

Southwark Youth Service

Southwark Children's Services Authority Area

Age group: All

Published: 16 December 2008

Reference no: 210

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Introduction

1. Southwark youth service is part of the 11-19 and Youth Services division of the council's Children's Services department. It contributes to a wide range of priorities in the local area's Children and Young People's Plan. The majority of youth work is delivered directly by the council with around a third being delivered by grant aided voluntary organisations. Provision is located in the youth service's six buildings, in voluntary organisations' premises and in community centres, church halls and meeting rooms owned by residents' associations. A significant amount of youth provision is delivered through detached work.
2. The service is managed by a youth service manager and a team of three operational managers. There are 24 full time youth workers and 18 full time equivalent part time posts. There are around 19,700 young people aged 13 to 19 living in the borough. Some 53% of the youth population is from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. In 2006-07 the youth service budget was £3.6 million. This approximates to spending of around £187 per young person aged 13 to 19. Last year the service reached 33% of young people.
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 provision in Southwark is adequate. The local authority sufficiently secures the provision of youth work. Young people's achievement is adequate and in a significant proportion of settings is good. The quality of youth work practice is adequate overall. Measures to raise standards are resulting in improvement. Strategic managers are aware of the quality and progress of the service and provide good support. The youth service is an integral element of the emerging integrated youth support service. Training, development and new procedures for planning and evaluation work are improving quality. The curriculum provides a well balanced range of learning opportunities. Strong partnership working results in an enhanced range of provision and contributes to improved outcomes. Accommodation is of a variable standard. Excellent facilities to support arts, media, sport and physical activities contrast with premises that are barely adequate. Young people's involvement in decision making, planning and evaluation is adequate, although the service's participation framework has yet to be fully implemented. Strategies to promote equality, inclusion and diversity are good; the service is working with an increasing range of vulnerable young people and reaches a good proportion of black and minority ethnic young people. Events to celebrate diversity successfully reduce territorialism and young people's fear of travelling outside their own neighbourhoods. Deployment of resources is

insufficiently linked to the outcome of needs assessment. Support and monitoring of voluntary sector provision is insufficiently robust. The improving quality and accuracy of management information is increasing the service's capacity to assess its quality and performance.

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	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 gain a good range of knowledge and skills through volunteering.
- Good facilities support young people's engagement in sports, physical activity, arts and media.
- Provision targeted at young people with disabilities is good.
- Equality, and diversity are promoted well.
- Strategic managers are well informed about the progress and quality of the service and provide good support.

Areas for development

- Implement the Young Southwark participation framework.
- Improve young people's involvement in planning and evaluating youth work.
- Improve the overall quality and condition of accommodation.
- Improve monitoring and support arrangements for voluntary organisations.

- Improve needs assessment and strengthen the link between local needs and resource allocation.

Part B: Commentary on the key aspects

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

5. Overall, the standard of young people's achievement is adequate with a significant number of examples where achievement is good. In the best practice, young people were articulate in describing their learning and achievement. For example, members of Southwark Youth Council gained self confidence, learned valuable skills through their voluntary activities and were enthusiastic about opportunities to have their learning and achievements accredited. By contrast, in sessions that were inadequate or only just adequate, young people discussed the activities they had undertaken but were unable to describe gains in terms of their personal development or learning.

6. In sessions judged as good, young people were enthusiastic about taking up opportunities that result in the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes. For example, young people at the Creative and Media Centre developed a very good range of skills in music technology. They were able to make good use of state of the art recording equipment; were confident about expressing their views and appreciated the opinions of others. Young people at Greendale youth centre learned about issues that affect their lives, such as sex and relationships, drug misuse, gangs, gun and knife crime; they participated enthusiastically in a session on sex and relationships and learned about local sexual health services. In the small minority of sessions that were assessed as inadequate, young people joined in a series of unrelated, low level recreational activities with limited opportunities to learn or make progress.

7. Young people's involvement in decision making is adequate overall. Their participation in decision making in clubs and projects is increasing. A growing number of youth fora are being developed in youth centres and local areas. Many young people take responsibility as senior members, volunteers and peer educators. They develop a good range of knowledge and skills. However, young people's participation in planning, implementing and evaluating youth work and in decision making at local levels remains inconsistent. Members of Southwark Youth Council help shape services at a strategic level; the group is proud of its role in developing the borough's emerging participation framework.

