



YMCA Wales  
1 The Kingsway  
Swansea  
SA1 5JQ

☎ 01792 480 141  
☎ 01792 466 495  
✉ info@ymcawales.co.uk  
🌐 www.ymcawales.co.uk

## YMCA WALES: RESPONSE TO ENQUIRY BY NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOR WALES ENTERPRISE AND BUSINESS COMMITTEE INTO YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP

YMCA Wales welcomes the opportunity to provide evidence to this enquiry.

YMCA Wales is the umbrella organisation which coordinates and sets the strategic direction for the work of 24 community-based centres and projects across the length and breadth of Wales. We provide a wide range of rights-based learning and behaviour-management opportunities and support for children, young people, families, adults and communities of all faiths and none in a non-formal, community-based environment. Our objective is to support the people with whom we work to enjoy improved well being and fulfil their potential. In so doing, we also support people to become more active within their communities as volunteers and this in turn contributes to increased social capital in the local community.

In particular, we have widely-respected expertise and experience in working inclusively with people from disadvantaged backgrounds, living in poverty, who are homeless, with health/mental health/substance misuse issues, with caring responsibilities, from ethnic minorities, who are NEET or at risk of becoming so, and/or who are known to the criminal justice system. In recent years we have piloted a number of programmes which can evidence high levels of successful outcomes with young people and adults from these groups.

Our 2012-15 Strategic Plan “Less talk more *social* Action” which can be accessed at [www.ymcawales.co.uk](http://www.ymcawales.co.uk) provides further background.

The YMCA movement in Wales (and internationally) has been established for over 150 years, making us one of the oldest third sector organizations in existence. We have a brand which is widely recognized, trusted and valued in the communities where we work and beyond. YMCA Wales is a charity, and a not-for-profit organization and has an excellent (although not sufficiently well-publicised) track record as a rights-based high quality learning provider offering a wide range of non-formal and informal learning opportunities, many of which lead to recognized accreditation, as well as support for healthy living, fitness, arts and cultural activities, independent living and social enterprise.



“creatively responding to the needs of young people and communities”

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YMCA Wales is acutely mindful that in the current economic climate, it is essential that all services we provide demonstrate effective use of every pound and penny of funding. The third sector in general, and YMCA Wales in particular, offers unrivalled value for money, pound for pound, in delivering services when compared with public and private sector providers because of our low overheads, capacity to draw down grant funding not available to the public sector, enthusiasm, ability to maximize use of volunteers and “can do” attitude.

Our response to this enquiry is necessarily limited to those questions relating to areas in which we have direct experience.

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

In our view, based on evidence from the young people with whom we work, little appears to be done in schools, FEIs or by careers advisers to promote entrepreneurial options as a realistic career choice. Young people who might be interested in following an entrepreneurial career path do not know where to go for advice and support on the practical aspects of pursuing such an option. We are unable to state categorically whether this deficit is attributable to the Welsh Government directly and/or to other bodies such as schools, FEIs and Careers Services over which the Welsh Government can, and does, exert leverage.

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

We believe that for many young people with entrepreneurial potential/aspirations, informal and non-formal learning providers such as ourselves (possibly more than formal learning providers such as schools or colleges) are extremely well placed to support them to turn aspiration into reality. However, we have hitherto had limited success in persuading the Welsh Government of the untapped potential of third sector service providers in this area of work.

YMCA Wales has very recently been successful in bidding for a small amount of funding from the Welsh Government (DfES) to run a fully evaluated small-scale pilot project (the Journey/YDaidd) over 2 years from May 2013. The project will work with partner agencies to identify and support disadvantaged young people aged 14-25 who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET and who are interested in following an entrepreneurial career, or who are identified by the agencies who work with them as having entrepreneurial potential. YMCA Wales will support them to improve their skills, self confidence and self esteem over a period of up to 6 months and will aim at the end of that time to support them into progression to mainstream entrepreneurial career pathways/work placements.

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

We have attached 3 case studies detailing the experiences of young people known to us. They have confirmed they are willing for this information to be used to improve understanding by the Business and Enterprise Committee of the issues faced by young people living in Wales who have an interest in following an entrepreneurial /social enterprise career pathway.

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

YMCA Wales believes there is considerable untapped potential to significantly expand our nation's social capital through improved support for entrepreneurial activity and social enterprise. Young people need to be inspired by others' success (eg via DYNAMO role models) and from an early age encouraged to consider entrepreneurial/social enterprise career options. Teachers may not always have the experience/knowledge to do this effectively; however any deficit can be addressed by improved collaboration between schools, FEIs, careers services on the one hand, and the third sector and private sector on the other.

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

See above.

We trust this information will be of assistance to the Committee in its deliberations.

Yours sincerely,

**Mo Sykes**

**Chief Executive Officer**

## CASE STUDIES

K

K is 17, he enjoyed school and left at the end of Year 11 having passed 9 GCSEs.

He doesn't recall having careers advice at school, except for 1 session in his final year which he didn't find very helpful.

