



ngātahi **sport**

Review of the Young Ambassador Programme in Wales

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He aha te mea nui o te ao - He tangata, he tangata, he tangata

What is the most important thing in the world? It is the people, it is the people, it is the people.

New Zealand Māori Proverb

1. Introduction and Project Scope

- 1.1.1 In 2005 Lord Seb Coe made a promise to use the power of the London 2012 Games to inspire millions of young people to choose sport. The Young Ambassador programme was born from this promise and the programme has been growing since 2009 in Wales. Sport Wales understands and values the importance of investing in its people and creating future leaders, in sport, and more generally.
- 1.1.2 Young people's experiences of sport and physical activity are central to transforming Wales into an active nation, where everyone can have a lifelong enjoyment of sport and physical activity. The Young Ambassador programme has been one of the leading initiatives in providing young people with a voice in sport and the empowerment to influence the opportunities they and their peers receive.
- 1.1.3 The YA programme was introduced in Wales in 2009 as part of the National School Games, held in Cardiff. In Wales today, the Young Ambassadors programme is funded and heavily supported by Sport Wales and is a key element of their contribution to developing young people as leaders in sport, with 25,000+ young ambassadors being supported through this programme since its inception.

1.2 Project Outputs

- 1.2.1 ngatahi sport was commissioned by Sport Wales to complete a review of the Young Ambassador programme. The study outputs for this review include:
 - An assessment of the local, regional and national opportunities with the YA Programme.
 - An assessment of the management and co-ordination of the YA Programme, at a national and local/regional level.
 - To explore the future collaboration opportunities across the programme.
 - Discuss with partners and young people the:
 - Recruitment, accessibility, and inclusivity of the YA Programme;
 - Value of the YA Programme; and
 - Visibility and clarity of the pathway through the YA Programme and beyond.
 - Perform an assessment of the YA Programme response and adaptation (nationally and locally) to Covid
 - Complete an assessment of the YA Youth Leadership Programme including Regional and National Conferences and the National Leadership Academy.
 - Discuss with partners and young people the value of the National Steering Group & National Leadership Academy.

2 Strategic Context

2.1 Welsh Government

Strategies and the Vision for Sport in Wales

- 2.1.1 Welsh government's current Strategy and plans for sport and physical activity are Climbing Higher, published in 2005 and Creating an Active Wales in 2009. However, in 2017 Welsh government requested Sport Wales develop a sector wide Vision for Sport in Wales. Following an extensive consultation and engagement programme, both across the sports sector and wider, the [Vision for Sport in Wales](#) was published in 2018 - '*An active nation where everyone can have a lifelong enjoyment of sport*'.

The New Curriculum for Wales

- 2.1.2 Following extensive consultation, the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021 was passed leading to the new curriculum for Wales commencing its roll out, starting in Year 6 from September 2022, through to Year 11 in 2026. The ambition set was for the curriculum to prepare young people to thrive in a future where digital skills, adaptability and creativity - alongside knowledge - are crucial and where children enjoy learning, and develop skills, knowledge and emotional resilience. By the age of 16, they should be confident, ethical individuals who play an active part in their community and society. They should be prepared to thrive in the new world of work. This will have an impact on the potential of the YA programme within the school environment.

Programme for Government – Wellbeing statement

- 2.1.3 In setting out its programme for 2021 to 2026, Welsh government has a statutory duty to publish a Well-being statement under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The programme set out for 2021 to 2026 is founded on the values of community, equality and social justice, puts collaboration ahead of competition and highlights how government will act to maximise fairness for all and eliminate inequality at every level of society. The 10 well-being objectives align to the seven long-term well-being goals of the WFGA Act and identify the steps it will take to deliver them.
- 2.1.4 Several of the actions relating to these goals align to the work of the Young Ambassador Programme and identify areas for greater focus or connect, namely proposals to explore reform of the school day and the school year; establishing a Youth Panel for Wales; and raising the voice of young people on the world stage. Underpinning all of this is ensuring the wellbeing goals continue to make a difference for everyone, irrespective of where they live, their background or circumstances.

2.2 Sport Wales

- 2.2.1 Sport Wales is the national organisation responsible for developing and promoting sport and physical activity in Wales and, as the national agency for sport, received investment of £41.4m from Welsh Government in 2020/21. Sport Wales also drew down £18.5m from DCMS in 2020/21 (National Lottery).

- 2.2.2 In responding to the Vision for Sport in Wales, Sport Wales sought to set out its own strategy to identify how it would respond to support the delivery of this Vision and published its new strategy '[Enabling Sport in Wales to Thrive](#)' in the summer of 2019.
- 2.2.3 Sport Wales have set out six levels of strategic intent. Funded partners need to be able to make a significant contribution to the first five of these. :
- To be person centred - the needs and motivations of the individual lead the delivery, whether just starting out, aiming to progress or striving for excellence on the world stage.
 - To give every young person a great start - every young person has the skills, confidence and motivation to enable them to enjoy and progress through sport; giving them foundations to lead an active, healthy and enriched life.
 - To ensure everyone has the opportunity to be active through sport - sport is inclusive and provides a great experience for all.
 - To bring people together for the long-term - there is a collaborative, sustainable and successful sports sector, led by collective insight and learning.
 - To showcase the benefits of sport - the impact of sport is evidenced, and sport's reach is fully understood, valued, showcased and celebrated throughout Wales.
 - To be a highly valued organisation - Sport Wales is a respected organisation, striving to over achieve by delivering a first class service through our valued staff.
- 2.2.4 Sport Wales created a Youth Panel in the summer of 2021 which has a strategic role in supporting the YA programme. A full copy of the Sport Wales Youth Panel Terms of Reference is included in the appendices but in summary, the purpose of the Sport Wales Youth Panel (the Youth Panel) is to give a voice to young people in the work of Sport Wales by linking directly to the Board and to oversee the delivery of the Young Ambassador programme in Wales. The work of Sport Wales predominantly impacts on young people across Wales and as such it is important that young people have the opportunity to feed into and impact on the strategic direction of the organisation.

