

# South Tyneside Youth Service

South Tyneside Children's Services Authority Area

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**Age group:** All

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## Introduction

1. South Tyneside has a population of 152,785. There are about 14,500 young people in the 13-19 age group. Approximately 3.9% of the population are from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds.
2. Local authority youth work is provided primarily by South Tyneside Youth Service. Currently the service is managed within the Children and Young People's Directorate. At the time of the inspection the council and its partners were in the process of moving towards an integrated youth support service. The 2008–09 council budget for youth work is £1.62 million. The staffing complement for the youth service is equivalent to 28 full-time posts.
3. This inspection was carried out under section 136 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, which provides that the Chief Inspector may inspect particular local authority functions. The joint area review (JAR) was enhanced to enable coverage of youth work.

## Part A: Summary of the report

### Main findings

4. The quality of youth work provided by South Tyneside is good and the local authority adequately secures its provision. Young people enjoy taking part in activities. They are learning practical skills and developing in confidence and self-belief. Young volunteers are making a good contribution to the projects they are involved in and in some cases to the wider community. Youth workers know their communities well and make good use of strong local networks to enhance opportunities for young people. Many are adept at blending practical instruction with guided discussion to help young people develop greater personal and social awareness. The leadership exercised by some youth workers is inspiring young people to achieve far more than they had thought they could. The authority has invested a good level of resources to support clear ambitions for young people that are well founded on needs and shared with a wide range of partners. There are however, some shortcomings. Some staff lacked the expertise to help young people reflect on what learning could be gained from the activities they were taking part in. The curriculum is failing to adequately respond to the needs and interests of young women. Leadership and management are adequate. Weaknesses in action planning, performance management and evaluation exemplify a service that is not sufficiently analytical or reflective. Improvements in management systems and the development of a more critical and evaluative approach are crucial if the service is to secure continuous improvement and effectively respond to changing requirements and expectations.

## 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	Leadership and management	2

*Inspectors make judgements based on the following scale  
4: excellent/outstanding; 3: good; 2: adequate/satisfactory; 1: inadequate*

## Strengths

- Young people are developing a good range of skills and are proud of their achievements.
- The quality of practice is good overall with some outstanding.
- The quality of resources is good and there are some excellent specialist facilities.
- The service has established strong and effective partnerships.

## Areas for development

- Develop a more effective response to the needs of young women.
- Create appropriate development opportunities to ensure that all staff are equipped to consistently deliver work of a high standard.
- Improve the quality of action planning and mechanisms to monitor and evaluate performance.

## Part B: Commentary on the key aspects

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

5. Young people value the opportunities that the youth service provides, have developed very good relationships with staff and peers and are growing in confidence and self-belief. They are helpful and supportive of one another and some are developing greater sensitivity towards the needs of others. Young women attending the young parents' project shared their experiences of pregnancy and helped to allay the fears of younger members of the group. Young

people involved in the Forum 50 intergenerational project enjoyed learning new skills such as dancing and sailing alongside members of the older generation and members of the Vision mixed ability drama group had improved their communication skills by designing materials aimed at encouraging primary school children to read. Young people who committed their time as volunteers with the youth opportunities fund grant-giving panel, the Check It Out youth assessors group and the sexual health peer education project took their responsibilities seriously and were developing skills in team work, decision-making, negotiation and presentation skills.

6. Many young people were learning practical skills including, martial arts, cookery, baby care, first-aid, performing arts, gardening and outdoor pursuits. They made good use of opportunities for accreditation, which they seized with enthusiasm, and were proud of their achievements which for some had resulted in re-engagement in formal education.

7. Youth workers know their communities well, have developed strong local networks and are well informed about the agencies to which they can refer young people for specialist advice. They are providing safe places for young people to meet. Boundaries for behaviour are well established and maintained. Where practice was good, youth workers were effective in guiding, supporting and facilitating young people's learning and development in an unobtrusive way. Where practice was best, workers were skilled at enabling young people to develop a wide range of social and personal skills through blending instruction and practical activities with guided discussion and reflection. Some youth workers provided inspirational leadership which enabled young people to achieve far more than they had thought they could.

