

Response to the Petitions Committee Inquiry: Work based learning for vulnerable young people

About Rathbone Cymru

Rathbone Cymru is one of the largest voluntary organisations in Wales supporting young people between the ages of 11-25 who are or at risk of becoming not in education, employment or training (NEET). Every year we support nearly 2500 young people to overcome barriers to education, employment or training. We offer support to re-engage young people with learning and getting them on the right track. Our belief is that everyone, whatever their starting point, can achieve and that every young person has the ability to learn and progress. We believe that the participation and experience of success through learning are fundamental in enabling young people to make an effective transition into adulthood. Rathbone Cymru offers support via:

- Preparation for life and work
- Support to enter the workplace
- Youth Engagement
- Support for those facing difficulties in mainstream education

Methodology

Rathbone Cymru produced a young people's questionnaire designed around the terms of reference of this inquiry:

- The availability and quality of training programmes, and work based placements, particularly suitable placements for vulnerable young people;
- Progression for the vulnerable young person building on skills and qualifications gained in the previous placement;
- Financial support for independently financed young people including training allowances, Education Maintenance Allowances, benefits, and funding for travel costs;
- Personal support for vulnerable young people including differences in levels of support for care-leavers;
- The effectiveness of agency collaboration/partnership working in issues in Wales

Our questionnaire was completed by our learners accessing Rathbone Cymru centres in Swansea, Aberystwyth, Newport, Aberdare, Pontypridd, Merthyr Tydfil, Crumlin, Llanelli and Carmarthen. The following results have been taken from a sample of 86 questionnaires. We have decided to analyse the results by dividing them into four categories, based upon their residential status: living alone, living with parents, living with friends and living with other family. We did include two other categories, sofa surfing and homeless, but fortunately we did not have one respondent in these categories. 82% of learners surveyed lived with parents, 9.3% lived alone, 2.3% lived with friends and 5.8% lived with other family members.

Evidence

9.2% of the questionnaires were completed by young people living alone. All of these respondents were aged either 17 or 18 years. We decided to analyse the results for this category of young people as they tend to be more vulnerable living alone.

- 50% of these young people rated access to work placements and training as good, with the other 50% rating access as average. It was felt that more work placements are needed, in addition to speeding up the process to accessing work placements.
- When asked to rate support they receive from other organisations, such as social services, the local authority and other agencies, 12.5% rated support as poor, 62.5% as average and 25% as good. One young person living in Swansea said *“Social services are really unhelpful and things need to be improved.”*
- Asked about the support they get with money, such as training allowances, travel expenses and benefits, 25% rate their support as poor, 25% as average and 50% as good. One young person commented *“The training allowance should go up because of travel expenses paid. Food should also be provided.”* Another commented *“I get money from training but they could give us a bit more because some of us run our own flat and sometimes it’s hard.”*
- 62.5% of the young people did not answer the question asking who they would approach if they needed help. Only one young person mentioned Rathbone Cymru staff; two young people mentioned friends.
- When asked which individuals or agencies they come into regular contact with, the most common included social workers, doctor, probation worker, housing benefit and Careers Wales.
- Only one respondent had caring responsibilities, mentioning this was for their child.

How does this compare to the other categories of residential status?

- Access to work placements, training and other opportunities provided by Rathbone Cymru: Good: 60.4%, Average: 39%, Poor: 0%.
- Skills and qualifications they had gained with Rathbone Cymru: Good: 65.1%, Average: 30%, Poor: 5.8%
- Support received from other organisations: Good: 21%, Average: 37%, Poor: 19%.
- Support they received with money: Good: 62.7%, Average: 26%, Poor: 10.4%.

Conclusion

From the evidence gathered, it is clear that those young people in work-based training who live alone require more help and support than those who do not live alone.

Fifty per cent found access to training places to be average, with many saying more places were needed, and calling for the process to be sped up.

These young people are often under greater financial pressure as a result of living alone (demonstrated by 50% of respondents rating support with money as either poor or average).

They are also less clear about where to seek help if they have a problem, and many do not find the help they do receive from external agencies such as social services to be satisfactory.

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