2.3 Youth Sport Trust (YST)

- 2.3.1 Whilst Sport Wales fund the YA programme in Wales, the Young Ambassadors intellectual property sits with the Youth Sport Trust. In 2018, the YST set out their 4-year strategic plan with a revised vision '*A future where every child enjoys the life-changing benefits that come from play and sport*' supported by its mission to '*pioneer new ways of using sport to improve children's wellbeing and give them a brighter future*'. It aimed to achieve this through:
- Transforming Physical Education;
 - Removing barriers to sport;
 - Unlocking potential; and
 - Empowering activism for young people through sport to become local activists, tackling the issues of their generation.

- 2.3.2 The YA programme is key to the final objective within the YST's commitment to equip young people with the skills, confidence, and opportunities to lead change in their communities. Additionally, the YA programme can also play a key role in unlocking potential and removing barriers for young people.
- 2.3.3. This review has taken place during the closing months of the YST's 2018-2022 Strategy. The new YST strategy which will run from 2022-2035 will be launched later this year. Within this strategy there will be a key focus on empowering young people to be changemakers, of which the YA programme will be an important feature.

2.4 Delivery Partners

Local Authorities

- 2.4.1 Key to the success of the programme is the buy in and commitment of 22 Local Authority (LA) partners as it is predominantly through their sports development teams that the YAr programme is delivered. Whilst the programme itself remains a national programme, how it is delivered in each LA varies significantly.
- 2.4.2 Sport Wales has invested in various community and school-based programmes since 2000 (from Dragon sport, 5x60, Active Young People etc), with the majority of the £4.9m of annual investment supporting the employment of a significant workforce across Wales.
- 2.4.3 Within Sport Wales there is currently a drive to create up to 5 Sport Partnerships across Wales, which will significantly change the way that community sport is delivered across Wales. The first of these partnerships, Sport North Wales, went live in 2021 with the appointment of a Director and the formation of the Sport North Wales Board to drive the strategic direction for the region. This partnership is currently made up of around 13 strategic partners, with the six local authorities making up the mainstay of the workforce delivering its objectives on the ground.

National Governing Bodies

- 2.4.4 Several NGBs have established their own YA programmes (e.g. Hockey YA's) aimed at meeting their own strategic needs. Whilst utilising the YA brand name, there is currently little connect to the wider school based programme, as outlined in the findings section.

3 Methodology and approach

3.1 Approach to the study

- 3.1.1 The YA review was undertaken using a collection of both qualitative and quantitative data to ensure that there was a robust evidence base to inform the recommendations for the future of the programme.

STAGE A - ASSESSING

- 3.1.2 In line with the brief provided, the first stage of the process involved assessing a number of key elements including the local, regional and national opportunities with the YA programme; the YA Youth Leadership Programme, including regional and national conferences and the National Leadership Academy (NLA) and the YA programmes, while also considering the response and adaptation (nationally and locally) to Covid-19.
- 3.1.3 To aid this process, data received from the YST and Sport Wales were examined to understand the journey of the programme from its inception through to its current position.
- 3.1.4 Much of this insight was then used to inform the next stage of the process, the development of both a participant and partner organisation survey.

STAGE B – ENGAGING

- 3.1.5 The initial priority was to develop a short survey which could be targeted at both partners, either currently engaged in the programme or with an awareness of the programme as well as the young ambassadors themselves, both current and YA alumni. This was launched at the end of November 2021 and was live until mid-January 2022. Combined these surveys received 47 responses, representing the view of partner organisations and YA programme participants. This successfully drew out key areas of success / improvement and suggested changes.
- 3.1.6 This was followed by an extensive engagement schedule, including discussions with 12 LA partners, 9 NGBs, Disability Sport Wales, the FE sector, the YST and Sport North Wales. This drew out some consistent themes as well as specific areas requiring further consideration.
- 3.1.7 Discussions also took place with the Sport Wales Youth Panel and members of the National Leadership Academy.

STAGE C - SCOPING

- 3.1.8 Further work was undertaken to review other youth leadership / ambassador programmes through both desk research and follow up conversations, to better understand the wider landscape of Ambassador / youth leadership programmes across Wales, how these operate and opportunities for greater connections.

STAGE D - COLLATING

- 3.1.9 The final stage involved bringing these strands together to identify common themes aligned to the wider strategic context in which the programme operates, leading to the development of key recommendations and actions.

4 Key findings

The brief for this work set out to provide an opportunity to celebrate the legacy of the London 2012 Games, but to also shift attention to the next 10 years of opportunities for youth voice and youth leadership throughout sport in Wales. It also sought to identify how the programme needs to adapt to face new challenges in the changing landscape of sport and physical activity in Wales.

In presenting the findings, the approach will be to highlight some of the key positives of the programme before considering some of the challenges, as well as the recommendations for the future.

Positives of the Programme

Through the previous reports and feedback from the engagement process, it is evident that there are significant positives of what the programme has achieved since its inception. Whilst this is understandably a key element, it is felt that a brief summary of these will build on the previously identified positives, drawn out through annual reports and highlighted in numerous social media posts.

