particularly strong, inclusive, and high-quality provision underpinned by trusted relationships, creative delivery, and meaningful engagement with complex issues. Their approaches combine trauma-informed care with peer empowerment and family engagement, offering young people the stability and skills needed to form and sustain healthy relationships.

Dr. Mz offers creative and youth-led engagement with a clear focus on relationships. Young people benefit from sessions on important issues such as personal hygiene, sexism and misogyny. Maerdy Youth are very effective in developing provision that offers consistency, safety, and a clear community connection, with positive peer modelling through volunteering and leadership opportunities.

Leading and improving

Leaders across all four organisations demonstrate a shared commitment to youth development and well-being. In the best examples, this clear leadership fosters a culture of trust, professional learning, and safeguarding. However, limitations in capacity, funding sustainability, and self-evaluation reduce the positive impact of otherwise effective practice.

Leaders in WRYPP model inclusive, trauma-informed, and relationship-centred practice. A trusted leadership team fosters a highly respected internal culture where staff and young people alike feel safe, valued, and empowered. Strategic integration into networks such as Community Focused Schools and a 12-year partnership with Pride Cymru illustrates a clear and sustained commitment to inclusive and healthy relational development. Multi-agency safeguarding practices are well embedded, especially for those at risk of exploitation or housing instability.

STAND North Wales CIC demonstrates clear strategic leadership and effective collaboration with schools, youth services, and advisory boards. Its founding leadership, rooted in youth work and communication therapy, promotes emotionally intelligent practice. Although the advisory board has limited formal governance duties, it still contributes practically to engagement, fundraising, and programme development. Leaders are responsive to local need and encourage open feedback procedures with young people.

Leadership in Maerdy Youth is grounded in strong values and a deep-rooted commitment to supporting young people in an area of economic deprivation. Leaders collaborate effectively with most schools, local youth services, and safeguarding leads, and they are personally known to the young people they serve. However, pressures related to financial security and staffing, for example the financial capacity to offer full sick pay, creates challenges to staff themselves.

In Dr. Mz, leadership from both the manager and trustees reflects a thoughtful, youth work-informed approach to governance. Trustees are well known to staff and young people and bring higher education and youth work training backgrounds that support a reflective, adaptive culture. Leaders are particularly mindful of relational modelling, emphasising what it means to be a youth worker in the context of healthy relationships.

STAND North Wales CIC and WRYPP regularly gather session-based reflections and qualitative feedback, which feed into responsive planning. This supports continuous improvement and ensures that relational themes, such as safeguarding boundaries, online behaviour, and emotional regulation, remain relevant. STAND North Wales CIC links project evaluation directly to funding bids and improvement cycles, while WRYPP responds dynamically to systemic changes, such as the closure of their former alternative education programme, by introducing provisions like drop-ins and residentials.

Dr. Mz fosters a culture of regular review and adaptation to ensure provision meets young people's needs. Staff respond well to changes in youth culture for example the use of gaming platforms and online misogyny, and hold scenario-based discussions to prepare for sensitive issues.

Maerdy Youth consult regularly and valuably with young people through a youth council. Leaders respond effectively when external funders require reports on the impact of core projects. and self- evaluation is appropriate in areas not tied to funding requirements. As a small organisation, leaders spend much of their time on funding applications and reports which limits their capacity to plan strategically across the whole of the provision.

Professional learning is a clear strength in WRYPP, where leadership invests in role-specific development such as for safeguarding, outdoor leadership courses and the Welsh

language. This contributes to high morale, strong staff retention, and improved relational practice. Staff are supported well to pursue learning aligned to their roles and interests, which further enhances the quality of engagement with young people.

Dr. Mz also demonstrates a proactive learning culture, supported by trustees who encourage ongoing learning, and adapt training in response to incidents or cultural shifts. Youth workers self-educate around emerging social dynamics for example incel culture and alpha male discourse and are supported to pursue accredited training through a range of providers including the Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services (CWVYS). Staff confidence in modelling and discussing healthy relationships is rooted in this learning culture.

STAND North Wales CIC has a stable and supportive team structure with regular internal communication. While staff show strong relational awareness, there is an opportunity to formalise professional learning pathways further, particularly in response to complex digital safeguarding needs and emerging relational risks.

In Maerdy Youth, the lack of sustained funding inhibits regular professional learning access. While the commitment of leaders and volunteers is notable, limited training around peer-on-peer abuse, sexual harassment, and emotional wellbeing undermines capacity to engage deeply with increasingly complex relationship-based issues. Additionally, staff do not have access to professional counselling or debriefing support after traumatic events, which affects their own well-being.

Safeguarding policies and protocols are appropriate across all organisations, particularly in WRYPP, where a dedicated safeguarding team ensures consistent vigilance. Risk assessments, including reconnaissance walks and GPS tracking for hill walking sessions, demonstrate proactive risk management, especially in high-risk environments.

STAND North Wales CIC has strong internal processes and uses tools such as online conduct contracts with youth and parents. Their policy development is robust, with clear and easy to understand documentation.

Maerdy Youth adhere to core safeguarding practices and liaises effectively with schools, particularly in their own local authority area.

Dr. Mz demonstrates an appropriate safeguarding culture, supported by annual policy reviews and scenario planning. The environment is well-monitored, for example through staff supervising the gaming suite, and staff respond appropriately to risks such as online coercion or peer exploitation. Staff work well with school-based youth workers to support continuity of care and to deal with issues that arise.

A report on how voluntary youth work organisations support young people's development of healthy relationships

Leadership across all four organisations is characterised by a commitment to young people's wellbeing and in creating environments that offer effective support to the development of healthy relationships.

Appendix 1: Numbers – quantities and proportions

The report makes references to different quantities and proportions e.g. '*most young people...*' or '*very few young people...*'. We use these terms to describe quantities and proportions as outlined in the table below:

nearly all =	with very few exceptions
most =	90% or more
many =	70% or more
a majority =	over 60%
half =	50%
around half =	close to 50%
a minority =	below 40%
few =	below 20%
very few =	less than 10%

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the provider and from the Estyn website (<http://www.estyn.gov.wales/>)

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