



Boys and Girls Clubs of Wales

Clybiau Bechgyn a Merched Cymru

***Evaluating the impact of the Boys' and Girls' Clubs
on the lives of young people living in Wales***

by Boys' and Girls' Clubs of Wales

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Abstract

The research evaluated the impact of the Boys' and Girls' Clubs on the lives of young people living in Wales.

For ninety years the Boys' and Girls' Clubs in Wales have been part of the fabric of the Welsh valleys. The clubs have been an integral part of the childhoods of generations of young people, helping them to realise their potential and fulfil their dreams.

The research used a multiple methods approach when gathering the information to answer the hypothesis.

'Do the Boys' and Girls' Clubs have a positive impact on the lives of young people in Wales?'

The research used questionnaires, focus groups and a review of sources and interviews. The questionnaires were tailored for three groups: current members, former members and leaders.

The findings showed that the former members of Boys' and Girls' Clubs value the time they spent at the Boys' and Girls' Club as a young person, and through a process of self assessment, have indicated that their soft skills have improved, including self confidence, self esteem, motivation, communication skills and team work skills and their experiences enabled them to respect others. Subsequently, by young people gaining these skills through their involvement at the clubs, Boys' and Girls' Clubs are assisting young people to be better prepared for employment as these skills have been highlighted as required by employers in Wales.

Although the paper concluded that the Boys' and Girls' Clubs in Wales have an impact on the lives of young people living in Wales, the paper acknowledges that the Boys' and Girls' Clubs in Wales need to ensure that they evaluate and evidence their youth work effectively. This will include demonstrating the impact of short term projects and long term youth work and further demonstrating that this work is benefiting young people and contributing to the Welsh Government agendas (2007, 2013, 2014).

Boys' and Girls' Clubs need to strive to modernise their approaches to become efficient and effective and better account for impact and outcomes. Clubs will need to use self assessment with their young people and also ensure that the youth workers and club leaders continually observe and record the observations of the young people. Supporting these two methods is accreditation where this is necessary and relevant.

It is recommended that further research is undertaken within the youth work sector in Wales to substantiate these findings.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

For ninety years the Boys' and Girls' Clubs in Wales have been part of the fabric of the Welsh valleys. The clubs have been an integral part of the childhoods of generations of young people, helping them to realise their potential and fulfil their dreams. The Boys' and Girls' Clubs have been serving the needs of young people in some of the most disadvantaged areas of Wales, the clubs provide young people with not only a place to go but also with an opportunity to gain new skills that have assisted their transitions into adulthood.

Although the organisation has existed for such a period there has been little research undertaken to demonstrate how effective¹ the 'Boys' and Girls' Club' has been on the lives of the young people. This in itself is very complicated as attending the Boys' and Girls' Club is just one aspect of a young person's life that could have a changing and lasting impact, others include formal education, family and friend support.

The aim of this research is to evaluate the impact of the Boys' and Girls' Clubs on the lives of young people living in Wales. As such the question that will be answered is:

'Do the Boys' and Girls' Clubs have a positive impact on the lives of young people in Wales?'

The results from this research will be used by the Management Committee of the Boys' and Girls' Clubs of Wales and will be shared with the Boys' and Girls' Clubs in existence throughout the country as well as the wider youth work community within Wales. The findings will form the basis to ensure that the organisation evaluates its impact to its maximum potential and recommendations can benefit and improve the volunteer led Boys' and Girls' Clubs in the communities.

This research paper has been produced following receipt of a research grant from the Education Workforce Council (EWC) to EWC registered youth work staff at Boys' and Girls' Clubs of Wales. This opportunity was quite timely as

¹ **Effective:** successful in producing a desired or intended result.

Boys' and Girls' Clubs of Wales were approaching their 90th anniversary and this research was seen as a good opportunity to reflect on the organisations work and make recommendations for the future. Finally, the authors were motivated by meeting many former members over the past few years in a variety of environments. Mostly when speaking to men in the 'forty to sixty' age group, comments suggest that the Boys' Club had a significant impact on their lives, comments such as; 'looking back now the Boys' Club changed my life' or 'looking back now I feel I gained skills at the club that have enabled me to achieve'. Sometimes it is only in later life that they realise the true impact of their time at the Boys' Club. This paper intends to collate this evidence and draw up some conclusions to back up these isolated statements.

This research paper will make recommendations towards more effective ways of demonstrating the outcomes for young people attending Boys' and Girls' Clubs and their involvement in the various programmes. Recommendations will also be made about the needs that young people have identified that they want from Boys' and Girls' Clubs in today's targeted youth work environment.

There is a small amount of documented data from former members about the impact that the local Boys' and Girls' Club has had on their lives (Clubs for Young People Wales 2009, Hargreaves 2009). This information has been gathered from various documents and documentaries; however, this qualitative data was used primarily in stories of past members when reflecting on their memories of the organisation but not specifically when looking what impact it had on their lives (Play the Game 2011, Clubs for Young People Wales, 2009).

This research will make use of this previous documentation; however, it will provide a more substantive evaluation of the organisation's impact. A report such as this has not been completed before and as such has been identified as a 'gap in research' and should be investigated further. This research will also add to the small amount of research (Williamson 2004, Merton, Comfort and Payne, 2005) that has looked at long term impact on young people attending youth organisations.

This research will use a multiple methods approach when gathering the information to best answer the hypothesis. It will include using questionnaires, focus groups and a review of sources and interviews. When undertaking the research, the views of three groups will be taken into consideration. These will consist of the current members who will give an indication of why they currently attend and why they value the organisation, the former members will answer the questions based on their reflections of the organisation some years later, whilst the current leaders and volunteers will explain what they consider are the views of young people and what they require from the organisation.

The success or failure of this piece of research will hinge on the honesty and involvement of the many people who are and have been associated with the Boys' Club Movement in Wales.

Due to the nature of the clubs accommodating girls and changing their name from Boys' Clubs to Boys' and Girls' Clubs at different times, this paper will use the universal term of Boys' and Girls' Clubs for the most part.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

This research paper aims to evaluate the impact of the Boys' and Girls' Clubs on the lives of young people living in Wales. Before undertaking this research, a review of literature will intend to frame the context in which the Boys' and Girls' Clubs exist within Wales. This chapter will summarise the Organisations early beginnings, it will describe the youth work context that exists at Boys' and Girls' Clubs in today's financial and political climate and importantly discuss and review literature about evaluating impact and how this could be undertaken at Boys' and Girls' clubs.

1. The early beginnings of the organisation and its historical development

In 1922 the first Boys' Club in Wales was opened at Treharris, Merthyr Tydfil (Dawes, 1975: 126). This was the start of the Boys' Club Movement in Wales which has been providing support for young people in some of the most disadvantaged and fast changing areas of Wales, affected as it had been by rapid industrialisation and subsequent decline linked to coal, iron and steel. The organisation has survived many social and political changes since that time but remains an important part of Welsh society and an integral part of the communities in which its clubs are located.

Governments come and Governments go, new policies and statements are offered, Ministers relate their passion for resolving the 'problems' that young people face throughout the decades. Meanwhile the organisation continues to offer its programme to young people in Wales regardless of what party wins an election or what crisis descends on our country. Apart from the occasional change in name Boys' and Girls' Clubs of Wales continues to stand proud as one of the largest voluntary youth organisations in the Principality.

Thomas (2009: 3)

Captain Glynn-Jones had been appointed as the Welfare Officer of the Ocean Group of Collieries which were scattered over the South Wales coalfields. This appointment had been made by his wartime friend David Davies, later to become Lord Davies of Llandinam who was the owner of the Ocean Group of

Collieries. Captain Glynn-Jones was immediately made aware of the problems encountered by the adolescent collier boy, faced as they were with harsh conditions underground and with little opportunity for leisure activities that were considered safe or moral. During the time when the Boys' Club movement was developing, young people were still working down the mine at the age of 14 (Owen, 2005). These young people were missing out on any form of meaningful leisure pastimes whilst they were also picking up what were described as the bad habits of the working man (Glynn-Jones, 1929). The idea of a Boys' Club was for young people to have a safe and friendly place where they could return after their day's work, to be young again and experience sports, arts, chess and reading. These activities were undertaken under the stewardship of a Boys' Club leader who would informally educate young people about the right morals, ethics and values.

The need for the wise and sympathetic club leader who can win the boy's confidence, who can talk to him kindly and usefully, and who will help him both with counsel and with healthy activity to steer his little barque through these tempestuous waters during a period of his life when he is really hungering for a little helping hand.

Glynn-Jones (1929: 5)

These leaders were 'pillars of the community', well respected and keen to instil their values in young people. The early Boys' Clubs were paid for by the miners 'who made a weekly contribution either from their wages or through local branches of the mineworkers union to the Ocean Recreation Fund' (Jones and Rose, 2003:5).

Treharris Boys' Club was soon followed by the establishment of other Boys' Clubs at Nantymoel, Ton Pentre and Gelli, Treorchy, Wattstown and Nine Mile Point (Dawes, 1975:126).

The organisation quickly became established at the heart of working class society located primarily at this time in the coal mining areas of the south Wales valleys. The organisation was keen to promote their role as providing activities to counter balance the so-called inadequacies of young men.

Jones and Rose (2003: 6)

In August 1928 at a weekend conference of Boys' Club leaders, secretaries, and members at St Athan Camp the South Wales Federation of Miners' Boys' Clubs was formed (Dawes 1975:126). This was the formation of the organisation that is known today as Boys' and Girls' Clubs of Wales. The organisations aim was to provide co-ordinated support and a programme to the existing Boys Clubs. During this period the organisation was an overarching body and its individual Boys' Clubs continued to deliver a range of activities for young people under the leadership of local individuals who were committed to providing a range of opportunities for local young men. No sooner had the organisation been formed, South Wales, and in particular the industrial areas were in the midst of the great depression which forced many young men out of work and unable to find employment. These times weren't just hard on the miners but also on the Boys' club movement and its plans to open more clubs.