Long term commitment and consistency of the programme

The programme has been running since 2009 and the long-term commitment and support, both in terms of resource and profile from Youth Sport Trust and Sport Wales has enabled it to become embedded within the infrastructure of sport in Wales. Whilst there have been local and regional variances in the levels of delivery, its consistency and the

From a YA

“.....the ‘family feeling’ you get from everyone in the young ambassadors programme.”

visible brand and narrative that it has developed compared to other programmes has been identified as a real positive, leading to a greater commitment by partners and their ongoing engagement and support. With limited core investment into the programme (Sport Wales investment into YST programmes = £152,500 for the year 2021/2022) many of the LA's have themselves 'invested' in the programme through staff time, making it a key component in delivering their own local strategic priorities.



From a YA

“How it has persisted through the Covid lockdowns and restrictions. Despite what has been thrown at it, it has still come through. It has continued to produce new ambassadors that have come through the younger years that are well trained, confident and eager to contribute to the Program. It is continuing to fulfil its purpose within schools and local authorities.”

Whilst the framework for the programme is set nationally, with the pathway mapped out, the ability for flexibility of how it is delivered within each LA to address local needs and priorities has been mainly welcomed. Conversations with some LA partners have identified that they are now looking to focus on the community rather than the school setting into the future.

However, with the shift in focus of Sport Wales funded programmes away from purely the school setting to the wider community, the YA programme has also been seen as a vehicle for LA partners to re-connect with schools and rebuild some of the relationships which may have diminished over time.

Senior strategic support and advocacy for the programme

Instrumental to the success of the programme has been the high level of advocacy and support provided by Sport Wales, namely through its CEO and the passion and drive of key members of staff.

The support of a focused lead officer, employed by the Youth Sport Trust has also been vital. This advocacy has led to positive wider recognition of the programme.



Addressing Inequality

Whilst there are some positive examples of diversity of YA's across Wales, particularly amongst Bronze YA's, there needs to be more work carried out to understand the local and regional variations and whether this reflects local population groups. There are some good examples of LA's ensuring that the scope of the programme includes targeting Special Schools, for example, Play Unified. Inspired by a simple principle: training together and playing together is a quick path to understanding, acceptance and friendship, and breaking down the barriers that exist for people with intellectual disabilities.

In October 2015, a three-year collaboration agreement was established between Special Olympics GB (SOGB) and the YST to drive forward the vision of Play Unified.

Play Unified aims to:

- Through youth advocacy, get schools to successfully integrate Play Unified into whole school delivery to help develop inclusive environments through sport.

Ceredigion Council

*Through external funding (a one-off grant from Special Olympics in 2016), **Play Unified** has supported young people with learning difficulties and focuses on leadership development and encouraging activity. The LA has continued to support this project through its core funding.*

- Provide young people with intellectual disabilities opportunities to lead and participate in inclusive sport projects alongside their peers with and without additional support needs.
- Strengthen leadership and sport participation pathways for young people with intellectual disabilities.
- Increase awareness of SOGB within the education sector.

Providing young people with a voice

The links to the Sport Wales Youth Panel has ensured that the voice of young people has, and continues to be heard. There are numerous other examples of the programme highlighting the voice of the young person in sport as well as the programme being a stepping-stone to influencing a wider audience and bringing about change.

From an active YA – positives of the programme

“Opportunities to attend NLA External Opportunities i.e., Sport Wales Youth Board, YST Board, Street Games Active in Mind Training”

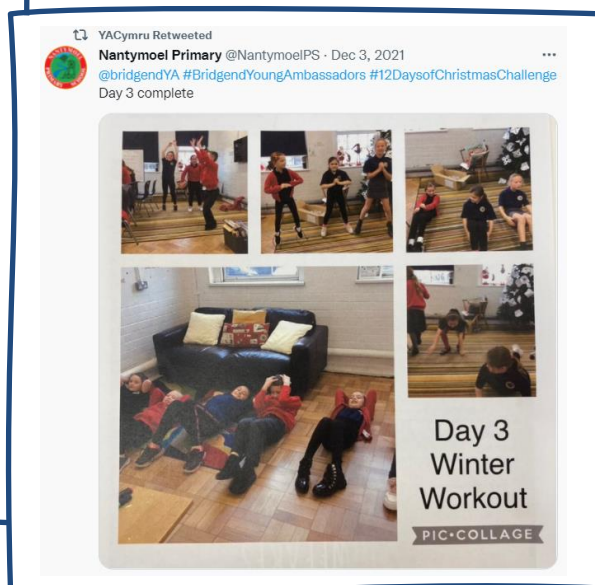
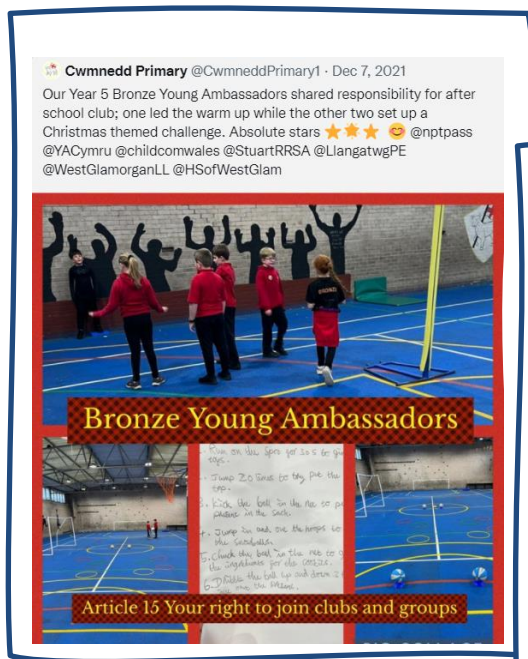


Aligned to this, recognition of the programme and what it can deliver for young people has been evident throughout with key advocates recognising the impact of the programme.



