



Wakefield Youth Service Report

Wakefield Children's Services Authority Area

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Introduction

1. Wakefield Young People's Service provides a range of opportunities in locations that include youth and community centres, libraries, Connexions centres, schools, Wakefield College, mobile units and detached projects. The service is structured as three divisions, led by the Head of Young People's Service, the Young People's Service manager and three team managers. There are 47 full-time and 103 part-time workers, giving a full-time equivalent of 83 youth workers. The service is commissioned by Connexions West Yorkshire to manage 21 personal advisers. The Young People's Service is located within the Inclusion and Lifelong Learning division of the Family Services Directorate of the local authority. The budget made available by the local authority in 2004-05 was £2.48 million, 1.36% of the education budget. More than £1 million was derived from contracts, partnership work and grants. In 2004-05, 27% of young people aged 13 to 19 were reached by the service.

2. The joint area review was enhanced to enable coverage of the young people's service. Inspectors considered the self-assessment and met with officers and a cross-section of staff and young people. They reviewed key service documentation and carried out direct observations of a small sample of youth work sessions in Wakefield City, as part of the neighbourhood study, as well as observations within each of the eight neighbourhoods.

Part A: Summary of the report

Main findings

Effectiveness and value for money

3. Wakefield offers a good youth service that provides good value for money. Many young people, in particular those in targeted provision, achieve well and make good progress. The quality of most youth work is good, although youth workers are not always sufficiently alert to the needs of individual young people. There is some inappropriate deployment of staff. The quality of the curriculum and resources are good overall. The service is successful in reaching a good proportion of young people. Leadership and management are good. Youth workers are highly committed to the service. Thorough and rigorous quality visits carried out by the management team identify accurately strengths and areas for development. Young people are involved effectively in evaluating the service and in planning provision. Strong partnerships with publicly funded bodies such as the Connexions service benefit young people, but joint working with the voluntary youth sector is underdeveloped. The service makes good use of information and communication technologies.

Strengths

- Good achievements by young people
- Much good youth work practice
- A broad curriculum that reaches a good proportion of young people
- Good leadership by senior managers
- Thorough and rigorous quality visits that lead to improvements in the service
- Effective and sometimes outstanding involvement of young people in evaluating and shaping the service

Areas for development

- Youth workers do not always take sufficiently into account young people's needs in planning sessions and programmes
- Some inappropriate deployment of staff
- Underdeveloped partnerships with the voluntary youth sector

Key aspect inspection grades

Key aspect		Grade
1	Standards of young people's achievement	3
	Quality of youth work practice	3
2	Quality of curriculum and resources	3
3	Strategic and operational leadership and management	3

The table above shows overall grades about provision. Inspectors make judgements based on the following scale:

Grade 4: A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for users:

Grade 3: A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users:

Grade 2: A service that delivers only minimum requirements for users:

Grade 1: A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for users.

Part B: The youth service's contribution to Every Child Matters outcomes

4. The Young People's Service makes a good contribution to most of the outcomes identified in *Every Child Matters*. The curriculum is based on the five themes and planning at all levels incorporates them. Information and advice is readily available on a range of health issues that young people have identified as important to them, and a counselling service has been established. An informative Youth Fax booklet is distributed to all Year 10 pupils in secondary schools. Thorough procedures are in place to ensure the safety of young people. However, at times, the level of supervision in youth centres is insufficient. The service supports young people well to take part in the democratic process and in developing their skills to become responsible members of the community. Effective collaboration with Connexions offers the most vulnerable young people information, advice and guidance about their futures. A variety of projects helps them gain confidence and skills to take the next step towards employment and training.

Part C: Commentary on the key aspects

Key Aspect 1: Standards of young people's achievements and the quality of youth work practice

5. The standards of young people's achievements are good overall. In the small sample of work observed during the inspection, the standards achieved were satisfactory or better in most sessions. In the best sessions, young people identified their personal targets and their progress. For example, young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities became confident in carrying out basic tasks new to them and were successfully developing their independent living skills. In the less successful sessions, young people gained few new skills or knowledge.

6. The service works well with vulnerable young people such as those not in education, employment or training, those at risk of offending, looked after children and those at risk of exclusion from school. In work of this nature, achievement is good; for example in the *Get Creative* project, young people produced moving works on the theme of love and high quality public performances in dance and music. Young people not in employment, education or training develop their confidence and skills in preparation for work or study. Exchange visits with Wakefield's twin city in Germany and challenging outdoor activities help broaden young people's outlook and develop their social skills and ability to work in teams. Young people demonstrate their ability to contribute as responsible members of the community through a variety of activities, such as taking part as peer inspectors of the service and their involvement in the election of members of the United Kingdom Youth Parliament. There are examples of good achievements in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and awards accredited by the Open College Network. Accreditation levels were below the service's targets last year, in part

due to difficulties with reporting. The recording of achievements using a computerised system has improved rapidly and now enables the service to better monitor and evaluate the outcomes for young people.

7. The quality of most youth work is good. The best work is well planned to meet the needs of young people and provides a suitable range of activities. In the best practice, youth workers develop good relationships with young people that support their progress. Workers provide a variety of constructive activities that extend young people well. Youth workers challenge young people about unacceptable behaviour where it occurs and are also prepared to engage with young people who display attitudes contrary to the service's expectations.