In his paper 'On behalf of the South Wales collier boy' Captain Glynn-Jones (1929) reflected that the immediate duty to local boys and young men is to make it possible for him to feel that when he enters the employment of a colliery company he is going to find there a friend who will help him along...this involves a Boys' Club associated with every colliery or group of collieries, and a 'full-time leader who will be in close touch with the colliery management over the boy's employment, the nature of his work, his general progress and health, and with most of his leisure pursuit' (Glynn-Jones, 1929: 13). Captain Glynn-Jones was instrumental in establishing the organisation alongside Lord Davies. Between the two of them they created plans to make an impact on the lives of young people within the Ocean coal mining communities.

In 1933 the organisation was opened out to the six counties of South Wales. At the same time a full time organiser was appointed to the Federation which also discontinued the use of the term 'miners' in its title (Glynn-Jones, 1933:217). Significantly, on 31 May 1947 the South Wales Federation extended its area to cover the whole of Wales and became the Welsh Association of Boys' Clubs. At this time there were 107 affiliated clubs with most located in mining areas (Clubs for Young People Wales, 2009:7).

In 1960 the organisation's name changed again to become Boys' Clubs of Wales. Significantly, in 1991 the organisation was renamed: Welsh Federation of Boys' and Girls' Clubs to officially include girls, although many girls were already involved with many clubs (Clubs for Young People Wales, 2009:8). Its name changed again in 1998 to Boys' and Girls' Clubs of Wales. Despite a period of being called Clubs for Young People Wales, between 2006 and 2012, it is still called Boys' and Girls' Clubs of Wales today.

Today the organisation, which encompasses the whole of Wales, has 160 affiliated clubs with over 27,000 young members, supported by 2,800 trained volunteers (Boys' and Girls' Clubs of Wales, 2018).

2. Youth Work at Boys' and Girls' Clubs

The Boys' and Girls' Clubs were established before the term 'youth work' was used. The early Boys' Clubs were set up to work with the problems of the adolescent boy (Glynn-Jones, 1929:3). It is clear that there is some excellent youth work taking place in Boys' and Girls' Clubs but also many opportunities for additional youth work when these opportunities arise.

In the National Occupational Standards for Youth Work (LSIS, 2012), the key purpose of youth work is to:

Enable young people to develop holistically, working with them to facilitate their personal, social and educational development, to enable them to develop their voice, influence and place in society and to reach their full potential.

(LSIS, 2012: 4)

Youth work has its own set of occupational standards and these standards which have 'agreed a suite of values which distinguish youth work from other, sometimes related, activities involving young people' (LSIS, 2012:18). These values are at the core of the work undertaken within youth work and underpin the National Occupational Standards for Youth Work. 'These values illustrate how youth work is involved in the holistic development of young people' (LSIS, 2012: 18).

Davies (2005) suggests that youth work is a value-based practice, and some of these values are embedded in the methods it chooses to prioritise. Davies (2005: 4) adds 'what distinguishes youth work from other related and often overlapping practices is its methods: how it seeks to express those values, and particularly its process.' Youth work is unique in that it focuses on a young person first approach where the young person decides their own programme through mutual agreement between themselves and the youth worker. This is based on informed decision making and being an integral part of the planning and preparation process.

Relationships are at the heart of youth work. The voluntary engagement of young people is a fundamental aspect of youth work practice. This 'voluntary relationship is paramount to change in young people and can be used to challenge behaviour and attitudes' (Davies and Merton, 2009: 13). Young people choose to participate and by being involved by their own choice are much more likely to own whatever gains they take away from their youth work experience (Davies, 2010: 2).

Youth work provides opportunities for informal learning in a friendly unthreatening environment whilst it makes use of reflection as a tool for learning and development. Reflection is a means by which youth workers and young people can learn from their experiences and apply their new found learning or 'theories' in new situations.

In Wales the Principles and Purposes of Youth Work in Wales (Youth Work in Wales Review Group, 2013) document, underpins the National Youth Service Strategy for Wales and suggests that youth work, through its voluntary relationship with young people, offers opportunities to learning that are: educative, expressive, participative, empowering and inclusive. This document provides the backbone to how Boys and Girls Clubs of Wales works with young people.

3. The impact of the Boys' and Girls' Club on the lives of young people living in Wales

This paper will now review the literature associated with evaluating the impact of the Boys' and Girls' Clubs in Wales.

i. *Defining Impact*

Evidence of the impact of youth work is being asked more frequently in today's society where evidence of outcomes need to be clearly demonstrated in order for organisations to receive funding. Impact and its assessment are important themes in current discussion about youth work.

The focus of this research paper is on Impact. According to Merton, Comfort and Payne (2004):

Impact encompasses all the changes resulting from an organisation's activities or projects. It includes effects that are:

- *intended as well as unintended.*
- *negative as well as positive.*
- *long-term as well as short-term.*

In the youth work context, it may include changes that were not included in the programme objectives (for example, increases in confidence as well as planned for achievements; benefits for groups additional to intended beneficiaries).

(Merton et al 2004)

Cupitt and Ellis (2007:6) define impact as the 'effect of a project at a higher broader level, in the longer term, after a range of outcomes has been achieved'. Sometimes the terms outcomes and impact are used interchangeably to denote the effect that projects and programmes have; however, impact is generally seen as long term.

ii. ***Demonstrating the Impact of the work of the Boys' and Girls' Clubs***

In the Boys' and Girls' Club, with significant voluntary effort, clubs are aware that the work they undertake has an impact on young people and their communities. However, there is insufficient 'collated' evidence that tells this story. Clubs need to demonstrate that the provision they make is 'efficient, effective and produces the outcomes required' (Merton 2009: 96). According to Merton et al (2005: 3) 'The assessment of impact is important because it testifies to the benefits acquired by young people, encourages professional workers to improve the quality of the service provided and makes the results of service provision more transparent so their value can be judged.'

Many young people refer to the long-term impact of being involved in youth work. It is quite often the case that as a consequence of sustained attendance at a youth centre or project and continuous contact with youth workers that a young person begins to recognise there are alternative ways of seeing the world and acting in it, that they acquire a wider repertoire of insights, skills and relationships through which to gain the confidence to explore new experiences and opportunities. But this may take a matter of years not weeks or months. It is also quite common for young people once grown into more mature adults to look back on their involvement in a youth work project and trace its influence on their direction and development.

(Merton et al 2005: 12)

An often overlooked indicator of success is 'fun'. Young people are under stressful circumstances within school, from parents, trying to get employment, but the Boys' and Girls' Club provides them with an outlet to have fun and enjoy themselves. This important ingredient of youth work and young people's development is often overlooked.

In the modern youth service, voluntary organisations are changing to become more professional with a greater emphasis on quality and demand for management information systems and accredited outcomes. This constant changing youth service is instigated by policy and literature from variety of bodies e.g. Youth Work in Wales: Principles and Purposes (2013), Extending Entitlement (National Assembly for Wales, 2000), National Youth Service Strategy 2014-2018 (Welsh Assembly Government, 2014). This drive for

professionalism and quality and change is needed in this era. However, voluntary youth organisations (such as Boys' and Girls' Clubs) have many years of history, culture and structures that have paved the way for how the organisation has existed for many years and these cannot be ignored.

We need to drive up quality and be proud about what clubs have to offer; we need to invest money in the right way; we need to ensure we work together to make the most effective and efficient use of funding.

(Antrobus, 2009:19)

iii. ***Impact on key skills and outcomes***

The clubs unknowingly, by undertaking 'good' youth work are enabling young people to achieve outcomes which are contributing to the children and young people policy priorities of the Welsh Government, UK Government and European Union. Many of these 'voluntary clubs' are not in receipt of funding that require targeted work and do not need to produce their 'results' to justify such funding.

Even though some Boys' and Girls' Clubs are not in receipt of public money² they are contributing to the outcomes for young people. In the 2007 Welsh Government Young People, Youth Work, Youth Service: National Youth Service Strategy for Wales the outcomes for young people who are involved with the youth service can be identified under three broad themes: active participation, wider skills development and enhanced emotional competence.

The Youth Service, with its positive view of young people, provides a unique learning environment built on the voluntary participation of young people and the quality of the relationship developed with the trained and skilled adult worker. The outcomes for young people from this environment can be identified within three broad themes: active participation, wider skills development, and enhanced emotional competence.

(Welsh Assembly Government 2007: 7)

² The National Organisation Boys' and Girls' Clubs of Wales receives the National Voluntary Youth Organisation (NVYO) grant from Welsh Government, however, some clubs do not receive public funding directly.

The full text can be viewed in appendix A. Within these broad themes include the listed outcomes of: enjoyment and achievement, improved health and wellbeing, team building, communication, increased self confidence amongst others. It is clear that a lot of these outcomes are being met on a daily basis at Boys' and Girls' Clubs. However, they may not be measured effectively.

These key skills (sometimes labelled soft skills) are the skills that have been highlighted as being required by employers. Youth work develops some of these key skills. There are six key skills: communication, application of number, information and communication technology (ICT), working with others, improving own learning and performance and problem solving (Welsh Assembly Government 2008). According to the National Strategic Skills Audit for Wales 2012 (Welsh Assembly Government, 2013) the skills most commonly lacking amongst employees were generic skills such as problem solving skills, customer handling skills, communication skills and team working. This was further highlighted in the National Strategic Skills Audit for Wales 2011: Key Findings (UKCES 2011: 12) that problem solving, customer handling and communication skills were deficient in today's workplaces.

A study commissioned by the European Youth Forum undertaken by Bath University / GHK Consulting which looked at the impact of non-formal education in youth organisations on young people's employability found that:

'Communication skills, team-working skills, adaptability and flexibility, self-confidence and intercultural skills are amongst those skills developed to a greater extent in youth organisations according to surveys of young people'.