A pathway of progression

At its inception, the YA programme clearly mapped out the progression for YA's from primary through to secondary schools and beyond, through the Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum level awards. The strength of Bronze YA's was seen as their ability to instigate activity within the school environment and in creating links to school councils. This approach to encouraging activity is supported by leads in individual authorities driving targeted LA based campaigns e.g. the Christmas Challenge in Bridgend.



From an active YA
"Good opportunities
for future
progression,
providing skills for
future employment,"

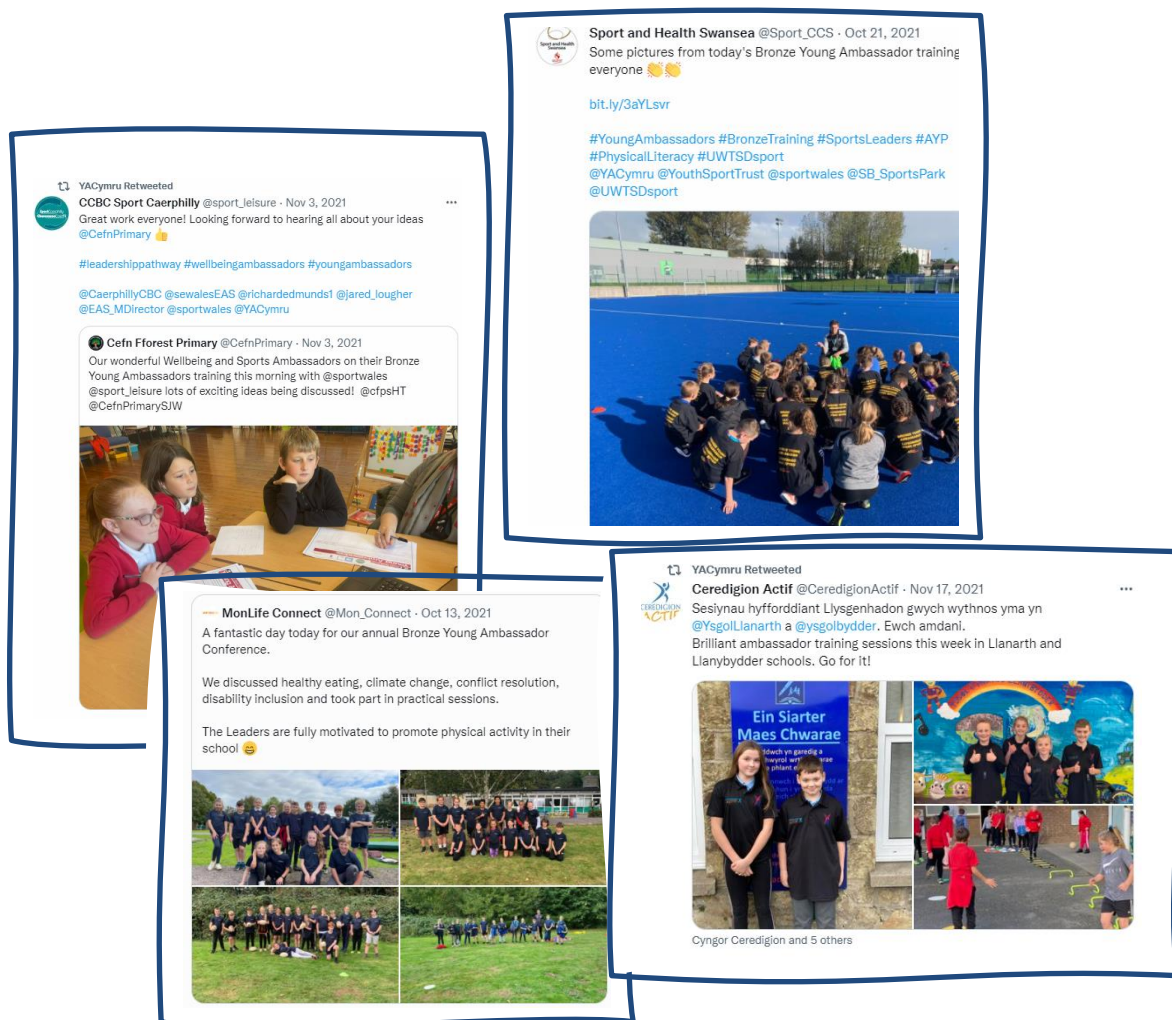
The enhanced focus on the leadership skills (rather than the pure delivery of activity element) as YA's move through this pathway was considered to be a real strength of the programme.

Whilst elements of the pathway may have not been effective as they could be (an area which will be picked up later in the report), the added benefit highlighted by several partners is also the pathway the programme provides to employment opportunities, particularly within

the LA setting. Many YA's become coaches for LA sport programmes and in some cases progress through to become full time employees, more so for individuals who do not leave the area to go to University. This was noted as a key element, particularly in respect of more rural LA's where this progression provides positive employment opportunities, often where limited opportunities normally exist.

Training

Training supports the upskilling at each level of the YA programme, with the Bronze training being delivered locally by each LA through to national delivery at Gold Conference annual events. Training for the NLA is also coordinated centrally. The Gold conference particularly was identified as being 'inspirational'. Due to the impact of Covid, programme delivery predominately moved online and has sparked the consideration of blended approaches going forward. Several LA's also mentioned that they also provided Disability Inclusion training (DIT) to the YA's, thus enhancing their knowledge in this vital area.



Challenges

This section identifies the challenges facing the YA programme and combined with the following section (recommendations), sets out what changes should be considered in the future.

