

Stockton-on-Tees Youth Service

Stockton-on-Tees Children's Services Authority Area

Age group: All

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Introduction

1. Stockton-on-Tees youth service is located within the Children, Education and Social Care Directorate and is currently managed alongside adult education by the Manager of Community Education. The head of service is supported by four officers responsible for youth activities, youth empowerment, youth inclusion and policy and development. There are 114 staff comprising 20 full-time equivalent (fte) youth workers employed on full-time and fractional contracts and 12 fte employed on a part-time sessional basis. Administrative staff account for 12 fte. In addition there are 40 volunteers.

2. The authority has in place new structures for managing integrated youth support services which will comprise the youth service, Connexions and the youth offending service. Managers have been appointed and will take up their duties from 1 April 2008. Consultation about the detail of service delivery is continuing. Planning for workforce development, budget allocation, commissioning and accommodation is at an early stage.

3. In 2006-07, the local authority allocated £1.446m for youth work and the service obtained external income of £162,420. It made available £19,885 in grant aid to the voluntary and community sector as well as seconding staff and providing other resources. The youth opportunity fund offered £127,991. There are around 18,600 young people aged 13 to 19 in the area. In 2006-07, 17% participated in youth work activities and 17.6% were reached by the service. Provision is made in 20 centres owned or leased by the authority, or rented from community groups. In addition, provision is made at three centres run by partners in the voluntary and community sector.

4. 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

5. Stockton-on-Tees provides a good youth service and sufficiently secures the provision of youth work. The service effectively targets provision to meet the needs of vulnerable and minority groups and offers a good range of activities that contribute well to the authority's education leisure time provision. There is insufficient provision in some localities. Young people's achievements and the quality of youth work practice are good. Curriculum documents provide excellent guidance that is used effectively by youth workers to plan programmes and activities. Full-time staff are fully qualified; a high quality training programme is enabling the majority of sessional workers to gain qualifications and it also promotes good practice. Leadership and management are good at all levels. Good progress has been made in setting up structures for the management of

integrated youth support services. Performance management and quality assurance activities lead to improvements but systematic review across the service is not fully in place. Partnership working is good but links with the voluntary and community sector are limited in scope and are not sufficiently strategic. Young people are influential in shaping youth work provision.

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	3

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

Strengths

- The standard of young people's achievement is good.
- Youth work practice is good.
- The curriculum plan and toolkit provide excellent guidance for planning youth work and youth workers use them effectively.
- The high quality training programme is enabling sessional youth workers to gain qualifications and it also promotes good practice.
- Young people are influential in shaping youth work provision.

Areas for development

- Partnerships with the voluntary sector are limited in scope and are not sufficiently strategic.
- Systematic monitoring, review and reporting of the quality of provision are not fully in place.

Part B: Commentary on the key aspects

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

6. The standard of young people's achievement is good. In the majority of sessions observed young people were making gains in their personal development, learning new skills and enjoying themselves. In the weaker sessions they were not sufficiently well motivated, or engaged, in the activities on offer to make sustained progress.

7. Young people involved in the Youth Assembly develop useful skills that enable them to take part in democratic processes and have their say. In entry to employment courses at the Youth Space, young people make excellent progress in developing their life skills and preparing for the future. They gain a good variety of awards and progression from this programme to further study and employment is good. At the Fairfield Young People's Centre, young people were successful in obtaining funding for a music project which they have agreed as a major focus for the club. They demonstrated good development of their creative and technical skills in a session which offered local bands the first opportunity to use the equipment. At the Grangefield Youth and Community Centre young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities were gaining skills to help them move towards independence through planning a train journey and completing their applications for adult education classes. Case studies show that young people who are looked after enjoyed taking part in the Stockton International Riverside Festival and gained recognition for their achievements in designing their outfits and planning their contribution.

8. The service has made good progress in giving young people appropriate opportunities to gain awards and in recording their achievements. Starting from a low base, the service is on track to meet, or exceed, national targets in 2007-08. The well considered local award, Recording Education Activities and Learning, alongside ASDAN awards, Open College Network, The Duke of Edinburgh's award and Youth Achievement Award are increasingly used effectively to recognise and accredit young people's progress.

9. The standard of youth work practice is good. In the majority of sessions, workers plan with young people a variety of suitable activities that offer them good opportunities for learning and development. Relationships between workers and young people are good; workers provide good leadership and guidance. In the less successful sessions, expectations of what young people can achieve are too low and the planned outcomes are not sufficiently clear or linked well enough to the educational purpose of youth work.