Souto-Otero, Ulicina, Schaepkens, Bognar (2012: 8)

In the Somewhere to Belong; a Blueprint for 21st century youth clubs, the author (Hargreaves 2009: 31) stated that youth clubs are one of the places that young people can develop their social and emotional skills. Furthermore, Williamson (2006) said 'Youth work assists young people in acquiring the skills for employability and citizenship, both 'soft' transversal skills proclaimed by employers as central to their needs and sometimes 'harder' more practical

skills. And it encourages young people to participate actively in their own development and in their own environment' (Williamson 2006: 81).

Whilst the authors youth work experience has been in the voluntary sector they are aware of conflict within the statutory youth sector due to the increased focus on outcomes. Current policy initiatives are reflecting shifts from the voluntary participation to more 'coercive forms; from association to individualised activity; from education to case management; and from informal to formal and bureaucratic relationships' (Jefferies and Smith 2010:11). This has caused the youth service in England some concern with the setting up of In Defence of Youth Work who state;

In the shifting political climate, we need more than ever to continue defending and making the case for a democratic and emancipatory Youth Work.

(In Defence of Youth Work, 2010)

iv. ***Demonstrating Impact***

It is vital that organisations develop systems to evaluate and demonstrate the effectiveness of the youth work programmes that are taking place.

Evaluating the impact of youth work on young people as a result of their involvement in the youth service is complex and involves the use of a wide range of tools. These will include tools capable of measuring personal achievement which will mainly depend on young people developing the skills of reflection and self assessment of their involvement in a wide range of experiences and opportunities.

(Welsh Assembly Government, 2007:8)

The reasons for doing so may be external (i.e. as a requirement of funding) or for organisations such as the Boys' and Girls' Clubs to demonstrate that their programmes are making an impact on the lives of young people. In the paper by Rose (2010) it is suggested that there should be three tools to do this. Firstly, self assessment of the young person's learning experiences. 'Youth workers must be able to develop appropriate processes that enable us to reply with

confidence that this is a question that is more appropriately answered by young people themselves' (Rose, 2010: 164). Secondly the youth worker would undertake observation and reflection; this observation and reflection should be carried out in a way that 'reflects the principles, values and ethics of the organisation'. The third tool would support the information obtained through self assessment and the observation and reflection of the youth workers. This could include appropriate formal accreditation and the use of statistical evidence.

The impact of service provision and its assessment are becoming increasingly important in current discussion in youth work policy. It is imperative that a system that is fit for purpose and suits the needs, values and ethics of the organisation is developed and more importantly, used on a daily basis rather than a resource that is tucked away on a shelf.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The aim of this research is to evaluate the impact of the Boys' and Girls' Clubs on the lives of young people living in Wales. It is the intention of this methodology chapter to set out the data collection and analysis techniques that were used to ensure that reliable³ and valid⁴ answers are provided to the research question. In order to investigate this subject title, the researchers felt it necessary to research a wide range of participants who have come into contact with the work of the Boys' and Girls' Clubs of Wales. A substantial amount of data was gathered and the analysis and interpretation of this data can make a contribution to the body of resources about the Boys' and Girls' Clubs in Wales. This chapter will discuss the methods that were undertaken for this study.

1. Role of the researchers

The researchers are currently JNC qualified Youth Workers⁵ or are JNC qualified Youth Support Workers who are employed by Boys' and Girls' Clubs of Wales. All are registered with the Education Workforce Council. The researchers have a keen belief in the values of youth work and as such has undertaken this research using their youth work skills and methods. Hopefully the researcher's credibility within the organisation has enabled the participants to co-operate fully in this research whilst their skills as youth workers have enabled the researchers to have the ability to interpret the data provided in the responses.

Due to the nature of this study the ethical considerations of the participants have been considered. All the participants who were involved in the study were over the age of 16 and were provided with information about the study prior to their voluntary involvement.

³ Reliable: consistently good in quality or performance; able to be trusted.

⁴ Valid: having a sound basis in logic or fact.

⁵ Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) for Youth and Community Workers, these qualifications have been professionally validated by the Education Training Standards (ETS) committee.

2. Qualitative Research

Due to the nature of this study it lends itself to a qualitative study with the focus of personal reflections from the people interviewed. The nature of informal learning does not lend itself well to quantitative data. Such is the nature of the young people's' lives there could be no single factor that could be decided upon that was responsible for their success or achievement that could be given by a quantitative set of data.

Qualitative evaluation is useful as it explores people's perceptions of events and of their development. Further, if several people from different backgrounds share a common perception then it is more likely to be true than one person's view.

(Ingram and Harris, 2001: 52)

3. Research Methods

The decision of the researchers was to adopt a qualitative approach utilising a range of appropriate research methods. The methods which were used to obtain information included: (i) questionnaires, (ii) a review of sources and interviews, and (iii) focus groups. These three methods were chosen as it was felt that a multiple methods approach would provide more valid results and corroborate each individual method. This triangulation may improve reliability (Silverman, 2000).

i. Questionnaires

There were three questionnaires designed specifically for this research and with questions that were carefully worded in order to enable the respondents to provide as much information as possible that would benefit the research. These included six data entry questions (which provide some quantitative data) and eleven open ended questions. There were three different sets of questionnaires used which were aimed at different audiences which include:

- Former members of Boys' and Girls' Clubs
- Current members of Boys' and Girls' Clubs who were aged over 16 and had been involved with a Boys' and Girls' Club for one year or more.

- Leaders of Boys' and Girls' Clubs.

The questionnaires were sent out to 50 contacts held at headquarters which included current and former leaders of Boys' and Girls' Clubs in Wales. A concerted effort was to have questionnaires completed in many different areas of Wales. By undertaking the data gathering in many different areas it would prevent a skew of results particularly if one area demonstrated poor or exceptional results.

These questionnaires were also taken to clubs that were undertaking a focus group and they were also given to people who had visited the office and were from one of the three groups. The questionnaires were also distributed to young people from Boys' and Girls' Clubs who had attended past youth exchanges as a rapport was already had with this group. Some of the questionnaires from this group were filled in online and accessed via social media.

ii. ***Focus Groups***

The study also involved focus groups; these were semi structured and included informal interview techniques. The people who took part in these groups were fully aware of the reasons for the research and were given sufficient notice of the date of the focus group.

iii. ***A review of sources and interviews***

There was a reasonable amount of substantive data available to this research which has provided a range of background information on the Boys' and Girls' Club movement in Wales. With this available, a review of sources and interviews was undertaken. This analysis would be more than a literature review but would extract existing evidence which has relevance to the research question. Every care has been taken to ensure that care has been taken when analysing existing documentation to ensure that quality of the process would meet the four criteria identified by Scott (1990: 1-2). These documents would need to be authentic, credible, representative and have meaning.

The review of sources and interviews was taken from some key Boys' and Girls' Clubs documents and videos. These included:

- Timeline 28-08: A History of the Boys' Club Movement in Wales (Clubs for Young People Wales, 2009).
- Play the Game: DVD (BBC Wales, 2011)
- Fishlocks Wales: Boys' Village DVD (ITV Wales, 2010)
- On Behalf of the Collier Boy (Glynn Jones, 1929)
- Outlook: Boys' Clubs and Camps (Glynn Jones, 1933)
- Diamond Jubilee Souvenir Publication (Boys' Clubs of Wales, 1988)
- Blueprint: Somewhere to belong (Hargreaves, 2009)

4. Interviewees and questionnaire respondents

In total there were 57 respondents to the questionnaires. These respondents were from all aspects of the Boys' and Girls' Clubs community. There was a good spread of respondents from the three groups (current member, former members and leaders). There were a few respondents who felt they fell into two categories. These included young people who were members and had recently started volunteering within the club and current leaders who were former members themselves.

The focus groups enabled the researchers to ask a structured set of questions but to ask the respondents to elaborate on certain aspects. This exercise was beneficial with some people providing additional information that perhaps they would not have disclosed through the questionnaire. The focus groups were made up of people from the three categories: current member, former member and leader, this provided many opportunities for people to reflect on their experiences.

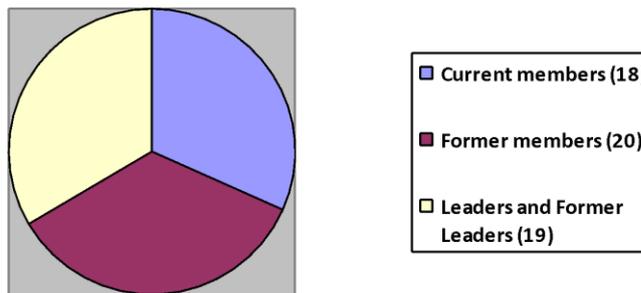
Chapter 4: Presentation of the data

Following the review of sources and interviews, undertaking focus groups and receiving a total of 57 questionnaires the results have been collated. This chapter will present the data that was obtained through these three methods.