8. Where practice is less good, youth workers do not sufficiently promote learning. Youth workers are not always sufficiently alert to the needs of individual young people and do not always plan adequately to enable them to achieve and record their individual learning outcomes.

Key Aspect 2: Quality of curriculum and resources

9. The quality of the curriculum and resources is good. The service offers a broad range of activities and opportunities for learning and personal development based on a comprehensive analysis of needs and consultation with young people. The curriculum is built around the five outcomes identified in *Every Child Matters* and reflects the service's powerful statement of equality and diversity. The service makes good use of research among young people in planning the provision and involves them as trained peer researchers to identify needs. Youth work is provided through a well planned mix of centre based activities, health and information projects, initiatives to involve young people, informal learning projects and street-work. The provision includes international exchanges, outdoor activities and the opportunity to take part in voluntary activities. Young people speak well of the Mix It initiative based on research of the needs among young people of black and minority ethnic heritage in Wakefield City

10. The wide range of delivery methods and types of provision are successful in reaching a high proportion of young people. Last year, some 27% of young people were in contact with the service and individual case studies show the positive impact of such work. However, the service is not able to meet fully the needs identified by young people, for example by extending the opening hours or providing a youth centre in all locations convenient for them.

11. Full-time youth workers and personal advisers are well qualified. Around 50% of youth work assistants are fully qualified and the remainder are undergoing training. All staff and volunteers undergo a well planned induction programme and initial training that includes mandatory units such as equality and diversity and child protection. There is good progression by volunteers to become trained youth workers. The allocation of staff is based on the nature of the activity, the anticipated number of young people and the assessment of risk. However, deployment is not always appropriate. The numbers of staff relative to young

people varied a great deal in those sessions observed in the inspection. Whilst well managed, at one centre the level of staffing was inadequate for the number of young people and the level of challenge posed. At another, the level of supervision was insufficient for the activity taking place. In other settings, the numbers of youth workers, volunteers and other adults present almost equalled the small number of young people present.

12. Overall, accommodation and resources are good. There are some excellent facilities such as the new community centre at Chesneys in Featherstone, the Mix It mobile unit equipped with high quality resources for multi-media work, and the Wakies World website designed and run by young people. A new centre is about to open at Crofton and another is planned for Wakefield city centre. The mobile units provide a safe environment for young people who might otherwise spend their time on the streets. However, there is a minority of accommodation where there have been delays in carrying out important repair works, for example at Brickhouse and Pontefract youth centres. Equipment at some centres cannot be used due to poor state of repair. The level and variety of resources to support youth work are very good at some centres but, at a minority, they are insufficient to meet the needs of young people.

Key Aspect 3: Leadership and management

13. Managers of the Young People's Service provide good leadership. They have established a clear sense of direction and the service responds well to local needs. The clear vision is articulated well in the curriculum policy and in team delivery plans. The local authority is effective in obtaining additional funding for the service. Some important policies, such as those relating to the use of the internet by young people, are out of date. Managers recognise that there is a capacity issue in ensuring the timely completion of such tasks.

14. Quality visits carried out by the management team are thorough and rigorous and lead to improvements. The Regional Quality Assurance Network provides external moderation of the judgements reached. The involvement of young people in quality assurance is outstanding and they produce very thorough reports. Their views are taken fully into account and are reflected in the annual report on the quality of provision. The system for staff supervision and appraisal is used well by managers to monitor the achievement of objectives. The recent investment in computerised systems, administrative staff and training is rapidly improving the collection of data and the use made of it to evaluate, plan and manage the provision. The service makes effective use of information and communication technologies for example in the e-office and Wakies World website.

15. The involvement of young people in shaping the service is good overall and aspects are outstanding. They contribute their views through a variety of means that includes conferences, research, focus groups and special events. The recently convened Young People's Service Management Board has 50% membership by young people. They are involved in the selection of youth workers. There are

many examples of a good response to young people's feedback such as the provision of a counselling service and the emphasis in the curriculum on addressing racism and bullying. The Young People's Service has taken an effective lead in the corporate initiative to engage young people in democratic processes and influence the council's services. Some 8,000 young people voted in the recent elections of MPs to the United Kingdom Youth Parliament. The recent *Building our Future* event was attended by 750 young people who represented the views of their peers in the eight neighbourhoods. However, they are not always systematically involved in planning the service at unit and area level.

16. The service's powerful statement of equality of opportunity informs planning well. Targeted provision addresses the needs of priority and vulnerable groups but the plans for open access provision do not always identify how the needs of such groups will be met. Approaches to equality and diversity satisfy statutory requirements set out in the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Disability Discrimination Act. Plans are in hand to address issues of access for those with restricted mobility at the few locations where difficulties remain. There are thorough procedures in place for child protection. Enhanced checks by the Criminal Records Bureau are in place for all staff and volunteers.

17. There is productive collaboration between the Young People's Service, Connexions and other publicly funded bodies that has led to good provision for young people. For example, the service is commissioned by Connexions to manage 21 specialist personal advisers who provide valuable services to vulnerable groups. Effective collaborative work with the Youth Offending Team and the police is helping support young people at risk of offending. However, partnerships with the voluntary youth sector are underdeveloped. Protocols are not well defined and the intended outcomes of joint working are not always clear. The Young People's Service has taken action to improve partnership working with the voluntary sector but it is too early to judge the effectiveness.