



# Rutland Youth Service Report

Rutland Children's Services Authority Area

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## Introduction

1. Rutland Youth Service was formed in 1997 as part of the revised county council structure. The service has had limited management capacity due to long-term staff illness, but this situation was remedied in September 2005 with the appointment of a new head of service. The population in Rutland is 35,600 with a little over 4,000 young people aged 13 to 19 and 2% of the total population being of minority ethnic origin. The youth service is located within the Children's and Young Peoples Services Directorate with the head of the youth service being line managed by the Director. Aside from the manager, there are two full-time youth worker posts, a full-time administrative assistant and 18 part-time youth workers, making a total full time equivalent of eleven. The service's total budget for 2004-2005 is £298,920 representing 1.6% of the education budget.

2. The joint area review (JAR) carried out in Rutland was enhanced to enable coverage of the youth service. During the inspection period, a total of seven youth projects were observed together with two outreach sessions. Further interviews and discussions also took place with focus groups, council officers, youth workers, an elected member and a representative from the voluntary sector. Information about youth services and partnership working was also drawn from other JAR interviews and observations, as well as from service documentation.

## Part A: Summary of the report

### Main findings

#### Effectiveness and value for money

3. Although some significant recent progress has been made in key areas, weaknesses remain in achievement, youth work practice, curriculum, resources and management. Currently the service is inadequate and provides unsatisfactory value for money.

#### Strengths

- The recently appointed head of the youth service has brought strong leadership together with infectious enthusiasm and energy.
- Managers have quickly and efficiently audited the youth service and a clearer strategic direction is evident.
- Workforce development plans are good with key elements of the training programme already having an impact.
- The service has taken a lead in developing youth participation.

## Areas for development

- The breadth of the curriculum and the range of opportunities are limited.
- Achievement is generally unsatisfactory.
- The overall quality of youth work practice needs to improve through the continued training of staff to implement and manage the curriculum.
- The extent of the involvement of young people in planning, management and evaluation of projects needs to develop further.
- The role and contribution of the service is ill defined through a lack of information in relation to the number, or details, of young people who access projects.
- Underdeveloped management information prevents the service monitoring its progress.

## Key aspect inspection grades

Key aspect		Grade
1	Standards of young people's achievement	1
	Quality of youth work practice	1
2	Quality of curriculum and resources	1
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:** A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for users.

**Grade 3:** A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users.

**Grade 2:** A service that delivers only minimum requirements for users.

**Grade 1:** A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for users.

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

4. The Rutland youth service makes a satisfactory contribution to Every Child Matters outcomes in a number of areas. Programmes promoting health are well integrated into the curriculum. 'Chikaroos', for example, is a girls' project whose programme is currently focusing on different health aspects including sexual health and healthy eating. There is a reasonable awareness of safety risks to young people, although certain settings are not entirely suitable for purpose. Targeted work has also been undertaken such as an anti-bullying project and

jointly-planned detached work to deal with anti-social behaviour through the Community Safety Partnership. Young people are well supported in making a positive contribution through the youth participation strategy and are also beginning to be supported through outreach work in smaller communities. Co-location of youth service and Connexions provision is enabling a more holistic approach to be taken to young people's needs.

## **Part C: Commentary on the key aspects**

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

5. The standards of young people's achievements are inadequate. There were good examples of achievement in only a few of the youth sessions observed, with young people increasing their levels of knowledge and understanding. Better examples included a session in which young people raised, discussed and developed their understanding of the health risks connected to smoking. A particularly good drama session enabled young people to appreciate and talk about their progress in self-confidence, voice projection, spatial awareness and social skills.

6. Weaker outcomes were invariably linked to poor practice, with workers failing to develop important issues as they arose in sessions. There has been little history of workers actively planning sessions that aim to combine learning with enjoyment, and which reflect young people's interests. Overall, the quality of youth work is, therefore, inadequate. Young people enjoy the opportunity to meet and they relate well to each other and to the youth workers, but these positive foundations are not built upon effectively. Insufficiently challenging and stimulating activities are in place and little use is made of accreditation to develop, acknowledge and reinforce achievement. In examples such as 'Chikaroos' and 'Youf Artz' however, workers planned well and good subject knowledge led to worthwhile achievement for the young people involved.