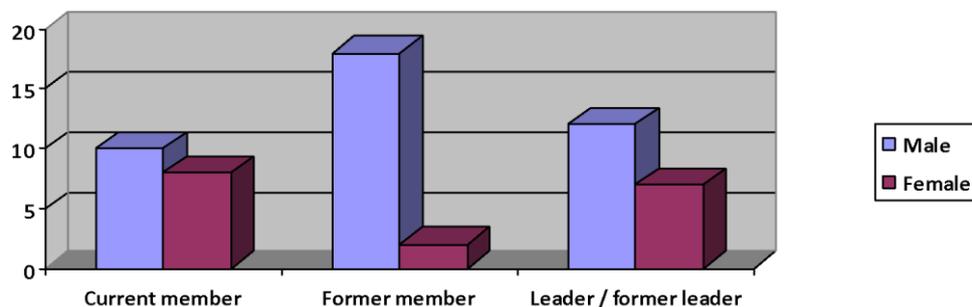
1. Analysis of Questionnaires

The questionnaires provided some valuable information.. Although the information returned through the questionnaires was qualitative data some data that was returned was quantitative; this included gender breakdown, age groups, club membership and duration of membership. This is presented below:

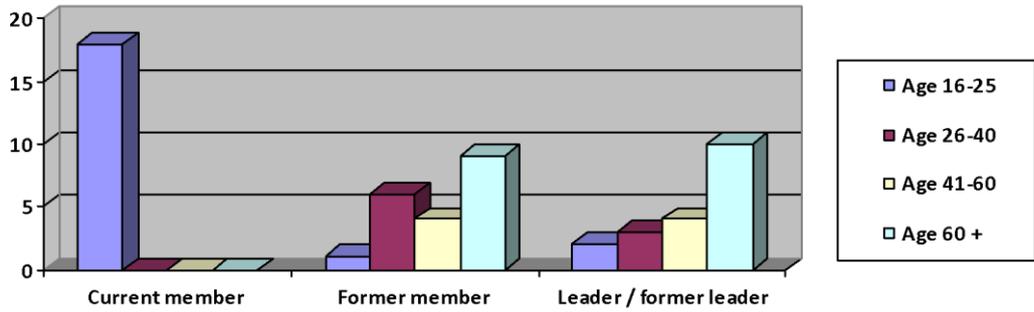
i. *Breakdown of respondents*



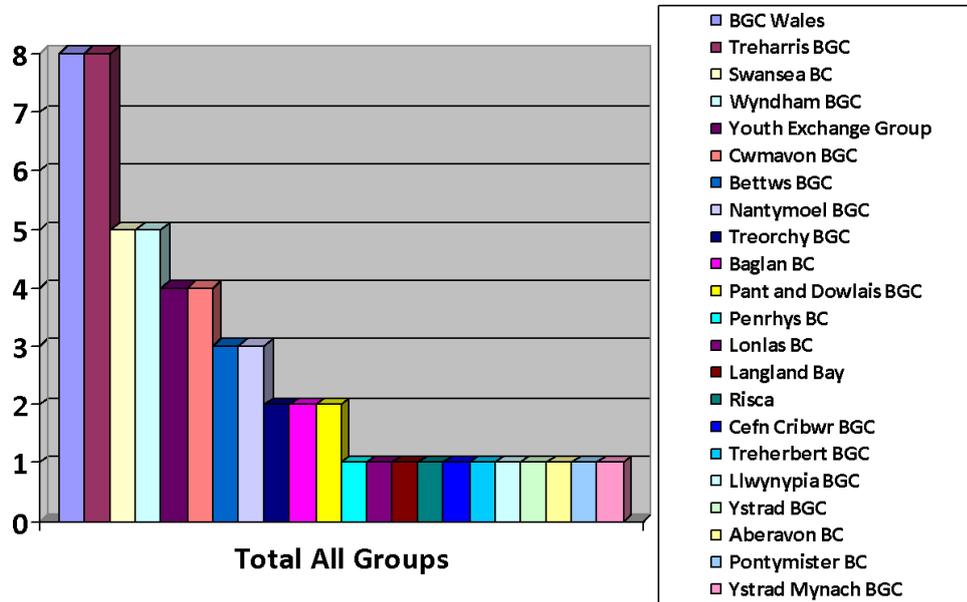
ii. *Breakdown of Gender*



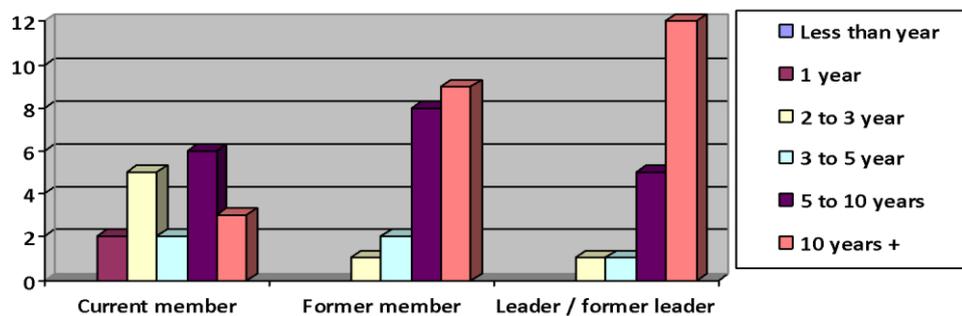
iii. **Breakdown of Ages**



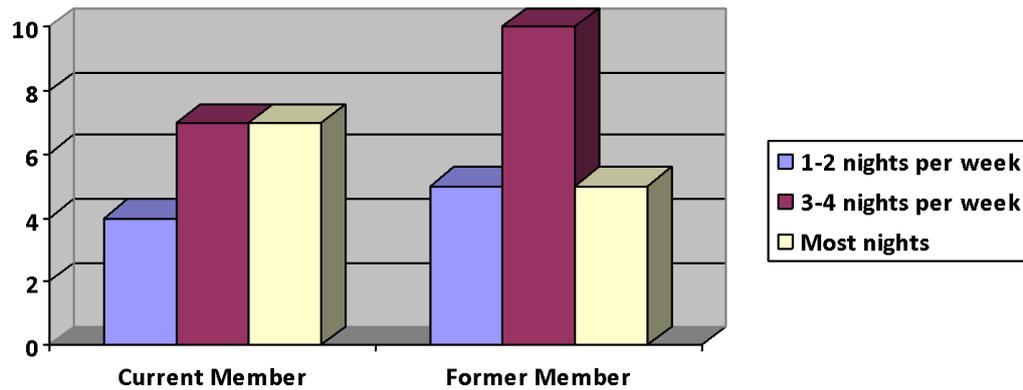
iv. **Boys' and Girls' Club (All respondents)**



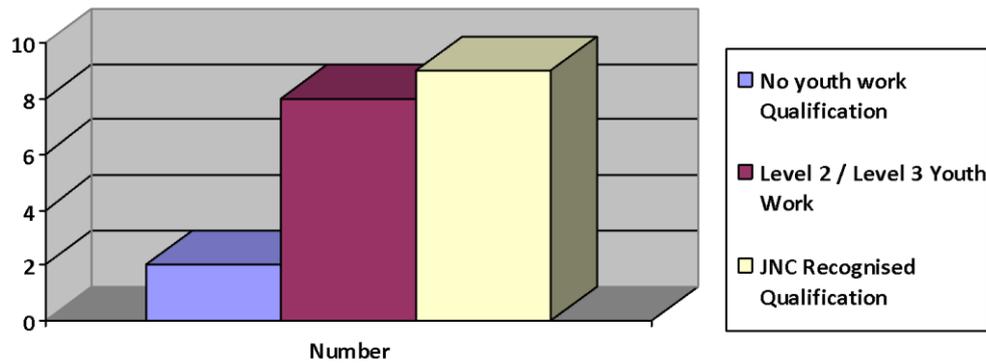
v. **Duration at the club**



vi. ***Time at club per week***



vii. ***Qualification of Leaders***



The responses of questions 1 to 11 have provided some valuable qualitative data and will be presented within this chapter as well as analysed in the following chapter. Although this data was not quantitative data, care has been taken to categorise the type of responses into set categories. These are collated below but care must be made when analysing this data as these were summaries of qualitative questions.

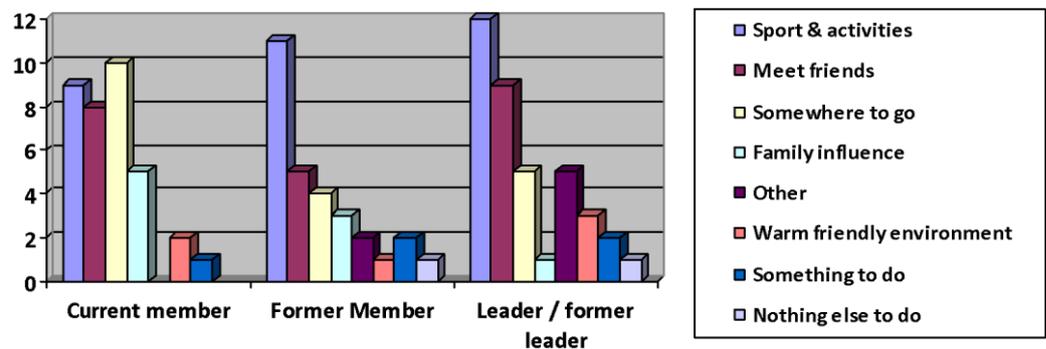
Dey (2005:43) stated that 'we can picture categorisation as a process of funnelling the data into relevant categories for analysis. The data loses its original shape, but we gain by organising it in ways which are more useful for our analysis.'

The three questionnaires were asking the same or similar question in three different ways depending on who was completing the questionnaire. The questions are listed below. Current Members (CM), Former Members (FM) and Leaders (L)

Question 1:

CM and FM: What first attracted you to become a member of a Boys' and Girls' Club?

L: What do you think attracts young people to become a member of a Boys' and Girls' Club?

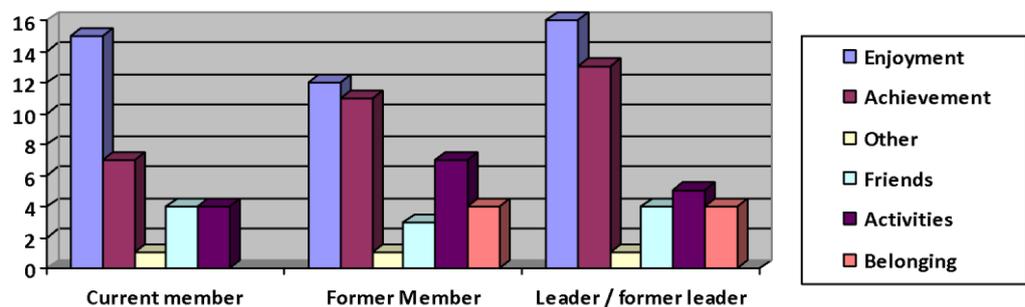


Question 2:

CM: Why do you come to this club?