10. At the Chapel Road Youth and Community Centre, a well planned and busy session offered a good range of creative activities such as dance and making Christmas decorations as well the opportunity to learn about rights and

responsibilities through a presentation by the Police Independent Advisory Group for young people. Young people responded well. At the Youth Space in a well structured session, young women who are seeking asylum were confident and at ease exploring their diversity through making meals from different cultures, capturing the experience on photographs and film. Workers on the youth bus at Newham Grange skilfully explored with young people the potential for harmful effects on health and behaviour of excess alcohol consumption.

Key Aspect 2: Quality of curriculum and resources

11. The quality of the curriculum and resources is good. The service and its partners offer a good mix of provision effectively targeting priority groups identified in the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP). These include young people who are not in education, employment or training, those who are looked after, young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, asylum seekers and the homeless. The Youth Inclusion Unit works well in partnership to meet specific needs. The Youth Empowerment Unit offers young people good opportunities to take part in decision-making, voluntary activities and environmental and heritage initiatives. A good range of activities, advice and guidance is offered at the 20 youth centres and the new Chill Zone Youth Café. For many young people there is a centre within walking distance of their homes but the opening hours of most are limited to one or two evenings during the week. The service recognises that there is insufficient provision in Thornaby, Ingleby Barwick and Billingham and plans are in hand to develop two more youth cafes and to add a third youth bus to its fleet.

12. The curriculum plan and toolkit provide workers with excellent guidance that is used effectively to plan provision. The curriculum promotes equality and diversity. The service's contribution to the five *Every Child Matters* outcomes is good. For example, at the Stockton Inspirations Dance Group young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities perform in public. Young people take part in sporting and outdoor activities such as the sponsored 42 mile walk across the North Yorkshire moors to raise money for charity. The Youth Assembly has presented a case to transport companies for better facilities in the north east region. Some 200 young people make a positive contribution to the community as volunteers, 40 within the youth service.

13. Full-time youth workers are all appropriately qualified but around a third of sessional workers are not. The service has developed an effective, high quality training programme that is enabling staff to gain suitable qualifications and which also promotes good practice. Child protection and safeguarding procedures are in place.

14. Overall, accommodation and specialist resources are adequate. There is some outstanding provision such as the Chill Zone Youth Café, Youth Space, the refurbished Fairfield Young People's Centre and the facilities available on the youth buses. Accommodation is welcoming, accessible and safe. While adequate, a few centres do not provide a sufficiently high quality environment to inspire modern

youth work. The service does not have enough control or influence on the majority of centres it uses to develop them as they wish to suit youth work.

Key Aspect 3: Leadership and management

15. Leadership and management are good at all levels. The service has clear and ambitious aims set out in well considered plans that align with the CYPP. The authority has made good progress in developing a structure for integrated services that will be in place from 1 April 2008 and managers have been appointed. Plans for workforce development, accommodation, budgets and commissioning youth work are at an early stage. Consultation about the delivery of integrated youth support services is taking place. Despite the inevitable uncertainty, staff morale is high.

16. Funding for the youth service is broadly in line with the national average. Managers monitor expenditure carefully and realign provision to make the most effective use of resources. Deployment of staff is appropriate. Participation by young people aged 13 to 19 is around the national target but the proportion reached by the service is low.

17. Partnership working is good. Collaboration with statutory bodies and public services benefit vulnerable young people such as those who are looked after, the homeless and young asylum seekers. Effective joint working with the Teenage Pregnancy Partnership extends the availability of services for young people. There are examples of good partnerships with community and voluntary sector groups but these are limited in scope and are not sufficiently strategic. Although working relationships are good, there are insufficient opportunities for local partners to take part in influential discussion about youth work.

18. Many aspects of performance management are well established and there are some effective quality assurance activities. Together these lead to improvements in the service. Managers review progress against plans and scrutinise data in performance clinics. Regular support and supervision of staff and annual appraisals contribute to the improvement of practice. However, the systematic monitoring, review and reporting of quality across the service provided by the authority, and its partners, are not yet fully in place. The new management information system, while providing increasingly useful and reliable information does not yet routinely provide detailed reports, for example of participation by young people analysed by ethnicity or disability.

19. Young people are involved effectively at various levels in the planning, development and quality assurance of youth work. They were influential in setting up the Chill Zone Youth Café which now provides a model for future provision. They are often involved in planning and evaluating youth work sessions but there is scope for them to take on more responsibility, for example by organising activities. Their involvement of quality assurance through observing youth work has just begun.