He lives with his Mum; when he left school he had no benefits of any sort, no direction to his life, and no known source of careers advice or counselling. He wanted to do something with his life & decided to get fit with a view to joining the Army so he started training at the YMCA gym. He went through pre-selection training with the Army but decided it wasn't the right career for him.

He started applying randomly for jobs; lots of applications but no success in getting an interview. One job he applied for was receptionist at his local YMCA centre where he used to train at the gym. He didn't get that job either, but through someone at the centre he knew, was offered an opportunity on a Jobs Growth Wales scheme as a painter & decorator.

He got no careers advice from JGW about his next career move, and assumed that when he completed his 6 months on Jobs Growth Wales he'd go back to where he was before- applying randomly for jobs.

He wanted to build on what he'd learned on JGW now so that he could move forward when he finished his 6 months on the scheme; however he didn't really know how to go about this or what support was available.

YMCA Wales supported him when he completed JGW in January 2013 to move onto a painting & decorating apprenticeship, He is learning to drive.

In 5 years time, K would like to be running his own painting and decorating business. He has had no advice so far from anyone about how to do this or what support is available.

J

J is 18. He admits himself he did not behave well in school and ended up being permanently excluded, although he was allowed to return to school to sit his GCSEs and succeeded in passing 3. These were not enough to allow him to move on to FE college. He had no support from Careers Service.

He looked for careers advice independently from school and succeeded in getting a place on an Apprenticeship Programme in a local garage where he gained NVQs level 1 & 2 in mechanical engineering. He had some issues with his employer – both in terms of payment and bullying, and decided to leave which he did with assistance from his mother. He reported his concerns; the garage was subsequently closed down however he had no support to find alternative employment.

He was very unhappy; despite searching for jobs he had nothing to do for the best part of 2 years- during which time his father also passed away. Finally, in desperation, he approached his former Employment Liaison Officer whom he knew from his days at the garage.

He didn't want to work in a garage again. He began a painting & decorating course under employment training, and is now undertaking level 1 apprenticeship; this is a 2-year course and at the end of it he expects to have gained level 2 NVQ.

His ambition is to be self employed & to run his own business; however he has no idea how to set about doing this and has not as yet been offered any advice.

## N

N grew up in the S Wales valleys and is dyslexic; he had problems at school because his dyslexia was not picked up. Successive teachers told him he'd never achieve anything much & he ended up in the bottom set.

However, he knew he could achieve a lot, and he wouldn't give up. He did ok in GCSE's and even managed to achieve 2 A levels; told his careers adviser that he'd like to set up a company; the careers adviser said "don't bother, get a job in a factory". He got a job in data entry ; whenever he suggested ways of improving the system his boss would reply : "you're not paid to think, just get on with your work" .

He applied to a number of universities & was accepted at age 18 to study applied economics.

During his first year at university he started publishing a music magazine, using work as a DJ at a local nightclub to finance it. For his first edition he managed to raise £2k in a week. Encouraged by his success, he set up a DJ-ing & events company through which he learned a range of skills including financial management and budgeting. His energies went into the company rather than his studies and by year 3, he only went to lectures to give out fliers publicising events.

One of his lecturers suspected he might be dyslexic and after many attempts finally succeeded in getting N tested 3 weeks before his final examinations. The test identified dyslexia which entitled N to extra time & support to sit his exams and he managed to get a very good degree.

He had learned lessons along the way around self confidence, self belief, having a "can do" attitude, running a company, working with others etc.

He decided to go back to an idea he'd first had when he was 14- learning through music. (LearnThruMusic.co.uk). He applied for a number of grants & loans, "Spin Out" from Finance Wales, Prince's Trust, Social Enterprise etc. The one he really needed was KEF – very hard to apply for. His application was turned down twice but was successful at the 3<sup>rd</sup> attempt. However times were still hard.

He was invited to a Prince's Trust event in London and struggled to pay for his train ticket. The event was attended by the then Prime Minister (Gordon Brown). After the speeches, there was time for only 1 question. N put his hand up & was terrified when he was invited to ask it. He told the PM about what he was trying to do, and asked for his support to roll it out to schools. PM was impressed.

There was lots of free publicity with the conference including an appearance on Sky News, BBC news, 3 radio shows and a free write up in the Times Educational Supplement, all of which kick-started the company. He sold the resource to some local authorities. Prince's Trust asked him to develop the resource into a tool to help young people gain skills, so the company diversified into different products.

He would like help to get the products into every high school across Wales as a resource to help young people aged 14-16 learn aspects of their curriculum. They work well with young people who are NEET, with behavioural difficulties/ALN. Work well with older young people up to age 25, also adults. Programmes teach self confidence, motivation, & employability skills through the medium of music. They lead to OCN accreditation at entry level in numeracy & literacy. Over the last 2 years they've been rolled out to 1000 people including employees of Admiral, Virgin, with "Singing Success" also being delivered to Swansea University staff & freshers & Legal & General.

N delivers many of the programmes himself & acts as a DYNAMO role model for Welsh Government N is currently writing & delivering "Get Started" for the Prince's Trust. YMCA Wales has supported N to raise awareness within Welsh Government of his initiatives.