FM: What were your reasons for attending?

L: What do you think are the reasons for young people attending?

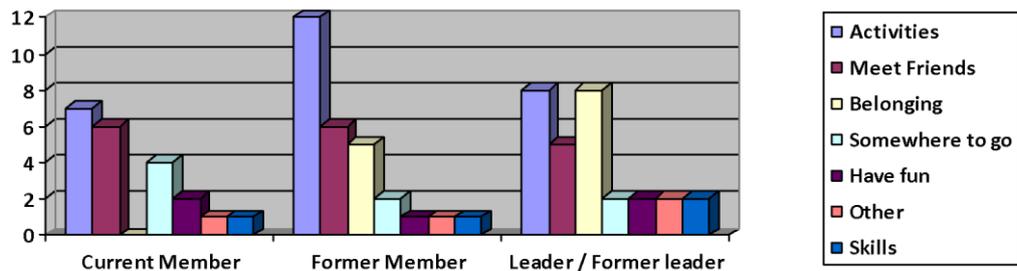


Question 3:

CM: What is the best thing about being a member of a Boys' and Girls' Club?

FM: What was the best thing about being a member of a Boys' and Girls' Club?

L: What do you feel the young people think is the best thing about being a member of a Boys' and Girls' Club?

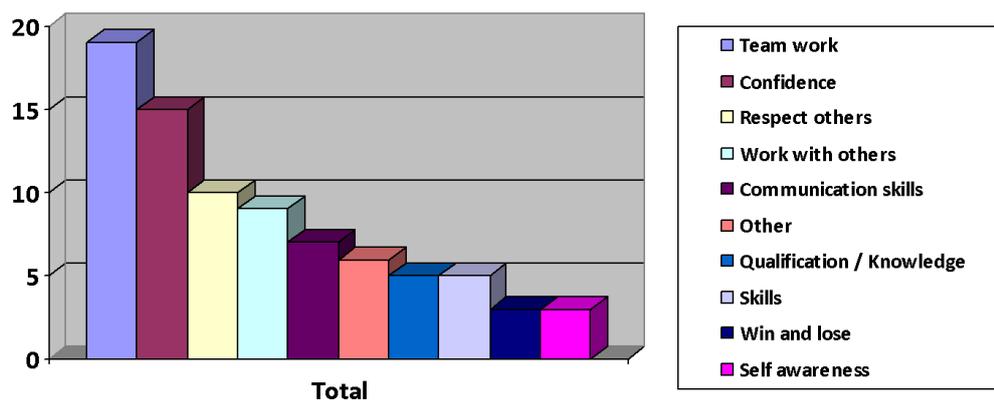


Question 4: (All respondents)

CM: Have you learned anything as a result of being a member and, if so, what have you learned and how did you learn?

FM: What do you think you learned from being a member of a Boys' and Girls' Club?

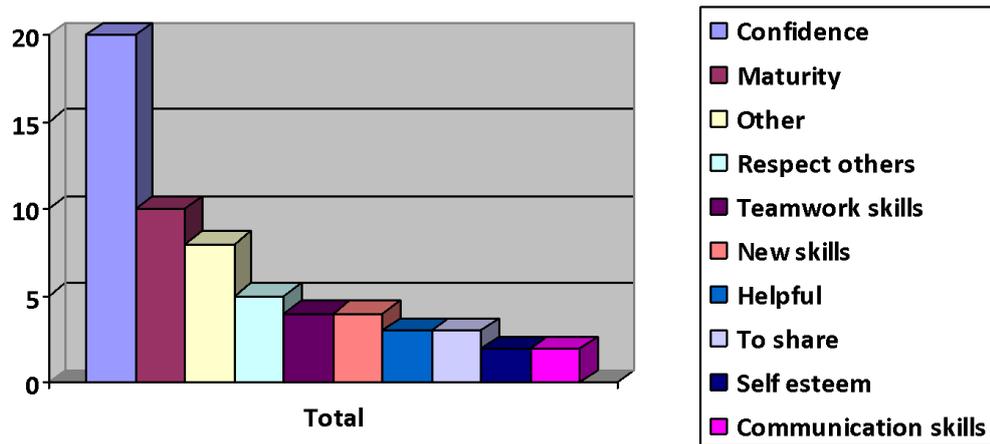
L: What do you think young people learn as a result of being a member?



Question 5: (All respondents)

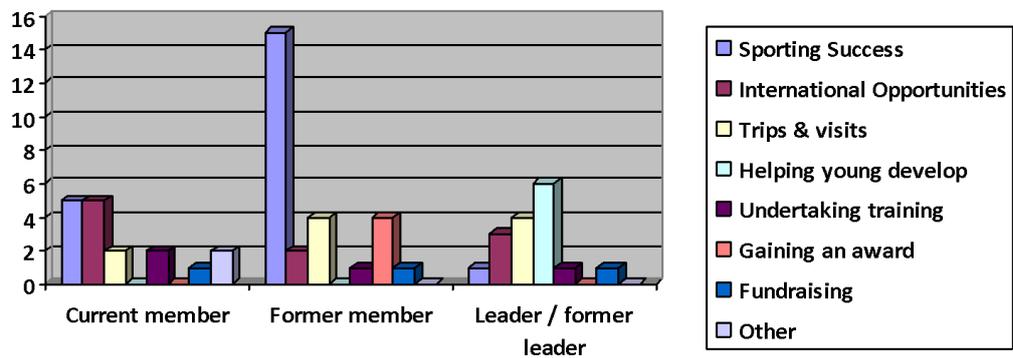
CM and FM: Do you feel you have changed as a result of being a member and, if so, how?

L: How do young people change as a result of being a member?



Question 6:

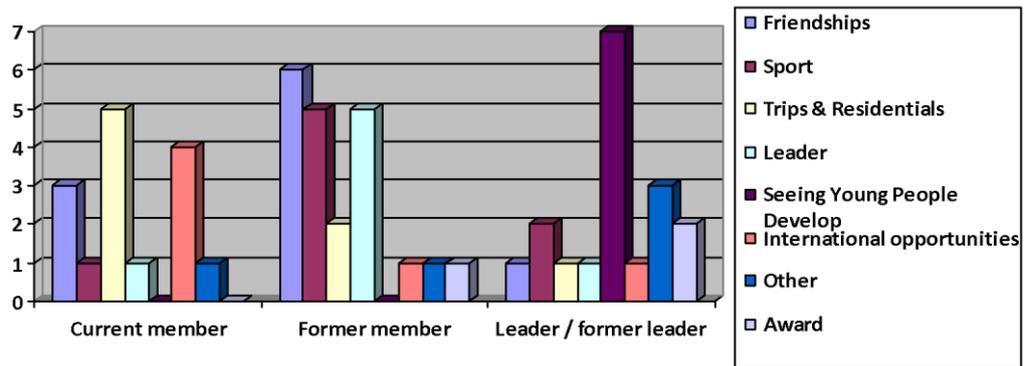
CM, FM and L: Can you tell me about something really good or important that you have been involved in at the club?



Question 7:

CM and FM: What is your most important memory of being a member of a Boys' and Girls' Club?

L: What is your most important memory of being a Leader of a Boys' and Girls' Club?

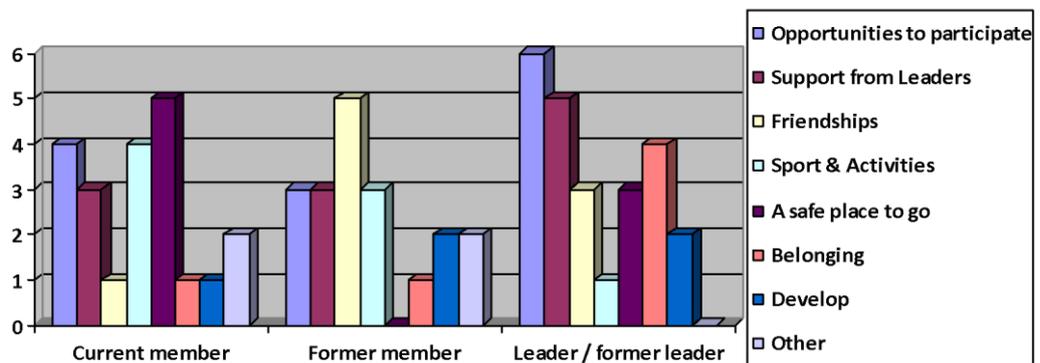


Question 8:

CM: What do you get from coming here that you might not get from other places you go to?

FM: What did you get from going to a Boys' and Girls' Club that you might not have got from other places?

L: What do young people get from going to the club that they might not have got from other places?

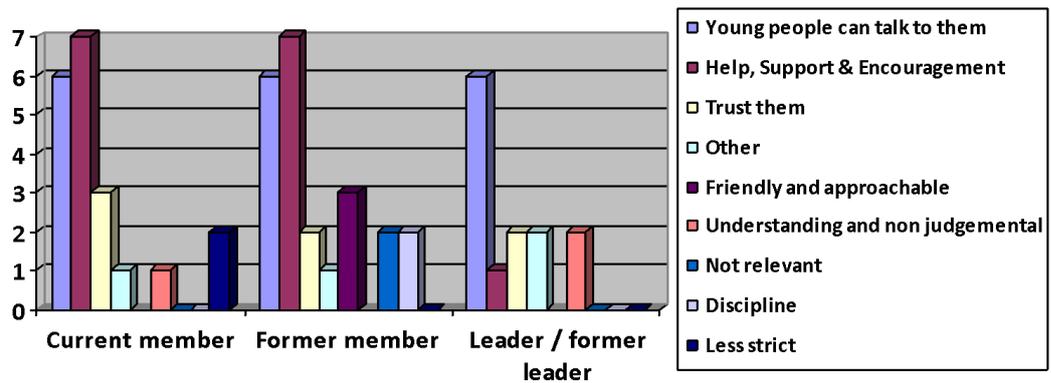


Question 9:

CM: What do you get from youth workers here that you do not get from other adults you have contact with?