Influence

The YA programme needs to increase its strategic influence and profile across Welsh government and partner organisations. While the programme continues to be well supported by Sport Wales, the YST and LA Officers, there is a concern that not enough is being done to ensure that key decision-makers value the programme and / or understand the impact that it is making.

For the YA programme to achieve its potential, feedback suggests that the programme needs to be visible in key national publications and championed by government senior officials and influencing bodies e.g. Public Health Wales, the Children’s Commissioner, Future Generations Commissioner etc., as well as being embedded in the emerging Regional Sport Partnership network.

Leadership

Greater definition on what outcomes Sport Wales is trying to achieve through the YA programme is required. As the programme has evolved, delivery partner priorities have been influenced by investment, personnel changes (within Sport Wales and LAs themselves), and varied school engagement. These changes, combined with the introduction of new versions of the YA programme (i.e. NGB awards, community YAs etc.), make it increasingly difficult to define what the national aims of the programme are and how national outcomes can be measured.

Through consultation and survey feedback, delivery partners were concerned that the “kudos” of the YA programme was falling short, with YA numbers and “sign ups” being the key metrics reported against. There was active encouragement for programme outputs to become a greater focus, to achieve better regional-national alignment and (relevant to the influencing points above), to better reflect the wider benefits of the programme and how these interact with agency / partner aspirations.

Partner Alignment

LAs and to a lesser extent Colleges, have largely led the way in supporting and resourcing the YA programme. More recently, NGBs have looked to introduce their own YA programmes to attract youth to events and club programmes that require greater workforce support.



While NGB programmes have been successful in a small number of sports i.e. Hockey Wales, the majority of NGBs consulted with had a limited understanding of the YA programme, were unsure how to engage, and cited challenges in building relationships with LAs and schools to activate their respective programmes.

Where NGB YA programmes have been introduced, feedback from LAs suggest that often these programmes are more aimed at “sporty” kids (with club membership being a requirement to entry) and ambassador awards not aligning with LA programmes already active, which leads to confusion amongst schools.



Young Ambassadors

With limited resources available across partner organisations to deliver the YA programme, further support is required to avoid silo working, to make it easier for schools to engage in YA programmes, and most importantly to deliver opportunities that supports leadership and / or workforce pathways for young people.

From a YA

“I think it might help some of the younger ambassadors if they had a bit more structure and things to do. I think there also needs to be more emphasis on coaching outside of schools (I know that being a young ambassador isn't all about coaching but I feel it does help build confidence).”

Recruitment

While programme awareness amongst YA partner organisations (LAs, schools, colleges etc.) is high, further efforts need to be made to recruit youth to the programme and to share the positive outcomes being achieved at a local-regional level.

Since launching social media content in 2016, across the three channels currently active (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram), total page followers are less than 5,000 which represents less than 1% of the total population of 7-24 year olds in Wales. It could also be argued that a large proportion of social media page followers represent YAs already engaged in the programme, highlighting the need for a more targeted approach to attract and retain youth to the programme.

From a YA

“Lockdowns and restrictions have caused young people to become sedentary, unsociable and reluctant to do anything. Young people need new interactions and time being active in order to maintain a healthy mental and physical wellbeing, and this is the role that the programme needs to fulfil”

Through consultation with partners, it was widely agreed that further support needs to be provided to help recruit more youth to the programme, particularly following lengthy covid restrictions where interest may have diminished and will require relationships with schools to be re-activated.

Pathway Retention

The YA programme pathway has some very clear drop off points, particularly the proportion of bronze ambassadors transitioning to the silver ambassador programme. As highlighted through consultation, while there is a perception that bronze YAs are generally representative of the population, as YAs progress through to silver / gold awards, this may no longer be the case. As a result, national programme reporting is somewhat distorted, with disability and other minority groups being largely reflective of primary school young ambassador involvements.

The key reasons for pathway drop off points are aligned to delivery partners (LAs and NGBs) introducing application processes to manage annual silver / gold ambassador programme intakes, a lack of programme clarity (particularly at a bronze and silver level), limited tracking of YAs across schools and colleges, and increased time constraints / demands on youth as they move through higher education.

91% of bronze ambassadors will not transition to the silver award

78% of silver ambassadors will not transition to the gold award

84% of gold ambassadors will not transition to the platinum award

Resource Support

Ultimately LAs receiving “core Sport Wales investment” determine what scale of funding is prioritised to support YA programme delivery. While this funding model provides autonomy for LAs to match funding with regional-local needs, the inherent risk is that the YA programme is not seen to a priority or to be “working” and funds may be directed elsewhere. Similarly with limited programme prescription, the Sport Wales locus of control in setting direction and programme outputs (as mentioned above) is low and overtly reliant on LA support.

From a Partner

“Schools don't value it. Cardiff is too large an authority to roll out the YA programme on the same scale as some of the smaller LAs. Hugely time consuming programme for a LA without a specific role.”

Based on the data provided by the YST and the consultation sessions completed, it is evident that there is varied partner engagement with the YA programme currently, which from a national outlook creates “blockages” in young people accessing the programme and reaching targeted communities e.g. areas of deprivation, young people with a disability etc.

42% of youth (aged 5-24) live in the 5 most populated LAs in Wales

23% of YAs come from the 5 most populated LAs in Wales

27% of youth (aged 5-24) live in the 5 most income deprived LAs in Wales

21% of YAs come from the 5 most income deprived LAs in Wales

Through survey feedback and consultation sessions, it was suggested that more national staff are needed to allow the programme to meet its strategic and operational objectives, that greater support for silver/ bronze ambassadors is needed to improve retention rates, and that the supply of programme merchandise would increase the YA brand and alleviate LA programme costs.

