

## **Neath Port Talbot Enterprise Learning Forum**

### **Response to the Welsh Government's Enterprise and Business Committee's Inquiry Into Youth Entrepreneurship in Wales May 2013**

The aim of the Neath Port Talbot Enterprise Learning Forum is to drive forward the Youth Entrepreneurship agenda in Neath Port Talbot by increasing the number of young people participating in enterprise learning and also by increasing the number of young entrepreneurs running their own business.

Membership of the Forum which comprises 21 representatives from across the public, education, voluntary and private sectors.

The Forum was initiated by Neath Port Talbot C.B.C. (Education and Economic Development) Neath Port Talbot College, NPT Council for Voluntary Service and Careers Wales West. Members deliver a wide variety of enterprise initiatives both individually and on a collaborative basis.

Since Local Authority re-organisation in 1996, Neath Port Talbot C.B.C. has supported a strong agenda on encouraging youth entrepreneurship. It demonstrated its support with the opening of the Sandfields Young Business Centre in 1997. This commitment was further enhanced in 2005 by all relevant departments across the Local Authority endorsing a strategy and action plan - "Developing the entrepreneurship skills of young people in Neath Port Talbot". The Forum also supports and collaborates with initiatives on a Swansea Bay/South West Wales Regional basis.

Activities include entrepreneurship skills development within formal, non-formal and informal learning settings and linking with established business support mechanisms.

The Forum welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the inquiry and responds as follows:

#### **How effective is the Welsh Government's approach to promoting youth entrepreneurship?**

The Forum supports the activities being delivered under the Welsh Government's Youth Entrepreneurship Strategy and Action Plan and many examples of good practice can be cited. However, it is difficult to gauge its effectiveness. While outputs can be measured, the long term impact is not as easy to assess.

The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor results do provide reassuring information of a year on year increase in entrepreneurial activity amongst 18-24 year olds in Wales – from 3.5% in 2002 to 10.2% in 2011. Whether this increase is due to the Welsh Government's initiatives is not confirmed.

**What steps can be taken to improve or strengthen support for potential young entrepreneurs in Wales?**

The Forum has for a long time identified a need for more tracking of our young people's progress following their enterprise learning experience to find out if the initiatives we are delivering do have long term impact. Unfortunately, due to lack of resources, we have been unable to do this.

The Youth Entrepreneurship Strategy has been in existence for some time. It is now timely to undertake a review. Ever reducing budgets necessitate more careful and targeted use of resources.

There needs to be more research undertaken with existing young entrepreneurs who are in business to find out which support mechanisms would have helped them create a better business and also to find out which initiatives they have benefitted from. Young entrepreneurs need additional support above that given to them through business support mechanisms – they do not have the pool of experience to draw upon to help them in the early stages of business. From our experience, they need a specific targeted approach with regard to advice and guidance, training, finance and workspace. The Prince's Trust provides this to a certain degree but if we are to make a significant long term difference at improving and strengthening support, more resources have to be invested. We need to provide more support to help young people make their business idea a reality.

**What are the experiences of young entrepreneurs in Wales?**

Please see above. There also needs to be more interaction between pupils and established young entrepreneurs. The Dynamo project in schools has been very successful but on some occasions, we need to take pupils out of the classroom to experience the business world at first hand.

Over the past couple of years, school pupils have regularly met with the young entrepreneurs based at the Sandfields Young Business Centre in Neath Port Talbot. These activities have been undertaken by the Economic Development Unit and have been beneficial to both pupils and businesses.

**What is the scale of Welsh Government resource and funding targeted at the promotion of youth entrepreneurship? Is it sufficient?**

Please see above.

**What progress has been made in implementing the Welsh Government's Youth Entrepreneurship Strategy and Action Plan?**

Please see above.

**How does the Welsh Government's approach to promoting youth entrepreneurship incorporate issues such as equality, social enterprise and regional variations in skills and training opportunities?**

More cross departmental working within the Welsh Government has been welcomed by the Forum. Creating more businesses run by young people can help to deliver on many of the key priorities for Wales such as the Tackling Poverty Action Plan and the regeneration of many of our most deprived communities under Communities First. Cross departmental collaboration would include the issues of equality, social enterprise and through DfES regional variations in skills and training opportunities. This would also ensure non-duplication and effective and efficient use of resources.

**What opportunities are presented by increasing youth entrepreneurship as a means of tackling youth unemployment and inactivity?**

Through our experience, 'being your own boss' is often a viable choice of employment for those who are unemployed, those with limited qualifications and/or those who have fallen out of the education system.

More entrepreneurship skills development not only helps to create more entrepreneurs, it can also improve the employability potential of young people. An increased focus on entrepreneurship skills should be included within initiatives for NEETS and disengaged.

**To what extent is entrepreneurship embedded within secondary education, further education and higher education institutions in Wales?**

Undoubtedly, the Youth Entrepreneurship Strategy has provided the focus and the resources for entrepreneurship to be embedded within formal education settings. However, the Forum considers that development of entrepreneurship skills through non-formal and informal learning at community level has equal importance. This is particularly relevant for young people who may be disengaged from education, at risk of being NEET or NEET as they do not have the opportunity to engage in entrepreneurship in school or college. In Neath Port Talbot, we have successfully delivered a significant number of entrepreneurship initiatives within local communities, particularly in the Valleys and Communities First areas. They have been funded by the Coalfields Regeneration Trust and the Welsh Government through Regeneration and Communities First outcomes funding.

**What is the evidence base for the Welsh Government's approach to supporting and encouraging youth entrepreneurship?**

Please see previous comments.

**How does the Welsh Government monitor and evaluate its youth entrepreneurship activities? What impact has it had on the number of people starting a business?**

Please see previous comments.

**What examples of good practice in youth entrepreneurship policy can be identified within Wales, more widely within the UK and internationally?**

There are many examples of good practice in youth entrepreneurship policy in Wales.

Some Local Authority areas have devised their own strategy for addressing the deficit in entrepreneurial skills on a local basis and have developed successful initiatives. A mechanism for exchange of good practice across Wales would recognise 'home grown' successes which could be replicated in other areas.

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