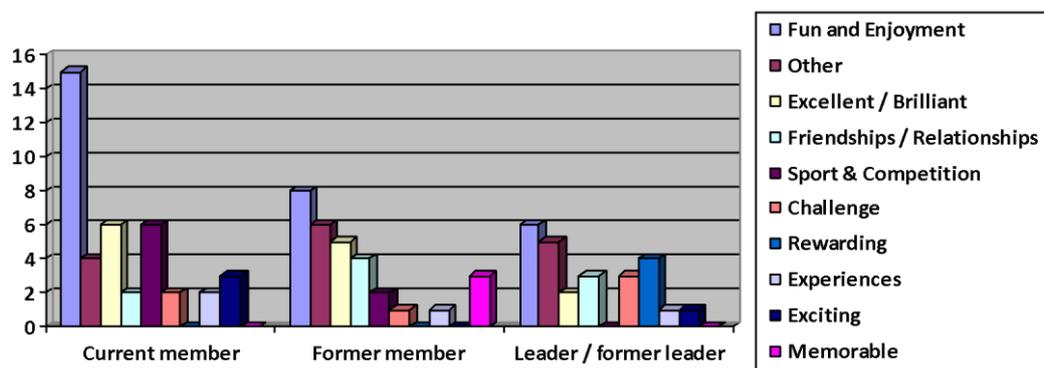
FM: What did you get from youth workers that you did not get from other adults when you were a member of a Boys' and Girls' Club?

L: Do you feel that young people have a better relationship with youth workers than with other adults?



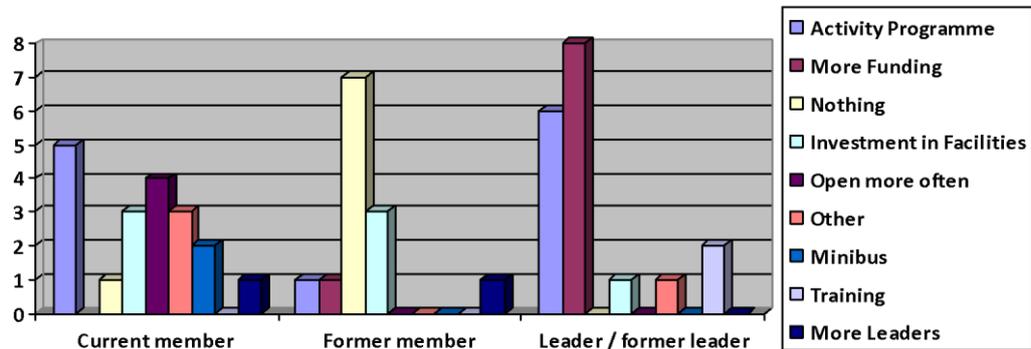
Question 10:

CM, FM and L: What three words best sum up your experiences at the Boys' and Girls' Club?



Question 11:

CM, FM and L: What else could have been done to improve your experiences of attending a Boys' and Girls' Club?



2. Analysis of Focus Groups

The focus groups were very beneficial in providing additional information that perhaps was not provided via the questionnaire. The process of discussing and reflecting on the past experiences at the Boys' and Girls' Club was very valuable. There were four focus groups held. The key results and discussions from these include:

i. **Self Confidence**

In all the focus groups the participants responded that they were more confident as a result of attending a Boys' and Girls' Club. This was noticed more so by former members who had reflected upon their experiences at the club in light of them being successful in their chosen employment field. One respondent commented:

On reflection I feel that I gained the self confidence through being involved with the club. This is something I probably only realised years later.

ii. ***Teamwork and sport***

One of the focus groups in particular felt that being part of the club and, in particular, the various sporting activities gave them the opportunity to gain many team working skills. The key emphasis of sport and, in particular, team sports such as cricket, basketball and football had enabled the members to gain new skills. The focus group believed that, although the team was competitive there was fairness in the team selection and everybody had a fair opportunity to participate.

iii. ***Community Focus***

It was made much more clearly through this method that the clubs were community based with people attending because it was very much part of what they did in that community. Some reported that they attended because their brothers had attended and their fathers before them.

Boys' and Girls' Clubs are organisations of the community. They belong to the community and they are also their own community. It is this sense of belonging to the community that enables young people to feel a part of the club. The group commented that the leaders were important, well respected and trusted members of the community.

3. A review of sources and interviews

Various sources and interview were analysed.

i. ***Timeline 28-08: A History of the Boys' Club Movement in Wales (Clubs for Young People Wales, 2009).***

From the review of the Timeline 28-08, it was clear that the Boys' and Girls' Clubs had an impact on the lives of people who had attended. Within the resource was information about the organisation provided by 16 current and former staff members, 4 officers of the committee, 14 former members, 4 volunteers and information from 6 clubs.

The review of this document provided a great background of the work of the organisation and the impact that it had had on not only former members but also on former staff members.

It was clear from the document that sport was a key influence and the reason why people had initially attended. However, other themes that ran through the document included community spirit, friendship of the clubs, volunteers' dedication and clubs helping young people gain self confidence and other skills. These points were best described by former Olympic Gold medallist Lynn Davies:

My memories are of a warm, welcoming place where we were encouraged to take part and enjoy the companionship of the many friends we made. It really was a home from home and Mr Cemys always made us feel very welcome. Looking back now the 'Mem' helped us develop confidence and self-esteem and the qualities have contributed to my career over the years.

ii. ***Play the Game (BBC Wales, 2011)***

The 'Play the Game' documentary which was screened on BBC Wales (15 March 2011) provided an overview of the organisation from its inception to the current day. This documentary utilised many personal stories to demonstrate the impact that the organisation was having on young people. The documentary featured interviews and case studies of many different people; these included club leaders Stan Norris, Enyd Lock and Neil Ellis, Rugby President Max Boyce and former members who have excelled in their careers such as Lynn Davies, Nathan Cleverly and Clive Thomas.

Some of the quotes that formed part of the documentary include in that were very relevant to this study include:

Back in the old days when times were as hard as they were, young boys were sent down the mine straight from school - to bring them to the boys club was something that made them into men.

(Stan Norris, leader of Wyndham Boys and Girls club for 58 years)

My career started here at Treorchy Boys' Club, my whole career started here, my career not only in football but in life

(Clive Thomas, retired international football referee)

(Whilst talking about Nantymoel Boys' and Girls' Club) The atmosphere is very warm and welcoming and that's why it is such a great place, a place for young people to develop their skills, confidence, develop belief in themselves and of course that carries on until later life

(Lynn Davies, former Olympic Gold Medallist)

It gives youngsters who want to do well in sport or just want to compete and enjoy sport a great opportunity to use their skills

(Nathan Cleverly, Boxing World Champion)

They perform a terrific role in Welsh rugby and sport in Wales, giving these boys an opportunity to play sport at a high level.

(Max Boyce, Entertainer)

These places will continue, they will go on, what shape or form we don't know but they will go on because there is a courage, the love and conviction of the people in the South Wales valleys have for these institutions because they understand and acknowledge the value of the Boys' and Girls' clubs.

(Neil Ellis, Leader of Bettws Boys' and Girls' Club)

iii. **Other sources**

The other sources reviewed included;

1. Fishlocks Wales: Boys' Village DVD (ITV Wales, 2010)
2. On Behalf of the South Wales Collier Boy (Glynn Jones, 1929)
3. Outlook: Boys' Clubs and Camps (Glynn Jones, 1933)
4. Diamond Jubilee Souvenir Publication (Boys' Clubs of Wales, 1988)
5. Blueprint: Somewhere to Belong (Hargreaves, 2009)

These resources provided additional information to the two key resources that were reviewed in detail. These documents provided further depth on the history and value base of the organisation. However they did not produce a great amount of information from people who had been involved in the organisation as members. The Blueprint: Somewhere to Belong (Hargreaves, 2009), whilst very useful to read was based around clubs in England and the examples and case studies produced reflected this.

Chapter 5: Discussion and analysis of the findings

This discussion will analyse and interpret the data that was collected via the three methods: questionnaires, focus groups and a review of sources and interviews with the aim to answer the research question. Much of the data being used in this discussion was generated by the questionnaires and focus groups. The review of sources and interviews will be used to back up some of the findings. The research was undertaken on three distinct groups; these included current members, former members and leaders (both current and former).

The three different questionnaires produced three different types of responses. It was clear to see that there was a marked difference in the 'tone' and response from the three groups that completed the questionnaires: Current members (CM), Former members (FM) and leaders (L). In most cases young people did not view what the organisation was doing for them, they just saw the organisation at a basic level; one that provided them with an opportunity to satisfy their needs of having somewhere to go, something to do and a place to meet their friends. The former members although acknowledging the three needs of the current members as being instrumental in why they attended, they were also able to look back and reflect on other aspects. These included gaining key skills, confidence and self-esteem through being involved in the Boys' and Girls' Club. However, sometimes it took these people many years to realise that it was this involvement at the club that enabled them to gain these new skills and confidence. The last group, which was made up of leaders and former leaders answered the questions slightly differently again. Their responses varied from similar to the young people to more detailed answers that were similar to those that were former members. However, in most responses this was more eloquently put by the leader (or former leader).