From a partner

“Provide more support for the staff that support the YA programme on the ground, either through more money for training / opportunities / recognition or encouraging organisations to put the YA programme and/or volunteering at the heart of what they do.”

In all cases, LAs advocated for core Sport Wales investment to extend beyond a one-year funding term, which inadvertently leads to job security concerns and high turnover rates, resulting in a loss of programme staff knowledge (following training and development investment) and prevents genuine relationships with schools being formed.

Communication

A number of stakeholders welcomed conversations with Sport Wales to help shape the direction and future priorities of the YA programme. Exacerbated by covid and limited national staff resource, the information flow from Sport Wales was reported to be far less frequent and created a feeling of silo working.

While there were some cases of LAs coming together to share learning and resources, it was also reported that this was becoming a rare event and opportunities to bring partners together (LAs and NGBs) to network and collaborate, particularly after the disruption created by covid, must be prioritised.

From a YA

“Having to work remotely outside of school I haven’t enjoyed not engaging face to face with other ambassadors in my school I found it difficult having the online meetings after a day online with school and having to do zoom sessions everyday with my swim coach I felt that the absence of a PE teacher from our School was missed which if we were meeting and it hadn’t been Covid I think they might have been there sometimes. They would have helped us to get ideas into our school”

Pathway Retention Data Sources:

- Youth Sport Trust Ambassador Report (2010-2019) – supplied by Aled Davies.
- [Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation \(full Index update with ranks\): 2019 | GOV.WALES](#)
- [Population estimates by local authority and age \(gov.wales\)](#)

Detailed population and deprivation data is included within the Appendices section.

5 Recommended Objectives and Actions

Highlighted within the [Wales Leadership Interventions 19-20 Final Report](#), the aims of the YA programme are summarised to:

- Be the young person's voice for PE and School Sport in their school and community;
- Promote the positive values of sport;
- Be a role model and champion for PE and school sport; and to
- Increase participation opportunities and healthy lifestyles to help get every child hooked on sport for life.

As we approach the 10-year anniversary of London 2012 it is timely to undertake this review. The impact of Covid 19 has forced some changes to the way the programme has been delivered, and it is evident that emerging priorities for community and school sport in Wales, add momentum to the need to re-set the future of the programme. The findings have clearly identified some key strengths of the programme but also a number of areas, that with a stronger steer, may deliver more impact going forwards. It is in this context that these recommendations are proposed.

Refreshed Vision for the YA programme in Wales

Whilst the flexibility of the programme is seen as a strength, there needs to be an agreed Vision for YA Cymru which all current and future partners of the programme need to be engaged in developing and aligned to deliver against. It is recognised that this needs to be owned by the YST, who hold the intellectual property of the programme, but also by Sport Wales who fund and support the majority of partners through which the YA programme currently operates.

With the Vision set there will also need to be further work completed to re-define / commit to the purpose of the programme and the non-negotiables i.e. how do we retain that longevity and consistency that is valued by partners, whilst allowing local needs to be addressed under its operating banner?

Underpinning this, there needs to be a re-clarification of the purpose of a YA in supporting this Vision and an aligned plan to deliver and communicate such changes through a united approach.

Recommendations (R)

R#1 Develop a new Vision for the YA programme.

R#2 Clarify the purpose of the programme and agree consistent outputs in collaboration with delivery partners.

Resourcing

Current resource committed to the programme comes from a number of sources including Sport Wales, the YST and partners (LA and NGBs).

Human Resource

Over the past few years Sport Wales has undergone a significant change in its staffing structure with key members of staff and advocates for the programme moving on. Similarly, several local authorities have also seen changes in staff coordinating the programme.

Within Sport Wales itself, the key aspects identified as being core to supporting the YA programme now sit across a number of teams and individual staff roles (*Partnership Development Lead; Education & Health Lead; Sport Partnership Relationship Manager; Workforce Lead & Officer; Relationship Manager; LA Officers; Policy Leads*). Additionally, there is a lead officer, funded by Sport Wales but employed by the YST, overseeing the programme at an operational level.

In ensuring that the YA programme is able to fulfil its potential in terms of supporting and influencing key strategic priorities across Wales, there needs to be clarity of where the strategic oversight of the programme sits within Sport Wales as well as determining the role that the YST could strategically play to support this (e.g. connecting on the new curriculum, health & wellbeing, potential links to wider sector ambassador programmes etc.). Additionally, in being able to gain the full impact of the positives of the programme, there needs to be greater comms and advocacy support to raise the profile of the programme and improve youth recruitment and engagement going forward.

As highlighted in the programme challenges section, the short term of Sport Wales funding to support LA programmes, and ultimately the YA programme on the ground, has led to significant variations in delivery approaches as well as a more distanced relationship with schools. The shift to Sport Partnerships will inadvertently bring about further change and raises the opportunity to develop YA Interns in each region to work alongside regional teams to activate the programme on the ground.

- R#3 To review and confirm the best staffing model to achieve the strategic and operational aims of the YA programme.**
- R#4 To ring-fence a proportion of core investment to support the agreed YA outcomes and outputs (R#2) within every LA in Wales.**
- R#5 To extend LA core investment beyond a one year term.**
- R#6 To introduce funded interns within each Sport partnership.**

Workforce - Training & Development

Training of YA's at bronze and silver level has in part, predominately been left to LA's to coordinate. As a result of Covid several LA's developed their own online resources. Providing more centralised support to establishing both an online e-learning and face to face resources with core components would assist in re-establishing some standardised messages and themes, whilst still allowing flexibility to apply delivery to the local environment. To support this, further training of Gold Ambassadors on technology to support such delivery may be required.

