

Southend-on-Sea Youth Service Report

Southend-on-Sea Children's Services Authority Area

Age group: All

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Introduction

1. The youth service in Southend-on-Sea is contained within the Integrated Youth Support Services (IYSS) which is a partnership of Southend-on-Sea Borough Council's Department of Children and Learning and Essex, Southend and Thurrock (EST) Connexions Partnership Limited. The partnership is a two year pilot due to conclude in March 2008. Within the IYSS, the youth work is one of three specialised strands providing services and activities for children and young people. Services are organised and delivered through three integrated locality teams and a cross borough support and development services team. Each locality team is led by a locality manager (13-19) and is made up of youth workers, assistant youth workers, personal advisers (PAs) and administrative staff. The IYSS is managed by a senior team comprising the Group Manager the three locality managers, one with responsibility for youth work across the borough and two for Connexions services, a development manager and a business manager. At the time of the inspection, there were 7 full time youth workers, 11.5 assistant youth workers and 27.8 personal advisers (PAs). Of the 12,965 young people aged 13-19, 27% are in contact with the service. The council contributed £826,015 to IYSS from its youth service budget in 2007/08 and other significant funding came from EST Connexions and other sources.

2. The Joint Area Review (JAR) was enhanced to enable coverage of the youth service. Inspectors considered the youth service's self assessment and other key service documentation. They met with managers, a cross section of staff, as well as representatives of the voluntary sector. A sample of youth work sessions and other types of work with young people were observed.

Part A: Summary of the report

Main findings

Effectiveness and value for money

3. Young people achieve well and benefit from a wide range of learning activities including opportunities for accreditation. Vulnerable and challenging young people make particularly good progress in their personal and social development. Youth work practice is good and a broad range of programmes is available supported by very good quality resources and accommodation. Service management is also good. Session planning is at times too broad and evaluation not always sufficiently self critical. Young people's participation in services designed for them is satisfactory but not all groups of young people are sufficiently consulted or involved. The reach of the service has improved in recent years and is now above national comparators.

4. The council values and supports the work of the IYSS which reflects corporate objectives and priorities. The budget available to the service by the council is below that of national benchmarks but the resources available are considerably enhanced by the allocation from EST Connexions for youth related

developments. Good attention is paid to safeguarding young people. The move to integrated youth support services, in line with government proposals, is well advanced. Connexions PAs and youth workers support each other well and value the new arrangements. Morale is good. The service is well-placed to develop this work further. An effective service, the IYSS provides good value for money.

Strengths

- Young people's achievements are good, they benefit from well-developed accredited learning opportunities and form positive relationships with youth workers
- Vulnerable and challenging young people make significant gains in their personal and social development that are sustained over time.
- Youth workers have a good knowledge and understanding of the young people with whom they work.
- Provision for young carers is excellent.
- Partnership arrangements are effective.
- Service management is strong and staff morale is high.
- Performance management and systems to assure the quality of work support staff effectively and are promoting the integration of services.

Areas for development

- Provide support for workers and young people to improve the planning and evaluation of provision.
- Secure greater involvement of those not accessing youth work activities.
- Improve opportunities for more young people to contribute to and participate in developing services which affect them.
- Support workers in reporting and managing racial incidents and hate crime in line with national guidelines.

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: 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

5. The IYSS judges, and inspectors agreed, that it makes a good contribution across the five *Every Child Matters* outcomes. The ECM outcomes form the basis of curriculum planning and appropriate activities are planned and delivered by locality teams. The Vibe health magazine, written and edited by young people tackles issues of importance to them and is widely circulated across the borough. The service contributes to anti-bullying initiatives, and its safeguarding and risk assessment procedures are very good. Partnership work with the voluntary sector and some schools is positive. The Youth Council is an effective forum for young people to have a say on a wide range of issues and to participate in a diverse range of community projects. Other opportunities to participate in planning activities are provided within the local areas. A range of projects effectively support vulnerable and disadvantaged young people.

Part C: 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 many instances gains made in personal and social development are excellent. Young people were able to articulate and provide examples of how they had developed self confidence and the self assurance to cope with different and difficult situations. The Youth Council actively engages significant numbers of young people in community events such as a competition to design a sign to deter motorists from using disabled parking spaces and a DVD on how not to speak to young people which has been

circulated to councillors across the country. Young people, who were responsible for developing the awards process and criteria, manage effectively with a very mature level of debate and decision-making at Fix-It, the local name for the Youth Opportunity Fund.

7. Accrediting learning is a key priority and the service has exceeded its own targets. A high proportion of young people, and in particular those from vulnerable and challenging groups, gain local and national accreditation through their involvement in youth work activities through, for example, the Essex Arts Award, Youth Achievement Award, Open College Network Units and the Duke of Edinburgh award. Young people speak positively and enthusiastically about their progress and achievements which are given high profile through celebration events, portfolios of photographs and the local media. Many have been involved with the service for a considerable time.

