



Sheffield Youth Service Report

Sheffield Children's Services Authority Area

**Better
education
and care**

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Introduction

1. Sheffield Futures is a limited company with charitable status, led by a Board of Trustees. It provides youth work through a contract with Sheffield City Council which retains legal responsibility, and leads the city council's youth strategy which underpins youth work development across the voluntary and statutory sectors. Youth work operates out of 26 main centres which are managed by the local authority, supplemented by the use of schools, community centres and other premises. Provision also includes detached work and specialist projects. The city council paid Sheffield Futures £3,954,455 in 2006/07 to deliver youth provision and 77 full-time equivalent youth workers are employed by the organisation. A director of youth services reports to the chief executive and a team of district managers heads up seven service districts. These are strategically aligned with emerging city council service districts where multi-professional, health, education and social care teams are being established. The service is in contact with approximately 25% of the 13-19 population, with higher involvement of males and young people from Asian and black and minority ethnic groups.

2. The joint area review (JAR) was enhanced to enable coverage of the youth service. Inspectors considered the youth service's self-assessment, the contract for delivery between the local authority and Sheffield Futures and met with officers of both organisations, a cross section of staff and young people. They reviewed key service documentation and carried out direct observation of a sample of youth work sessions throughout the city and in the Burngreave area as part of the neighbourhood study.

Part A: Summary of the report

Main findings

Effectiveness and value for money

3. Sheffield has an adequate youth service that provides satisfactory value for money. Aspects of the service are good. A broad range of opportunities enables young people to learn new skills and gain in confidence but accreditation is less well developed. An increasing number of young people benefit from their involvement in youth work. A more effective management information system has recently been implemented and enables workers to provide accurate statistical information and capture more evaluative evidence. The new curriculum framework provides a good basis for delivering Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes. Implementation of the curriculum, however, is not fully supported by sufficient resources at the point of delivery or a comprehensive training programme. In spite of a very turbulent time with three structural changes in as many years, workers demonstrate effective youth work skills and show high levels of resilience, motivation and commitment.

Strengths

- A broad range of education and recreational activities is offered providing sufficient informal opportunities for young people to meet and participate.
- A good management information system ensures that data, planning and evaluation information is used increasingly effectively to improve provision.
- Strong and effective partnership working with the statutory and voluntary youth sectors enhances the programme.
- Consistently good implementation of equality, equal opportunities and diversity strategies is reflected in user and staffing profiles and the curriculum offer.

Areas for development

The City council should:

- ensure Sheffield Futures has sufficient support to embed systems that will improve quality and outcomes over the longer term
- clearly define the youth participation strategy to ensure that all young people have access to decision-making processes within the council structure and across the partnership area
- improve the quality of council-owned buildings used by Sheffield Futures Youth provision.

Sheffield Futures should:

- improve the use and range of accreditation
- enhance the quality and range of resources at local level
- provide opportunities for youth workers to disseminate good practice and develop professional approaches to key curriculum issues
- improve the training and support for youth workers in open youth work settings, particularly those on short part-time contracts
- establish a clear participation framework within the company to enable all young people to contribute to strategic and operational matters.

Key aspect inspection grades

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

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

Grade 4: Excellent/outstanding: a service that delivers well above minimum requirements for users:

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

Grade 2: Adequate: a service that delivers only minimum requirements for users:

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

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

4. The contribution made to most ECM outcomes is satisfactory. The new curriculum framework provides a good basis for the development of training programmes and interesting activities for young people. Health issues such as sexual health, drugs education and alcohol awareness are well embedded in youth work programmes and targeted initiatives provide new opportunities for young people to participate safely. While young people express growing interest in taking more responsibility for decision making, there is no access to formal structures within Sheffield Futures and the council for most. An increasing number of young people are becoming youth volunteers and peer educators through developing partnership arrangements between Sheffield Futures and voluntary youth organisations such as Chilypep and Youth Association South Yorkshire (YASY).

Part C: Commentary on the key aspects

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

5. Young people have many opportunities to develop their personal and social skills and can articulate clearly how much they have achieved. Outdoor education programmes delivered at Stocksbridge Centre provide excellent opportunities for young people to grow in confidence and develop team-work skills. Specialist dance and music projects, such as Street Vibes dance, also give young people new experiences which enable them to achieve highly original and creative work. Many new and interesting programmes have been established, some of which are

delivered in partnership with the voluntary sector. These include ASDAN accredited programmes such as citizenship, 'Baby think it over' and 'Towards independence', a residential project for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Accreditation however has been slower to develop. The Duke of Edinburgh Award is well established but the direct involvement of young people through youth provision is relatively low. Young people gain good skills and experience through their participation in youth forums and local action groups, but they have limited opportunities to contribute to broader decision-making structures within Sheffield Futures and across the city council.

6. Youth workers and young people enjoy consistently good relationships. Young people are encouraged to take responsibility as individuals and show high levels of maturity and commitment to the projects they attend. Increasing numbers of young people are engaged in peer education programmes and volunteering opportunities which in most instances are linked to formal accreditation. Plans to develop youth volunteering in collaboration with voluntary sector partners are well conceived, coherent and highly inclusive.