The opportunity to share best practice and learning has come out as a key theme. Whilst there was a strong level of support for the continuation of the Gold Conference, there was a call for more opportunities including similar high-profile conferences for wider audiences i.e. delivered regionally, silver focus as well as opportunities to establish regional learning forums e.g. aligned to future regional partnerships.

A key aspect of the programme is the need to recruit for diversity, particularly at the Gold level. Providing support to YA's and LA's on how to develop and deliver recruitment campaigns would greatly assist in meeting this objective. Similarly, whilst several LA's mention delivering Disability Inclusive Training (DIT) a more proactive and coordinated support approach led by Sport Wales, would help to embed inclusive delivery across the whole of Wales.

There is the opportunity to share training and development opportunities on common themes (e.g. diversity, recruitment, planning, marketing etc) as well as take learning from other sectors in a more coordinated way.

R#7 Investigate opportunities to provide YAs with a recognised qualification, that can support wider employment opportunities.

R#8 Complete a review in partnership with the YST to determine what training and support services may be offered to enhance YA online and in-person training opportunities, at all levels.

Training & Kit

Whilst the Gold and Platinum levels of the programme are well resourced in terms of training, conferences and kit, the feedback suggests that it is down to individual LAs to fund provision at the bronze level (training, kit etc). In truly valuing all aspects of the programme and the volunteers, further consideration needs to be given to the provision of core funding to support these elements.

R#9 Consider how resources may be provided to support the volunteer network at all levels.

Commercial Opportunities

With a 'workforce' of over 2,500 across Wales annually, further work needs to be undertaken to better understand the 'value in kind / social value' of the programme, which has the potential to open up considerable commercial and other funding opportunities to provide greater support across the number of themes identified in the recommendations. It is recognised that this concept / approach would need further discussions with the YST.

R#10 Undertake a social value exercise to determine the commercial value of the YA programme.

R#11 Pursue commercial opportunities and consider partnerships that can directly benefit YAs involved in the programme e.g. student discount cards, cash rewards etc. (see *Hockey Wales links with USW insert above*).

Recruitment and Retention

Marketing & Promotion

As referenced above, the YA programme is currently reaching 1% of the 7-24 year population in Wales, through its social media platforms; and conceivably this engagement is largely represented by youth already involved in the programme.

To increase the programmes reach and engagement with young people across Wales, it is recommended that a digital strategy is developed which focuses on:

- Creating a dedicated web page on the Sport Wales website which acts as a central information point and links to partner programmes;
- Increasing social media engagement, by partnering with organisations, and increasing "bottom-up" content;
- Actively engaging with the media to promote the value of the programme, particularly within areas of deprivation and / or where programme uptake has been limited;
- Connecting social media and promotional activities with targeted individuals (i.e. Ministers and civil servants; and
- Establishing monitoring tools that allow Sport Wales to accurately track and monitor website and social media engagement (impressions, click through rates (CTRs) etc.).

The development and implementation of a digital strategy will play a critical role in improving the reach of the YA programme. Further, closer monitoring of analytics will allow Sport Wales to understand where community engagement is limited and how "community activation" programmes, may generate greater interest and ultimately more participant involvement.

The added value of an effective digital strategy is that it allows Sport Wales to strategically increase awareness and support of the YA programme, by connecting directly with key partners and individuals, on a regular basis. Further, heightened analytics would place the programme in a far stronger position, should the commercialisation of the programme (as suggested above) be considered.

R#12 To commission the development of a YA digital strategy.

R#13 Identify and commit to the resourcing requirements needed to deliver against the YA programme digital strategy.

R#14 Monitor digital strategy outputs in line with programme outcomes and objectives.

NGB Pathway Programmes

Although not the immediate focus of the YA programme, it does equip young people with leadership qualities / skills that are highly transferrable to sport coaching and officiating roles. It seems a missed opportunity to not make a concerted effort to connect NGB programmes into the YA programme, particularly within areas of the pathway that experience significant “drop off”.

It is advised that Sport Wales support NGBs to develop a “sport ambassador” programme that attracts and recruits young people towards coaching and officiating roles. For this approach to be successful, NGBs need to be well supported to develop coaching and officiating pathways, that provide appropriate training and development support for YAs. Further, NGBs need to be made aware of young people that have been involved in the YA programme (see tracking comments below) and align their respective programmes to the overall vision and agreed programme outputs.

R#15 Sport Wales in collaboration with LAs target and support a sample of NGBs to develop pathways that look to address critical drop off points.

Tracking

The nature of the YA programme is not linear, with young people moving into new schools, colleges, universities and in some cases employment throughout their involvement in the programme. The tracking of young people within the young ambassador programme is variable, with application processes being introduced at various stages of the pathway.

A lack of tracking information provides two fundamental issues, the first is that young people actively involved in the programme cannot be contacted directly as they move into new school or college environments, secondly, it is very difficult to understand why YAs “exit” the programme and / or to identify if they continue to be involved in volunteering in a different way after doing so e.g. becoming a sport coach or official.

With the understanding that data tracking programmes can be very expensive and a significant burden to administer, it is recommended that:

R#16 A “pilot” tracking system is set up with a targeted region, where some level of data capture exists.

This system will look to share YA programme data across key drop off points (schools, colleges etc.), and using a sample approach, aim to track what involvement youth who “exit” the programme may have in wider volunteering roles.

This project will also allow Sport Wales to better understand the longitudinal benefits the programme may have (i.e. What % of bronze ambassadors commit to volunteering roles when they exit the programme?); and to ascertain if sharing data increases the number of young people that stay involved in the YA programme at critical drop off points. Improving data tracking may also help other partners such as NGBs connect with young people as they look to further develop or evolve YA programmes to support workforce gaps and or event opportunities.