1. Somewhere to go, a place to meet friends and something to do

From the methods of data capture and in, particular, the questionnaires from current members and former members it was clear that young people attend Boys' and Girls' Clubs voluntarily, they do so of their own free choice. The responses indicated that young people wanted somewhere to go:

I started going there as a kid because I didn't like hanging about on the streets and the club did fun activities and I enjoyed going. (CM2)

Can attend when we want, Shelter - a place to hang out. (CM11)

It was somewhere to meet friends, hang out (out of the cold), play competitive sport and enjoy myself. It was part of a like minded group of people. (FM11)

Adding to this need for a place to go, to get away from the street was a need to meet with friends in a place that was theirs. Most of the respondents described a place where they could meet their friends:

Somewhere to go to meet friends and have a laugh. (CM5)

All friends are here. (CM4)

Freedom - It was such a great feeling I could come here with my friends and not get ordered to do things. (FM2)

The social life and camaraderie with people of my own age and interests (FM4)

The Boys' and Girls' Clubs have always provided a varied programme of activities that have been based around sport whilst also incorporating to a lesser extent the arts. Young people participate in this activity programme and attend because it is something that interests them. Young people vote with their feet, if they like something they will go, if they don't they will not attend. The activity programme, particularly the sports was a key factor in young people attending:

Activities, meet friends. (CM4)

Free pool tables, football court & snooker. (FM9)

Many respondents added that what ensured them to continue to be members was the sense of family or belonging, some members answered:

It had a sense of belonging to something unique. (FM3)

It is like a big family. (CM13)

Friendship, comradeship, skills & knowledge, being positive about myself. (FM14)

Somewhere to go, a place to meet friends and something to do were key reasons for attending. This was evident from the responses of young people and as a way of working that claims to listen to the young people and cater for their needs is something that youth workers need to ensure that they do.

2. A place to have Fun

When reviewing the questionnaires and looking at question 10, it was clear that the most popular answer when indicating a word that summed up the experience of attending a Boys' and Girls' Club was 'Fun'. This was the answer of 83.3% of the current members, 40% of the former members and 31.5% of the leaders' in response to the question. A place to relax and have fun with friends is a key priority, probably now more than ever due to increasing demands on the lives of young people. The organisation needs to re-evaluate what it does and start listening to young people. They want fun, but government policy is moving towards a focus on accredited outcomes with the youth service becoming solely a provider of education.

In the 2008 book *Timeline 28-08 (Clubs for Young People Wales, 2009)*, many former Boys' and Girls' Club members talk about 'friendships, a welcoming environment and the fun'. Former Olympic Gold Medallist Lynn Davies commented 'Nantymoel Boys' Club (the Memorial Hall), or the 'Mem' as we used to call it, played a big role in my life when, as a teenager back in the 1950's, I spent many happy hours there with my friends'....'My memories are of

a warm, welcoming place where we were encouraged to take part and enjoy the companionship of the many friends we made. It really was a home from home and Mr Cemys always made us feel very welcome'. Former Boys' Club member Alan Curtis commented that 'I owe a lot of my success to the grounding I had at Treorchy Boys' Club. I spent six happy years at the club and loved every bit of it. It wasn't just the football which was obviously important but all the great friends I made there then who are still great friends to this day'.

A reason for attending according to a respondent from the questionnaire was:

Mainly to have fun when I was younger as I could see some of my friends from school but not do any school work. Now I like to give something back and give that great feeling to the young people like the leaders done for me when I started here. (FM2)

Through analysing the data there are many statements of 'friendship' 'warmth' 'welcoming' and 'fun'. These statements are the reason why young people attend and value the organisation. This is something that clubs should never forget. Clubs can enhance the emotional wellbeing of young people through attendance and participation in fun activities with their peers.

3. Learning

A common misconception (particularly from the public) is that Boys' and Girls' Clubs just keep young people 'off the street'. Whilst the clubs do provide young people with somewhere to go, the activities and relationships developed at clubs have an influence on the young people now and for the future. The Boys' and Girls' Clubs offer a set of values to young people, help them to develop a sense of loyalty and encourage them to take on responsibilities – all experiences they need for later life.

Much of the learning that has historically taken place at a Boys' and Girls' Club is informal learning. This is learning as a result of conversation and dialogue, it is unstructured and incidental though daily club life.

From the response to the questionnaires it was noticeable that the former members were more able to attribute the learning that they had gained

from being a member of the Boys' and Girls' Clubs compared to the current members. A possible reason for this is that the former members had realised on reflection that these skills were developed at the Boys' and Girls' Club. In one focus group (FG), one respondent commented:

On reflection I feel that I gained the self confidence through being involved with the club. This is something I probably only realised years later. (FG2)

A current member described how he felt that he had changed as a result of being a member:

Yes with the help of the workers and the responsibility they have given me in the club I have become more mature I think personally. (CM2)

Former members seemed more able to reflect:

I accomplished my goals and achieved my outcomes. But importantly becoming a better & stronger person. (FM14)

Taught us everything – to be good citizens. None of us walked the streets. (FM6)

Support, direction, discipline, friendship, consideration. Opportunities to grow and develop in a way that was very different to school where I did not excel (FM8)

i. Wider skills development

Boys' and Girls' Clubs offer different opportunities for young people to get involved, this includes influencing the programme, club youth council, volunteering and leadership opportunities. These not only help develop confidence and self esteem but also encourage skills such as problem solving, communication and team work.

I learnt respect for peers, players & to become a team player (FM3)

Teamwork, respect, time keeping, patience, hard work, motivation, coaching (FM20)

Having respect for the committee made me learn to have better social skills. My parents brought me up good, but I learnt a different respect at the club. (FM11)

The Boys' and Girls' Club enables young people to learn through the appreciation of different perspectives and difference, through becoming confident to express their views and working with others. The club activity assists young people in acquiring the key skills and practical skills that will form a good grounding to their future goals.

ii. ***Enhanced emotional competence***

It was evident how many young people had referred to having improved their confidence through taking part in club activities. Olympic Champion, Lynn Davies, commented in Timeline 28-08: A history of the Boy's Club Movement in Wales (2008) 'Looking back now the 'Mem' helped us develop confidence and self-esteem and the qualities have contributed to my career over the years'. These are outcomes as listed in the Welsh Government Young People, Youth Work, Youth Service: National Youth Service Strategy for Wales (2007) (see Appendix A).

Former and current members commented:

I became a more confident person. (FM3)

Become more confident in being involved with others. (I was) encouraged to participate in other sporting activities. (FM7)

Working with others, feel more confident. (CM11)

I became more self confident and as a consequence more able to see and respond to the views of others. My self esteem improved as a result of my developing sporting ability. I became more motivated and developed a lifelong interest and passion in the potential of the youth service of which the club was a part. (FM8)

iii. ***Achievement***

Although not the main reason for attending a Boys' and Girls' Club, quite a few current and former members attributed attending a club to achieving something. Although this may not have been to gain a qualification, in most cases it was to achieve success or to win a sporting event. Some respondents listed accreditations such as:

I was the first boy attached to the Monmouthshire Group to gain the Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award. This is something that I would not have done if it was not for the Boys' Club. (Powe, 2009: 24)

Yes I have picked up some knowledge as well as going on a few courses like child protection. (CM2)

However many have referred to winning awards that have meant a great deal to them, although not accreditation; this achievement has stayed with them all their lives:

Every year we had the annual presentation, and it was a big deal. I always looked forward to it, when I won the U13 player of the season it gave me huge pleasure and ranks up there with my proudest moments. My name is still up on the board today. (FM11)

An example of this is in the 'Play The Game' television documentary where Nathan Cleverly mentioned winning one of his first boxing competitions which inspired him to move on to the next level:

I am very grateful for the opportunity the Boys' and Girls' Clubs of Wales has given me, I've enjoyed my experience of entering the competitions, they were very competitive and gave me an opportunity to go out and win something. It has definitely given me a good foundation for the future.

The learning undertaken at the Boys' and Girls' Club are 'listed outcomes for young people' as part of the National Youth Service Strategy (2007: 7). These themes within the strategy are active participation, wider skills development and enhanced emotional competence. By being a member of a Boys' and Girls' Club, young people are gaining these skills and in doing so are being prepared for employment as these skills have been identified as being lacking amongst employees in Wales (Welsh Assembly Government, 2008).

4. Youth Worker or Club Leader

As a result of undertaking the focus groups it was brought to the researchers attention that some club leaders do not see themselves as delivering youth work and as being volunteer youth workers. A leader asked the question why the questionnaire related to the Boys' and Girls' Club throughout yet in question 9 the was asked about the relationship with youth workers. It is clear that some Boys' and Girls' Club leaders see themselves as leaders and not youth workers. This is not the case in all clubs but I this uncertainty could have led to question 9 not being answered in the best manner if people hadn't understood that with the term 'youth worker' the question was referring to the club leader. Whilst reading many of the responses the term 'coach' was also used on some occasions. Again, perhaps some young people viewed their Boys' and Girls' Club Leader as a coach, particularly if the Boys' and Girls' Club leader was instrumental in leading sports activity.

Despite the ambiguity that this may have caused with some of the leaders, it was clear that respondents in both groups (former and current members) agreed that youth workers were valued differently to other adults.

You can speak with youth workers and they can give advice, they won't judge you and they are fun! (CM13)

Help whenever you need it, someone to talk to. Some that know how to help you. (CM16)

They understood my passion, my drive and goals – and they wanted to push me to get there. There was a common sense of achievement (FM11)

The sense that they will be there when other people are not. (CM2)

The Boys' and Girls' Club leaders are an exceptional pool of committed volunteers (although some paid) who deliver youth work at the coal face. Without this massive contribution of volunteers young people within Wales would be worst off. There are 2800 volunteers within the organisation and their

contribution is vital. Even though in 1929 Glynn-Jones wrote the following, this very much applies in 2018 almost 90 years later:

The need for the wise and sympathetic club leader who can win the boy's confidence, who can talk to him kindly and usefully, and who will help him both with counsel and with healthy activity to steer his little barque through these tempestuous waters during a period of his life when he is really hungering for a little helping hand.

