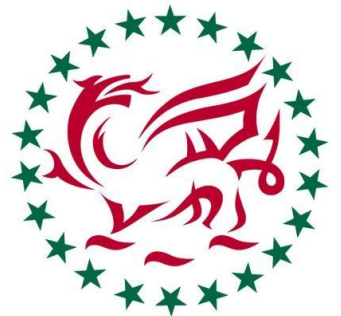




Enterprise & Business Committee Inquiry into Youth Entrepreneurship

May, 2013



WLGA • CLIC

INTRODUCTION

1. The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) represents the 22 local authorities in Wales, and the three national park authorities, the three fire and rescue authorities, and four police authorities are associate members.
2. It seeks to provide representation to local authorities within an emerging policy framework that satisfies the key priorities of our members and delivers a broad range of services that add value to Welsh Local Government and the communities they serve.
3. The WLGA is pleased to be afforded the opportunity to contribute towards this inquiry into Youth Entrepreneurship. In the current context of the economic crisis, youth unemployment continues to rise. Therefore, in a free economy youth entrepreneurship, the employment and general engagement of young people is crucial to their chances of becoming long-term active citizens making a positive contribution to the economy and society as a whole.
4. As major employers in each local authority area as well as providers of education and support service for young people, local government takes the challenge of ensuring that all young people are positively engaged in education, employment or training very seriously. This is reflected in a number of initiatives and programmes delivered, often in partnership with other relevant organisations including the Third Sector and employers in both the public and private sectors, underpinned by strategic commitments and co-ordination at the highest levels.
5. Efforts to increase the numbers of youth entrepreneurs have been very successful across Wales in the last decade, as reported in the Global Entrepreneurship Monitoring Report (2011), which showed numbers of young people getting involved in business ventures have trebled. The return on the circa £4m annual investment will undoubtedly be positive for the individual, economy and society in general, some of which can be easily evidenced in terms of success, some of which is less easy to measure (soft skills development including enhanced self-esteem, development of communication and networking skills, resilience etc.).
6. The WLGA believes that there is further scope to capitalise on this success to date through improved links between WG departments and with other stakeholders. For

example, the Youth Engagement & Employment Division is developing a framework for Youth Engagement & Progression with local authorities and other relevant organisations (Careers Wales and Youth Support Services).

7. There is currently a high level of support for and flexibility of delivery of youth entrepreneurship programmes in formal education institutions e.g. via WG's Youth Entrepreneurship Services. This support can be maximised via opportunities for young people in the 14-19 phase as part of the (soon to be enhanced) Welsh Bacculaureate. The framework provided by the Welsh Bacculaureate offers further opportunities for young people to explore and learn from the world of business, with opportunities for real involvement with communities and employers.
8. All young people have the potential to become entrepreneurs and those with often high levels of untapped potential are individuals who are also disengaged from the formal education system. Many of these potential entrepreneurs access often access programmes/methods of learning outside the formal education system e.g. via alternative education programmes and youth support services. It is important that relevant information is shared between schools, further education colleges, training providers and youth support services to better serve the needs of such learners.
9. Judging by the continued success of drivers and investment in youth entrepreneurship, young people are responding well to current arrangements. What is key to continued success and positive experiences however is sustainability, which relies on ongoing support which is accessible and of good quality.
10. Investment in this area by WG has been high profile and welcome e.g. the £4.4m announced recently, but more could be done to encourage and promote opportunities and support both in the public, third and private sectors, in particular developing partnership approaches. As per previous comments, whilst progress is evident (particularly in regard to youth entrepreneurship take-up), this could be accelerated by improved partnership working arrangements.
11. Youth entrepreneurship opportunities are available to all young people, irrespective of their needs and/or background. This is reflected adequately in the Youth Entrepreneurship Action Plan, as is appropriate flexibility of proportional targeting of specific groups. Through the 14-19 regional and local networks, WG is working with local authorities and other partners to mitigate any regional variations in skills and training opportunities, thereby providing a consistent offer. However, this could be enhanced by ensuring improved links with youth support services.

12. As a country of small to medium enterprise (SME) business, it is crucial to the future prosperity of Wales for young people to both be encouraged and supported into entrepreneurship. Wales has an excellent record on the world stage for producing global entrepreneurs – these individuals are seen by many young people as role models. Whilst many of these re-invest their knowledge and experiences, this powerful motivational and educational process of re-investing to grass roots needs further encouragement.

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