7. Good progress has been made in embedding youth participation. Youth representation groups, such as the Dream Team, are well established in the consultation process and have made inroads into being fully participatory partners. Members of the Dream Team were fully included in recent council interviews, and representatives have also spoken to the council on a number of subjects including tolerance and equality. Two young people were also able to accompany and support an inspector on an observation visit during this inspection. Good efforts are being made to increase the degree of representation within this team and to enhance the skills of its members.

8. Youth workers do not demonstrate high enough expectations of what young people can achieve and a lack of meaningful planning and evaluation does not provide adequate opportunities to undertake new learning or to take part in purposeful and progressive activities. With nearly half of the main workforce

being recent appointments, staff are having to develop the skills necessary to provide, support and share good practice.

## Key Aspect 2: Quality of curriculum and resources

9. The quality of the curriculum and resources is inadequate. There is an insufficient spread and variety of programmes, including a lack of provision for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities. This situation is compounded by the rural nature of the county with poor transport making access to already limited facilities difficult. The work of the youth service has been hampered by staffing issues, both in levels of sickness and in recruitment and retention. Link work with schools, for example, has been halted because of staff sickness; some outreach work has also been affected.

10. The service currently provides limited generic youth activities, some detached and outreach youth work, and specifically-focused activity groups involving drama, girls' work and sessions with young parents. The potential that exists through linking with partner organisations and the voluntary youth sector has not been exploited. The size and nature of Rutland lends itself well to joint working, but more needs to be done to create a comprehensive understanding of provision and the opportunity to enhance and dovetail complementary activities. The only session, for example, specifically targeted to meet the needs of young people with learning difficulties and disabilities, is in the voluntary sector and was established by a parent.

11. The quality of the limited premises and resources used for youth work is variable. The attractive 'Jules' one-stop shop is currently trying to satisfy too many diverse needs; the available space has the potential to pose risks to the babies in the young parents' group and also creates management problems for young people in the generic sessions. The 'Cellar Bar' is not accessible to any young person with restricted mobility, although the difficulty of finding an available alternative option is recognised. Such premises do not comply with the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001.

12. The service has begun to provide good support to youth workers through supervision and appraisal as well as offering a good range of training opportunities. Full-time workers are experienced and well qualified, although the vast majority of part-time workers have no formal youth work qualification. Only half the workers have had training in first aid and child protection, although skills and knowledge are being progressively extended through induction and a comprehensive training plan.

13. The recently produced curriculum framework has a strong emphasis on learning, empowerment, participation and equal opportunities. It is well constructed and is underpinned by a clear rationale reflecting national priorities. Appropriate training is underway to support the implementation of this framework.

## Key Aspect 3: Leadership and management

14. Strategic and operational leadership and management are satisfactory. The local authority has a clear strategic vision for children and young people's services, which now encompass the youth service. The service is also being supported with a three-year budget plan that will ultimately lift spending from a very low level to the equivalent of the national average. The service's self-assessment demonstrates a high level of understanding and appreciable honesty in relation to the problems that it is facing.

15. There is consensus between the head of the service, the director and the relevant elected member in terms of the impact of the legacy and the priorities for improvement. The service has been at a very low baseline but demonstrable actions have been taken to begin to address the problems, starting structurally with a mapping process followed by a clear strategy, the introduction of critical policy documents and attendant implementation plans. A significant number of new staff have been successfully recruited and extensive staff training is well underway. Many aspects introduced over the past three months are still embryonic and therefore specific outcomes cannot yet be fully measured.

16. No data exists in relation to the numbers of young people reached by the youth service in Rutland, how long they are engaged or how much they achieve. A database system has been purchased, although data is still being collected and collated for this service. Feedback from staff and young people would suggest that numbers accessing this service have increased over the past quarter but the lack of quantifiable information overall makes it very difficult to assess performance.

17. Satisfactory partnership arrangements are in place with Connexions, health and the Community Safety Partnership. Other necessary and significant partnerships, such as those with schools and the police, are less well developed.

18. The head of service is providing strong and capable leadership with staff feeling well supported and challenged. There are indications from observations that recent training is beginning to have an impact in terms of understanding the new youth service framework and the Every Child Matters agenda. There is now a shared consensus amongst staff about the learning outcomes that are being sought within the service.

19. The current lack of a systematic and strategic analysis of local need and complementary resources has resulted in limited appropriate provision for young people in Rutland. Scrutiny of the quality of existing provision and service performance is insufficiently developed but is improving. The legacy of weak leadership, poor practice and limited accountability is being addressed in a systematic way but the existing quality of youth work, the curriculum and standards of achievement make this an inadequate service providing inadequate value for money.