7. The quality of youth work is adequate overall, with much that is better. Workers provide consistently good support and guidance; they know the young people they work with well and have good community links to ensure that the views and opinions of young people are well represented. Workers are generally comfortable in challenging difficult or antisocial behaviour. However, in open access youth work, part-time staff were generally less confident and lacked appropriate skills to engage young people in more challenging activities. Programme plans were weak and a significant proportion of sessions offered little more than a safe place for groups to meet. Record keeping was often poor. Good practice exemplars and case studies have been produced by many projects to demonstrate the breadth and quality of provision, but there is little sharing of practice.

8. Project and detached youth work is generally of good quality and offer young people a broad range of interesting and innovative activities from which they learn new skills and strengthen peer and community relationships. This work often serves as a catalyst for young people to take a more active role in their local communities. For example, community cohesion activities undertaken in partnership with the voluntary youth sector has significantly improved the life chances for more disadvantaged groups and established better long term facilities for young people.

Key Aspect 2: Quality of curriculum and resources

9. The curriculum is broad ranging and young people have adequate opportunities to take part in innovative activities across the city. Provision includes outdoor education, summer activity programmes, art and media provision through the Arts and Media Project, music technology projects, dance, drama, environmental activities, health services and sports.

10. The new curriculum framework is well written and underpinned by ECM outcomes. Workers generally have a satisfactory grasp of planning and demonstrate this well in most aspects of their work. The least effective approaches were found in open access youth work sessions. New planning and recording arrangements linked to the management information system identify targets and outcomes to be achieved and show early promise in capturing concise and accurate information particularly for targeted work.

11. Workers ensure that equality and diversity issues are embedded well within local programmes. Levels of awareness are high and examples of workers addressing sensitive aspects of discrimination are frequent. Opportunities for workers to come together to identify and determine city-wide approaches to important youth work issues have declined over recent years. This serves to undermine the good, but often fragmented, work that is taking place to address such issues as racial and homophobic bullying. Sheffield Futures continues to support the exemplary work of Football Unites Racism Divides (FURD), where effective youth work is delivered through a varied programme of football coaching, peer education and youth volunteering.

12. Youth workers are generally well deployed and the staffing profile reflects the ethnic and gender demography of the city. Heavy reliance on unqualified part-time workers on short sessional contracts has stalled curriculum development in some settings and training is not easily accessible for this group. All staff complete mandatory child protection training and Criminal Records Bureau checks are undertaken on a three-year rolling programme. Safeguarding mechanisms are robust. The service meets the requirements of the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000.

13. The range and quality of resources and buildings is variable. Buildings meet basic health and safety requirements but are not all fully SENDA 2001 compliant. Many need refurbishment and decoration and signage is generally poor. Displays are used creatively to showcase young people's work and simultaneously to brighten often drab buildings. Levels of resources are generally insufficient at the point of delivery to ensure work is adequately supported, although enterprising workers seek out additional funding and local expertise. High specification equipment is available for specialist work such as outdoor education, art, drama and music. Access to information technology equipment and internet facilities is available to young people in some but not all centres.

Key Aspect 3: Leadership and management

14. Leadership and management are adequate with some good features. Contracting arrangements between Sheffield Futures and the council are now effective after a period of instability and there are sound monitoring processes in place. The relationship is constructive and transparent. The recent appointment of the new Chief Executive for Sheffield Futures and the restructuring into service districts in line with the council shows promising signs for further improvement. Challenging targets and outcomes are aligned with national and local priorities,

which are presented clearly in the contract and reflected in Sheffield Futures Corporate Plan and district delivery plans. Recent improvements in quality systems and management information have been significant but there is still work to be done to implement them fully and align them with council processes.

15. As an independent charity, Sheffield Futures has successfully attracted funding from external sources to extend its range of programmes. Whilst the contract with the council is substantial, it is tied tightly to prescribed targets, thereby limiting Sheffield Futures flexibility to pursue further funding opportunities.

16. Youth workers and managers demonstrate a broad understanding of issues affecting the lives of young people. Issues of social inclusion and community cohesion are well established and embedded in practice. City-wide projects provide important specialist work for vulnerable groups, black and minority ethnic young people and young people with learning difficulties and or disabilities but provision for lesbian, gay and bisexual young people is under represented within mainstream youth programmes.

17. Partnership arrangements are effective and many are based on strong and long standing relationships. Agreements between main partners are becoming more specific and the council's service district structure is further promoting the use of local agreements to shape coherent services for young people. This approach is not fully embedded or consistent across all areas. Sheffield Futures leads the Youth Strategy on behalf of the broader partnership and has an increasingly positive profile across the city.

18. The involvement of young people in planning and decision-making is adequate, although there is still much work to be done. Consultation is undertaken regularly and is used to evaluate services and the quality of provision but young people do not fully understand how this information is used to improve services. The absence of a coherent city wide youth participation strategy weakens the overall impact of this work.

19. Operational management is good. Workers enjoy consistent and effective line management and support. Quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory.

20. Peer observation of practice is developing well. The intensive focus on targets and outcomes is challenging and youth workers and managers are concerned that these may distract from providing sustainable high quality youth work. Participation rates are improving although attendance at open youth work sessions was generally low. Managers monitor and review the work regularly. The self assessment shows a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development within the provision.