Glynn-Jones (1929: 5)

In the Timeline book a great tribute was written by Lynn Davies, former Olympic Athlete:

Over the years the Boys' Clubs of Wales have made a huge contribution to the personal development of our young people in Wales. This is thanks to the many people and volunteers who give their time to make clubs for young people so successful. (Davies, 2008: 26)

Whilst a questionnaire respondent wrote:

I applaud my coaches, the volunteers who drove Llwynypia BC forward during the 60/70s & I would personally like to thank them for helping me to 'grow' into the person I am today. Thank you. (FM4)

Many commented that the club leaders were well respected members of the community, they had integrity, trust, were caring and placed the needs of others before themselves. Another essential quality of the Boys' and Girls' Club leader was a sense of humour. It was these qualities that ensured that they are respected and admired by the members:

Youth workers were willing to listen, help and participate in the activities with you. They also gave a lot of encouragement. (FM17)

The help and support from adults who were without exception key role models during my adolescence. (FM9)

Good adult support and direction and discipline of the right sort. (FM8)

At the same focus group that questioned the term 'youth worker' it was clear that there was a further misconception about the term 'youth service'. Some with the organisation feel that the youth service applies to the maintained youth service and not the voluntary sector organisations such as Boys' and Girls' Clubs, Scouts, Duke of Edinburgh's Award etc.

5. Demonstrating the impact

Through undertaking this research it is evident that Boys' and Girls' Clubs have a positive impact on the lives of young people on many levels. Firstly, it provides young people with three of their needs: a place to go, something to do and to be with friends. It should not be forgotten that without such centres young people would not have this opportunity to meet with their friends outside of the formal setting of the school or away from parents at home. This was summed up by one former member:

Mainly to have fun when I was younger as I could see some of my friends from school but not do any school work. (FM10)

Secondly, clubs have an impact on the lives of these young people as demonstrated in the answers to the questionnaires, the testimonies in Timeline 28-08 (Clubs for Young People Wales, 2009) and the 'Play the Game' (2011) documentary. Members have identified that attending Boys' and Girls' Clubs has improved their self confidence, self esteem, motivation, communication skills, team work skills and enabled them to respect others. These members have identified these skills and qualities through a process of self assessment of their time at a Boys' and Girls' Club. Subsequently, by young people gaining these skills through their involvement at the club, Boys' and Girls' Clubs are assisting young people to be better prepared for employment as these skills have been highlighted as required by employers in Wales and Welsh Government (2007, 2013 and 2014).

Thirdly, the Boys' and Girls' Clubs have had a significant impact on the lives of young people through sporting success and the opportunities that the organisation has afforded them. Significantly the process of youth work at hand

during the sports has ensured that values and ethos were instilled in the members through their participation.

As such these findings show that;

Boys' and Girls' Clubs in Wales have a positive impact on the lives of young people living in Wales.

Although it is clear that the Boys' and Girls' Clubs have had an impact on young people living in Wales, as demonstrated over a long period of time, mechanisms need to be carefully tailored to demonstrate these successes over short periods. Although very difficult, clubs need to think about this to demonstrate how effective their work is. Clubs will need to use self assessment with their young people and also ensure that the youth workers continually observe and record the observations of the young people. Supporting these two methods is accreditation where this is necessary and relevant.

On the whole, today's Boys' and Girls' Clubs are 'run' by volunteers or part time staff. These clubs are too busy doing what they do best - working with young people - that they lack the time to demonstrate success, evaluate and promote their work efficiently and effectively. However, to ensure that Boys' and Girls' Clubs in Wales continue to provide a service for young people, clubs need to demonstrate the quality work that they undertake and effectively demonstrate that they have an integral role to play in the development of young people, helping them to realise their potential and fulfil their dreams.

Chapter 6: Summary and conclusions

For ninety years the Boys' and Girls' Clubs in Wales have been serving the needs of young people in some of the most disadvantaged communities in Wales. The clubs have formed an integral part of the childhoods of generations of young people, helping them to realise their potential and fulfil their dreams. This paper has provided a comprehensive literature review which has included the early beginnings of the organisation and its historical development; Youth work at Boys' and Girls' Clubs; and the impact of the Boys' and Girls' Club. The research paper used a multiple methods approach. These methods included questionnaires, focus groups and a review of sources and interviews. In total 57 people completed a questionnaire; these were completed by current members, former members and leaders.

In this qualitative study, the researchers conclude that:

Boys' and Girls' Clubs in Wales have a positive impact on the lives of young people living in Wales.

Former members of Boys' and Girls' Clubs value the time they spent at the Boys' and Girls' Club as a young person and, through a process of self assessment have indicated that they improved their self confidence, self esteem, motivation, communication skills and team work skills and the experiences enabled them to respect others. Subsequently, by gaining these skills, Boys' and Girls' Clubs can assist young people in their search for employment as these skills have been highlighted as required by employers in Wales. This conclusion is probably best summed up by Merton et al (2005) who undertook a comprehensive evaluation of the impact of youth work in England. Merton et al (2005) stated:

Many young people refer to the long-term impact of being involved in youth work. It is quite often the case that as a consequence of sustained attendance at a youth centre or project and continuous contact with youth workers, that a young person begins to recognise there are alternative ways of seeing the world and acting in it, that they acquire a wider repertoire of insights, skills and relationships through which to gain the confidence to explore new experiences and

opportunities. But this may take a matter of years not weeks or months. It is also quite common for young people once grown into more mature adults to look back on their involvement in a youth work project and trace its influence on their direction and development.

(Merton et al 2005: 12)

Although the paper concluded that the Boys' and Girls' Clubs in Wales have an impact on young people, the paper acknowledges that the Boys' and Girls' Clubs in Wales need to ensure that clubs evaluate the impact of short term projects and long term youth work to demonstrate that they are undertaking quality work. Boys' and Girls' Clubs need to strive to modernise their approaches to become efficient and effective and better account for impact and outcomes. This could be quite difficult as a high percentage of leaders are volunteers and care needs to be taken before burdening them with extra work. Boys' and Girls' Clubs in Wales need to be able to show convincingly that youth work programmes, projects, and the clubs themselves make a difference which contribute to the outcomes of the Welsh Government (2007, 2014).

Clubs will need to use self assessment with their young people and also ensure that the youth workers and club leaders continually observe and record the observations of the young people. Supporting these two methods is accreditation where this is necessary and relevant.

Further conclusions

Although this research had the intention to evaluate the impact of the Boys' and Girls' Clubs on young people in Wales, which it has achieved, there were other conclusions. Young people who attend Boys' and Girls' Clubs today want somewhere to go, a place to meet friends and something to do in a fun environment. Whilst reviewing the questionnaires it was clear that the most popular answer when indicating a word that summed up the experience of attending a Boys' and Girls' Club was 'Fun'. This was answered by 83.3% of the current members. A place to relax and have fun with friends is a key priority, probably now more than ever due to increasing demands on the lives of young people. The organisation needs to start listening to young people and catering

for their needs, as both former and current members indicated that they attended Boys' and Girls' clubs to meet their friends in a safe place that was fun:

It was somewhere to meet friends, hang out (out of the cold), play competitive sport and enjoy myself. It was part of a like minded group of people. (FM1)

Young people must continue to be involved in all aspects of club life. They need to be listened to. They want a safe place to attend and meet their friends. None of the respondents said they wanted to undertake further accreditation, however, some did attend to achieve in the sporting arena.

The paper acknowledged that current members and leaders have identified the need for an investment in the building and facilities at clubs. Former members reported fantastic facilities; however, nowadays this is not the case as many of these buildings are in need of upgrading.

Further Research

This paper has provided some much needed research on the impact of the Boys Clubs movement on the lives of young people living in Wales. However, further research is necessary to substantiate these findings. Moreso, research on the impact of youth work within Wales is necessary and has previously been highlighted by the former Welsh Government Deputy Minister for Skills Jeff Cuthbert, who acknowledged that there is much excellent work but the current contribution of youth services is unfocused and lacks an overall strategic impact that can be clearly evidenced (Cuthbert, 2013).

Recommendations

As well as the conclusions previously mentioned and the need for greater research in this area, it is also recommended that:

- Training is provided for Boys' and Girls' Clubs to demonstrate impact.
- Boys' and Girls' Clubs investigate opportunities for volunteer leaders to train to become qualified youth workers.

- Boys' and Girls' Clubs to consider opportunities for funding to improve premises.

Finally, if the youth service and in particular the established voluntary youth work organisations such as the Boys' and Girls' Clubs of Wales are to continue to benefit the lives of young people in Wales, they will need to establish mechanisms to effectively demonstrate the quality work and its impact on the development of young people, helping them to realise their potential and fulfil their dreams.

Appendix A Outcomes for Young People

The Youth Service, with its positive view of young people, provides a unique learning environment built on the voluntary participation of young people and the quality of the relationship developed with the trained and skilled adult worker. The outcomes for young people from this environment can be identified within three broad themes: **active participation; wider skills development; and enhanced emotional competence.**

1. The outcomes of active participation include:

- enjoyment and achievement;
- making a positive contribution to their Youth Club or project, to their neighbourhood, community and society;
- improved health, fitness and well being;
- acquiring new and enhancing existing practical skills related to, for example, their involvement in sport or creative activities or as members of a Youth Forum;
- improved knowledge and understanding of the wide range of issues which affect them;
- becoming involved in community activities;
- learning to manage risk in supportive situations.

2. The outcomes of wider skills development include:

- learning to learn;
- team building;
- communication;
- problem solving;
- decision making;
- becoming able to influence services and policies which have an impact on their lives.

3. The outcomes of enhanced emotional competence include:

- increased levels of confidence and self-motivation;
- improved self-awareness, motivation and self-worth;
- maintaining the ability to develop and sustain relationships in a wide range of settings;
- empathy with and consideration for others.

The combination of these three themes defines the Youth Service and its contribution to young people's learning. Youth work programmes may focus on any or all of these three themes depending on the needs of young people and their starting point at a given time.

National Youth Service Strategy for Wales: Young People, Youth Work, Youth Service (WAG 2007)

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