

## **About The Prince's Trust Cymru**

At The Prince's Trust Cymru we work hard to create brighter futures for young people aged 11 to 30, empowering them to develop skills and confidence to live, learn and earn.

Many of the young people we help are in, or leaving care, facing challenges such as homelessness, mental health issues, are struggling in school or have been in trouble with the law.

Across our programmes, The Prince's Trust Cymru has supported more than 3,500 young people across Wales in the past year, with 78% progressing into employment, training or volunteering.

Young people are the key to a positive and prosperous future for all of us. That is why every young person in Wales should have the chance to succeed.

Our flexible programmes give young people the practical and financial support they need to stabilise their lives. We help them to develop key skills, while boosting their confidence and motivation, so they can continue to dream big.

Our Achieve programme supports almost 1000 young people in Wales who are disengaged from education. We work in mainstream schools supporting those at risk of exclusion and in a variety of EOTAS settings including pupil referral units (PRUs) and prisons.

The programme is completely flexible allowing schools or EOTAS settings to run Achieve over a few months or a few years encouraging young people to try new things, develop as people and reengage with education.

The flexible units of the programme include the opportunity for young people to:

- deliver a community project to make a real difference to the local area

- learn all sorts of new skills to help with meeting new people and building confidence
- take on a business challenge to put entrepreneurial skills to the test
- improve their knowledge of how to live a healthy life

As part of Achieve young people also have the opportunity to work towards entry Level 3 and Level 2 Prince's Trust qualifications. These are recognised by Qualifications Wales and can support young people into other education routes and employment.

Currently The Prince's Trust Cymru is working in 22 EOTAS settings including provision in Swansea, Cardiff, Wrexham, Debigshire, Powys and across the south Wales Valleys. Achieve has been supporting the staff in these settings with valuable resources which enable them to support, encourage and develop their learners.

## **Our Response**

### **Teachers and Youth Workers**

Many EOTAS have strong links with mainstream schools, others are part of a school, often on the same site or very close. In many settings teachers from linked schools offer support by providing subject focused teaching to support young people's learning and help them achieve recognised qualifications. However, we often hear from EOTAS staff that it can be very hit and miss if the teachers turn up which effects the motivation of young people and can be demoralising.

In some settings there is a real disconnect from the schools and EOTAS with questions over the role that teachers play and what is required of them by the EOTAS. The staff we work with tell us that teachers struggle with the flexibility of EOTAS and that those with a youth work background are more likely to thrive in the EOTAS environment.

However, in others there is daily communication between the school and EOTAS. For example, in one setting we work in there is a joint decision made between the young person, teaching staff and EOTAS staff where is best for the young person to attend that day. They work together to make sure that the young person is in the right setting for them and is therefore getting the most out of their education and maintaining strong links with their school.

Our experience working in EOTAS has shown that the environment and culture of provision is critical to success. The difference that a welcoming

environment with no stigma, where the young person feels heard, can make is visible and lasting.

## **Special Educational Needs (SENs) / Additional Learning Needs (ALNs) and Mental Health**

There is a high number of young people with special educational needs in EOTAS provision. Mental health issues are also very prominent across EOTAS settings. Ineffective support for young people with SENs/ALNs and mental health concerns often manifests in disruptive behaviour with a lack of response to authority. Our experience has shown that non-traditional learning styles are needed to support these young people.

Small group learning in a nurturing setting is supportive to young people's needs and development. We encourage the use of active learning styles with a focus on practical application for these learners.

We have also seen the value of flexible lesson length and the use of responsive breaks. For example, if the class is getting restless and there is a risk of behaviour escalating, a break is introduced. The flexible approach to learning means that all timetabling is treated as guidance rather than being set in stone.

In settings where this level of flexibility has proved too challenging, half days have been introduced. In one setting we work in there is a morning and afternoon group. There is a set of short engaging lessons in the morning with one group and then a different group of young people in the afternoon. The groups are set depending on when in the day the individual is at their best, which in turn creates a good atmosphere for all.

At The Prince's Trust Cymru we work with young people of secondary school age and upwards. We have recognised that the young people in EOTAS provision are getting younger, presenting with more challenging behaviour and often have a number of SEN/ALN and/or mental health concerns. We are seeing more young people joining EOTAs provision straight from primary school without attending mainstream secondary schooling.

## **Well-being**

In most of the settings we work in, well-being projects run throughout the year. Many EOTAS also have a staff member whose sole focus is the young people's well-being. Others have a week of well-being focused activities.

Most of these initiatives are driven by and decided on by staff in individual EOTAS. Staff we have spoken to have observed that for many students the improvement in their well-being has been the most noticeable change since they left mainstream schooling.

In many cases the more tailored and focused support available in EOTAS make it the right place for young people to access mental health support.

It is important to recognise the key role of outside influences on young people's well-being. For example, Achieve has a unit on gang culture, but there is low take up of the unit in Wales and staff tend to use it only if an issue comes up.

## **Finance**

We agree that funding for young people's education should follow them. This system currently makes it attractive for schools to have internal EOTAS provision or link with outside provision. This also makes bringing young people back into mainstream schooling, if they are ready much easier, and encourages teachers to maintain positive relationships with EOTAS.

As stated above, flexible learning styles are critical for learners in EOTAS provision. However, many tell us that there is pressure to justify their curriculum and style of learning which can be frustrating and make staff feel that they are not trusted to make decisions on what is right for their learners. Many hope that the new curriculum will ease this but those that are linked to or within schools are not sure how they will fit into the wider school's curriculum and if the EOTAS staff (who are often youth workers rather than teachers) will be included in the school's curriculum planning or will be given flexibility to plan separately.

Young people in the EOTAS settings we work in are very responsive to practical sessions, for example those which explore catering and cooking. However, due to finance and facilities available opportunities are limited.

It is worth mentioning the transport costs (usually taxis) to enable young people to attend EOTAS provision, particularly if it is not on a school site. We believe that these costs would be reduced if there was more EOTAS provision at schools rather than young people being sent to EOTAS served by multiple schools which can be a long way from a young person's home.

## **Resources and Quality**

Our experience has shown that the support available to EOTAS settings varies between settings and schools. In speaking to staff, schools, and young people it is clear that the flexibility of EOTAS is critical but the lack of support to enable this to work well in some settings is causing challenges.

Achieve's flexibility and informality is a good fit for EOTAS provision and therefore it is attractive for staff. Our resources are easily accessible allowing staff to choose the most relevant units for their young people. We have Prince's Trust Cymru staff who can support at all stages and we can also provide Adventurous Activities for added enrichment. Achieve also supports learners towards recognised qualifications.

However, we are concerned that in some settings the resources to support the staff appear weak and some will grab at anything offered to them which is a quality concern.

## **Attainment**

When working in EOTAS it is important to recognise that attainment, success and achievement is different to mainstream schooling. For many of the young people in EOTAS support just getting up and having a positive engagement with education is success, improvement and a positive development. For others it is improved attendance. This can be a step onto reengagement in education and ultimately qualifications.

There is more push for students in the GCSE years (Years 10 and 11) to reach a recognised level of academic attainment with a focus on Maths or Numeracy and English Language.