R#17 Based on the findings of the “pilot” tracking system consider how a national tracking system may be supported.

Communication

Based on consultation sessions and survey feedback, it is apparent that partners are / will be changing the way that they deliver the YA programme into the future. Following covid restrictions and the need to work “differently”, various internal reviews to consider how the YA programme should be best delivered have been completed. Some key changes proposed include, increased online training, shifts in focus (i.e. a greater emphasis on the bronze ambassador programme) and community versus school delivery approaches.

In parallel, Sport Wales / the YST have had time to review the YA programme and dependent on the response to this report, may wish to take the programme in an alternative direction, to protect its future and make sure that it can make a stronger contribution towards national priorities i.e. equality and inclusion.

There is real desire amongst partners (LAs, FECs and NGBs) to come together to consider how the YA programme can best supported and delivered into the future. To achieve this outcome it is recommended that:

R#18 To set up a National Committee (represented by LA, NGB and FEC members) to discuss this review and oversee its recommendations.

R#19 To coordinate a series of meetings with NGBs (and LAs) to discuss how they can align with the YA programme individually and as a collective i.e. an outdoor sports group.

R#20 To establish an e-platform that allows partners to seamlessly share programme resources and ideas.

- END -

6. Appendices Section

6.1 Acronyms

DIT	Disability Inclusion training
FEC	Further Education College
LA	Local Authorities
NGB	National Governing Bodies of Sport in Wales
NLA	National Leadership Academy SOGB Special Olympics GB
WFGA	Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
YA	Young Ambassadors
YST	Youth Sport Trust

6.2 List of Consultees

Local Authorities

Bridgend

Cardiff

Carmarthenshire

Ceredigion

Conwy

Flintshire

Gwynedd

Merthyr Tydfil

Neath Port Talbot

Pembrokeshire

Rhondda Cynon Taf

Torfaen

NGBs

Canoe Wales

Cricket Wales

Hockey Wales

RYA Cymru

Snowsport

Swim Wales

Other Partners

Colegau Cymru

Disability Sport Wales

Sport North Wales

Youth Sport Trust

National Leadership Academy

Sport Wales Youth Panel

Partner Survey responses

Aura Leisure

Denbighshire Leisure

Powys Council

Street Games

Swansea Council

Wrexham Leisure

3 x Primary schools

6.3 YA Programme Data Analysis

Population

42% of young people (aged 5-24) live in:

- Cardiff (15%)
- Swansea (8.5%)
- Rhondda Cynon Taf (7.5%)
- Carmarthenshire (5.5%)
- Caerphilly (5.5%)

23% of YAs come from the 5 most populated LAs in Wales

18% of bronze ambassadors come from the 5 most populated LAs in Wales

31% of silver ambassadors come from the 5 most populated LAs in Wales

22% of gold ambassadors come from the 5 most populated LAs in Wales

48% of platinum ambassadors come from the 5 most populated LAs in Wales

Deprivation

26% of youth (aged 5-24) live in the 5 most income deprived LAs in Wales

- Newport (9%)
- Rhondda Cynon Taf (7.5%)
- Caerphilly (5.5%)
- Blaenau Gwent (2%)
- Merthyr Tydfil (2%)

21% of YAs come from the 5 most income deprived LAs in Wales

15% of bronze ambassadors come from the 5 most income deprived LAs in Wales

20% of silver ambassadors come from the 5 most income deprived LAs in Wales

23% of gold ambassadors come from the 5 most income deprived LAs in Wales

24% of platinum ambassadors come from the 5 most income deprived LAs in Wales

General

91% of bronze ambassadors will not transition to the silver ambassador award

78% of silver ambassadors will not transition to the gold ambassador award

84% of gold ambassadors will not transition to the platinum ambassador award

Data Sources

- Youth Sport Trust Ambassador Report (2010-2019) – supplied by Aled Davies
- [Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation \(full Index update with ranks\): 2019 | GOV.WALES](#)
- [Population estimates by local authority and age \(gov.wales\)](#)

6.4 Exemplars aligned to Project Recommendations

- R#4 To ring-fence a proportion of core investment to support the agreed YA outcomes and outputs (R#2) within every LA in Wales

[sportscotland partner investment](#)

[Tū Manawa Active Aotearoa | Sport New Zealand](#) (EDI focus)

[Sport Wales Calls4Action](#)

- R#6 To introduce funded interns within each Sport partnership

[Sport New Zealand Graduate Programme](#)

or apprenticeships – [Urdd](#); [WRU](#); [Cardiff Met](#)

- R#7 Investigate opportunities to provide YAs with a recognised qualification, that can support wider employment opportunities

[DofE - The Duke of Edinburgh's Award](#)

[Instructor Qualification Pathway](#)

[University of Otago \(NZ\) Student Leadership Awards](#)

- R#10 Undertake a social value exercise to determine the value of the YA programme

[Two Circles](#)

[Sports Sponsorship Agency](#)

[Sport Wales](#)

[Sport & Recreation Alliance](#)

[Sport Australia](#)

- R#11 Pursue commercial opportunities and consider partnerships that can directly benefit YAs involved in the programme e.g., student discount cards.

[Commercial Partnerships](#)

[Ski Club of Great Britain](#)

- R#12 To commission the development of a YA digital strategy

[Creative & Design Agency | Jamhot](#)

[Home - Story Shop](#)

[Spirit Media](#)

- R#20 To establish an e-platform that allows partners to seamlessly share programme resources and ideas

[Hive Learning](#) – End user upload/ chat functionality

[Welsh Athletics](#) – Document storage (centrally managed)

6.5 Covid -19 impact on the YA Programme