8. The quality of youth work practice is adequate overall, with significant examples of good practice. Generally, staff apply the educational principles of youth work, although in a minority of instances they do not possess sufficient skills or understanding to involve young people in negotiating programmes focused on learning. Measures to improve planning and evaluation are beginning to make an impact on the quality of youth work practice. However, many plans list activities rather than identifying what is to be learned or achieved. In the majority of work

observed, there was an insufficient focus on involving young people in evaluating their progress or assessing the impact of youth work.

9. Youth workers generally know the needs of the young people in their areas. In the best sessions this information was used to involve young people in developing programmes that engage their interest and result in learning about issues that affect their lives. Youth workers collaborate effectively with a good range of agencies to improve young people's access to specialist support and information.

Key Aspect 2: Quality of curriculum and resources

10. The quality of curriculum and resources is adequate. Accommodation is of variable quality; some premises are only just adequate whilst others such as the Creative and Media Centre, the Damilola Taylor Centre and the Salmon Centre, provide an excellent range of facilities. The location of provision and staff deployment is historical and insufficiently linked to needs. Detached work, often conducted in partnership with other agencies, is used to respond to emerging needs. Detached workers develop positive relationships with young people, but have limited understanding of how to support their progress and involve them in decisions in their own communities.

11. The curriculum provides a good balance of learning opportunities such as arts, media, sport, physical activity, outdoor education and programmes that address issues such as teenage pregnancy, substance misuse, personal safety, crime and anti-social behaviour. The revised curriculum framework is closely related to *Every Child Matters*. It is a useful resource for staff but is yet to be consistently implemented. A comprehensive document provides guidance on good practice in sex and relationship education. However, there is no policy or guidance on drug education. An electronic management information system is improving the service's ability to manage the curriculum.

12. Access to qualifications, in-service training, and supervision by managers are good. Too few staff, however, possess appropriate initial qualifications for their roles, the effects of which are seen in weaker youth work practice.

13. Promotion of equality, inclusion and diversity is good. There is effective targeting of girls and young women, black and minority ethnic young people and those at risk of engaging in crime or anti-social behaviour. Provision targeted at young people with disabilities is of a particularly high standard. There is an emphasis on celebrating diversity particularly through borough wide events such as Diva Day, which is a celebration of young women's musical talents, and the Southwark Youth Carnival that involves high numbers of young people in a Caribbean themed event. These events bring a diverse range of young people together and contribute to reducing territorialism and young people's fear of travelling outside their neighbourhoods.

Key Aspect 3: Leadership and management

14. Leadership and management are adequate. The council provides good strategic direction and secures youth work adequately. Strategic managers are aware of the quality of the service and understand the challenges it faces. The youth service manager, who has been in post for a year, has implemented a wide range of measures to raise standards. The service plan is well linked to the Children and Young People's Plan and contributes to corporate priorities. Most youth workers understand the priorities of the service and how their work contributes to achieving them. Performance management is adequate. Evaluation of youth work is not robust enough to assess its overall impact.

15. Youth work is delivered through a good mix of directly delivered provision and partnerships with voluntary organisations. Service level agreements clearly identify accountabilities but monitoring arrangements and support for voluntary organisations is insufficiently robust. The service budget is good and above funding levels for similar authorities. However, the link between the outcome of needs assessment and the deployment of resources is inadequate.

16. Implementing integrated youth support is a council priority and progress has been adequate. The youth service's role in providing educational leisure time activities is an integral element of the emerging integrated service. Equality and inclusion are strong; the service is particularly good at reaching black and minority ethnic young people and through improved targeting is working with an increasing number of vulnerable groups. The involvement of young people in planning, development and quality assurance of youth work at a strategic level is adequate.

17. Partnership working is strong and enhances the range of provision and services available to young people. Close partnership working with Connexions is resulting in a reduction in the numbers of young people that are not in education, employment or training. A partnership with the teenage pregnancy unit provides a good range of staff training, specialist support for the provision of sex and relationship education and sexual health services in youth work settings. This contributes to reducing teenage pregnancies. Collaborative work with Southwark Community Games has resulted in young people being trained as sports leaders and finding employment in their own communities. Levels of crime and anti-social behaviour have reduced as a result of effective partnership working with a wide range of agencies including Southwark Anti-Social Behaviour Unit and the Police.

18. Policies to ensure that staff and young people are provided with safe and healthy working environments are in place and routinely implemented. Staff are well trained and are confident in applying safeguarding procedures. Risk assessment procedures are carried out in all settings but require refinement to ensure they are robust and appropriate to the needs of young people.

19. The management information system has been improved during the past year and now provides an accurate range of information on the numbers of young people that engage in the service, the quality of planning and evaluation and the delivery of the curriculum. The service's ability to make judgements about its quality and performance is adequate.