8. Evaluation of the impact of the work and involvement of young people in this process were not consistent features. Some staff confused outcomes with activities and lacked the expertise to help young people reflect on what learning could be gained from the activities they were taking part in. In a minority of provision, activities dominated the programme to the exclusion of personal and social development and a narrow range of methods was failing to adequately respond to the needs and interests of the youngest participants and young women.

## Key Aspect 2: Quality of curriculum and resources

9. Youth work takes place in a good range of settings including mobile, detached, youth centres, community centres and specialist borough wide projects. Provision is generally located in areas of highest deprivation. Some youth work is timed to respond to the needs of young people, such as a midnight football session for young restaurant workers.

10. The curriculum is delivered in line with the service's priorities which are closely aligned to *Every Child Matters* outcomes. It offers some good opportunities for performing arts, residential experiences, citizenship and sexual and physical

health. There is a strong focus on sport and outdoor activities in many centres and projects. There is a wide range of opportunities for national accreditation. The Duke of Edinburgh's award is well co-ordinated and good use is made of sectional certificates to engage young people from a wide range of youth projects and from special schools.

11. There is very good provision in specialist projects for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, young people from Black and minority ethnic groups and young mothers-to-be. However, there is a significant gender imbalance in the take-up of the service and the curriculum is not adequately meeting the needs and interests of young women.

12. The service has a stable staff team and rates of sickness absence and turnover are very low. Very good use is made of specialist expertise to enhance opportunities for young people. However, not all staff are benefiting from access to training and supervision arrangements are inconsistently applied. A greater focus on professional staff development is now required if the service is to enable all staff to further develop their youth work skills and consistently deliver youth work to a high standard.

13. The quality of premises is very good. They are attractive, accessible, well maintained and well equipped. There are some excellent specialist facilities for music, watersports and climbing.

### Key Aspect 3: Leadership and management

14. Leadership and management are adequate. Performance information is not fully utilised to inform planning or to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the service. Measures to identify the cost effectiveness of provision are at a very early stage of development and have not yet resulted in actions to improve efficiency. The service has not yet defined the local performance indicators it needs to monitor progress against key aims and ambitions. Visits to practice have had some impact on improving the quality of youth work delivery in only a small proportion of provision. A good start has been made recently to involve young people in assessing the quality of youth work but it is too soon to measure the impact of this development. Managers do not evaluate sufficiently the impact of their activities or of provision to meet the authority's aspirations.

15. The quality of action planning to support strategic ambitions is highly variable. Intentions are not always supported by timescales, costed plans or measurable targets. Policies, procedures and guidelines for staff are not regularly reviewed and updated in the light of changing circumstances and requirements. Management arrangements for part-time staff working in community centres are inconsistent and lines of accountability for these staff are unclear. Overall, good attention is paid to health and safety but systems and procedures for Criminal Records Bureau checks on volunteers in youth service provision require some refinements.

16. The authority's ambitions for young people are clearly articulated and appropriately linked to national developments. Priorities are well founded on needs and informed by consultation with young people. The draft strategy for integrated youth support services clearly identifies the place of personal and social development in integrated structures. However, many staff would welcome greater clarity with regard to the development of integrated working arrangements.

17. The service has developed strong and effective partnerships with a wide range of organisations. Sexual health work in partnership with the Primary Care Trust is making an effective contribution to the reduction in teenage pregnancy rates and the increased uptake of chlamydia screening. The Jarrow Active Youth Development partnership (JAYD) is effective in reducing incidents of anti social behaviour through well-targeted positive activities. Voluntary youth organisations are positive about the financial and in-kind support the youth service provides which contributes to their sustainability.

18. The authority provides sufficient resources to meet youth work priorities and has allocated additional funding for work which was previously reliant on temporary grant aid. Very good use is made of the additional Youth Opportunities and Youth Capital funds to support the work of the voluntary sector and to enable young people to have a role in developing and shaping provision. Financial management is sound.