8. The quality of youth work practice is good. Full time and part time workers have a good knowledge of the local area and develop very good relationships with young people. In the best practice, workers use their knowledge and understanding well to plan and design work relevant to the needs of the young people as well as seeking to maintain their interest and engagement. In a minority of instances, meeting the needs of young people is interpreted by workers as providing activities young people request. Some work does not give enough emphasis to individual or group target setting to ensure young people are appropriately challenged. The evaluation of some programmes is not sufficiently critical to inform future planning effectively.

Key Aspect 2: Quality of curriculum and resources

9. The quality of curriculum and resources is good. A rich and varied programme of activities is offered across the borough, with resources focused into three main centres. An appropriate curriculum framework based on the five outcomes of *Every Child Matters* underpins the work of the service. It is understood well and used effectively by youth workers to plan the majority of sessions. In many instances, young people also participate in planning and leading activities. The curriculum is managed well through local area managers and is subject to regular scrutiny by the senior management team.

10. The curriculum effectively promotes equality, diversity and inclusion. The quality of provision for young carers is excellent with high levels of participation. A good programme is provided for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and well established provision for gay and lesbian young people is of high quality. An effective motor vehicle project works with young people who are, or are at risk of not being in education, employment or training. Whilst young people from the small Black and minority ethnic communities participated in some settings, few opportunities were available for them to meet discretely to discuss their views of whether more was needed to support them. Council plans for looked after young people and those with learning difficulties and disabilities to have their own forums are well advanced. Detached and outreach work lacks clarity and

purpose and is insufficiently focused on those young people who would benefit most.

11. Youth workers are well qualified and appropriately experienced. A good programme of staff development is in place and well-supported. External training is available and the service provides an 'in house', Open College Network accredited level 2 basic training certificate. Many training programmes are open to partners including those from the voluntary sector who value the opportunities to learn alongside IYSS staff. Staff deployment is effectively managed and aligned with levels of need. There has been a significant reduction in the high turnover of assistant youth workers during the last year.

12. The quality of accommodation and resources is very good. All centres used by the service have hearing loops and are compliant with the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 with suitable modifications for those with restricted mobility. For example, the cooker at Shoeburyness has a hob that can be raised and lowered. Whilst Braille and language translations are available, the service is not well equipped to work with those for whom English is a second language. Each centre has a good range of resources to support educational and recreational programmes and activities. The service has two minibuses available for hire by partners and a mobile outreach vehicle. The IYSS effectively supports the well developed Informu information service. Although two new Internet based kiosks have been placed in each centre, information technology is not used to best effect with young people.

Key Aspect 3: Leadership and management

13. Strategic and operational leadership and management are good. The IYSS makes effective contributions to the council's corporate plans and to national priorities and is well placed strategically to take forward the council's work for children and learning. The IYSS is providing a lead for the council in the integration of services and the development of locality working. Although early days, positive impacts can be identified for staff and young people. It is in a strong position to extend its work with other services for children and young people. Effective leadership and positive promotion of the service are provided by the group manager and senior team and there is a range of effective partnerships with other agencies including the voluntary sector. The service is monitored effectively.

14. Council funding combined with that from Connexions EST to support the service is satisfactory and it secures limited additional income from a range of other sources. Although a formal agreement has been reached, the council recognises more needs to be done to ensure the security of the funding model from April 2008.

15. Procedures to provide healthy and safe environments are good. Activities are risk assessed well. Criminal Records Bureau checks are carried out and corporate child protection procedures are in place. Staff receive good training in

child protection, first aid and personal safety. All workers carry a 'safeguarding card' which provides essential information. However, arrangements to report race incidents and hate crime in line with national guidelines are not sufficiently clear.

16. Good working arrangements are in place with a range of partners. There is good support and joint activity from the teenage pregnancy worker and the drug and alcohol preventative team workers. One youth worker is seconded to the Youth Offending Service. Effective collaborative work is undertaken with the Children's Fund, The YMCA and Relate. Community and faith groups and other voluntary sector partners value highly the support they receive from the IYSS especially access to training. The quality of work with school is undermined by the lack of a coherent strategy. In the limited school work that takes place roles and responsibilities are not clear.

17. The involvement and participation of young people is satisfactory. Whilst the Youth Council in particular is very effective and endeavours to speak and act on behalf of all children and young people and most clubs have council, arrangements for local area councils are at an early stage of development. Opportunities for the voices and concerns of some vulnerable groups including those from Black and minority ethnic communities are limited. Very few opportunities exist for young people to influence or report on the quality of the service overall. A council-wide participation strategy has been approved and a part-time worker appointed but the action plan has not yet been implemented.

18. The day to day running of the IYSS is very good. Morale amongst staff is high. Senior managers listen to and respond well to staff. Communication across the service is very good. The council provides an annual stress check for workers whose results are analysed and acted upon. Performance management and supervision arrangements are in place, valued by staff and underpinned by a good framework which is used effectively to make service improvements. Data management is very good and used well by managers. To help workers make better use of data in their planning and evaluation, a well produced management information newsletter has been introduced. The service plan is excellent and a model of good practice. It celebrates strengths, identifies clearly areas for development with appropriate targets to be managed by named personnel, and applies an agreed formula to determine cost effectiveness and value for money.