

North Lincolnshire Youth Service

North Lincolnshire Children's Services Authority Area

Age group: All

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Introduction

1. North Lincolnshire Youth Service is located within the Learning, Schools and Communities division of the Children's Services directorate. The head of service reports to the recently-appointed head of the new Integrated Youth Support Service (IYSS). The service is delivered through three localities, the eastern and western halves of the authority area plus the central urban area of Scunthorpe, which contains almost half the total population. Each is managed by a locality manager. A review of the place of youth work within the IYSS has been conducted and the recommendations accepted. Full-time equivalent staffing of the youth service totals 47, which comprises 5 full-time and 114 part-time youth workers, supported by 4 managers and 11 administrative staff. The service's budget for 2007-08 is £1.2 million which, as a percentage of the education budget, is around the national average. A further £605,220 is generated externally.

2. 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

3. The overall quality of youth work provision in North Lincolnshire is adequate and the local authority sufficiently secures the provision of youth work. The role of the youth service as a major component of the new IYSS has been confirmed, following the acceptance of the recommendations of a recent service review. The standard of young people's achievements is adequate overall. Young people are making good progress in personal development, especially those in vulnerable groups and those who participate in targeted programmes. Youth work practice is adequate. Teams of experienced youth workers work well together and enjoy very good relationships with young people. However, the quality of practice is too variable in open access work, where, in the less effective practice, planning and evaluation are inadequate and sessions lack purpose and challenge. There is no adequate curriculum framework and needs analysis is often informal and incoherent at locality level. Young people's involvement in planning, monitoring and evaluating provision is developing well at local authority level but is inconsistent and sparse in the localities. Youth service provision is within easy reach for the majority of young people, but there is insufficient detached and outreach work to cater for those who choose not to access it. The quality of accommodation is good but it is not efficiently used. Partnerships with statutory bodies are strong, especially with Connexions, and partners value the ability of youth workers to engage young people and work in multidisciplinary teams. A new quality assurance system has begun to assess the quality of youth work practice, but its capability to address all aspects of service performance has yet to be fully exploited.

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 demonstrate good progress in personal development.
- Specialist and targeted work is very effective.
- Workers are suitably experienced and well motivated.
- Partnerships, in particular with Connexions, are strong and extensive.

Areas for development

- Achievement is too variable in open access work.
- The curriculum framework is inadequate as a basis for coherent planning.
- Needs analysis is underdeveloped.
- The quality assurance system does not adequately identify outcomes and unsatisfactory practice.

Part B: Commentary on the key aspects

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

4. Standards of young people's achievement are adequate. Across the area young people demonstrate good progress in their personal development. Those attending the observed sessions enjoyed the activities, generally engaged well and treated the centres and each other with respect. Young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make excellent progress and gain crucial life skills in specific programmes. Specialist and targeted work are strong. The sexual and relationships education programme is very popular with schools and young people, who were able to articulate the useful knowledge they had acquired and consistently evaluate the programme very positively. Young people, particularly those who are vulnerable or who underachieve, were enabled to resolve personal problems and to identify and secure future training and employment options through the Youth Information and Counselling Unit and the Learning Support Unit (LSU). This work makes a significant contribution to their progress towards economic wellbeing. Young people were clear about their direction and were gaining confidence to take responsibility for their lives. The LSU is making a good contribution to reducing the number of young people not in employment education or training by helping difficult young people to achieve positive outcomes. One young person at the LSU related how his attitude to learning had changed while attending the project, and that he now saw the relevance of education.

5. Achievement was very variable across the open access work. In the better examples, young people were involved in planning and reviewing the activities, which enabled them to gain information and understanding on a range of personal and social issues. In the worst examples, young people confessed to being bored at times and demonstrated little evidence of learning new skills or gaining useful knowledge and understanding. Accreditation overall is underdeveloped, and there are very limited opportunities for young people to benefit from the formal recognition of their achievements.

6. Youth work practice is adequate overall. Youth workers are dedicated and experienced. They know the young people and their localities well. Youth workers and young people enjoy very good relationships. The motivation of staff is high and they work effectively in teams. In targeted provision and the better examples of open access work, skilled workers have developed their own session planning and evaluation forms and provide young people with structured and challenging programmes, which are geared to their needs. The excellent assessment of the individual needs of young people with a range of learning difficulties and disabilities at Bottesford Friends club was accompanied by a well differentiated programme. The activity and outcomes are recorded with young people who demonstrate clear skill development over time. However, in many open access settings, needs are determined erratically and activities bear little relation to termly centre plans. Session planning and particularly evaluation in this work

were weak. The recreational aspects of youth work often showed little sense of purpose and were poorly structured. Overall, young people are not sufficiently involved at a local level in planning, managing and evaluating provision, and there is no established approach to ensure their consistent and systematic participation.

Key Aspect 2: Quality of curriculum and resources

7. The quality of curriculum and resources is adequate overall. Young people respect and enjoy using the reasonable range of provision in mobile and open access activities at 14 centres. Projects, such as the ROOF housing support project and the Base in central Scunthorpe, are well-targeted and very well used. However, the analysis of young people's needs is underdeveloped. Although reference is made in the youth service annual plan to the sound needs analysis in the Children and Young People's Plan, in reality there is no curriculum framework for youth work, which would link this broader analysis to any analyses at service and locality levels. Nor does the youth service annual plan provide the structure to help staff to develop their work.

8. The commitment to promote equality of opportunity within the plan is translated adequately in practice. Effective inclusion work at Bottesford Friends youth club and the efforts of the X-Press youth forum to ensure a diverse membership are good examples.

9. Youth centre locations have a good geographical spread for a small authority. They were usually bright, warm, welcoming and well equipped, although there were insufficient information and communication technology facilities. Young people felt comfortable and safe there, and all centres complied with the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001. The mobile unit, though small, is particularly effective in engaging young people in the more remote areas. It is respected, well used and expertly staffed. All youth workers are qualified or working towards a suitable qualification and are supported by employee development reviews and supervision, which is sometimes irregular. However, resources could be more effectively deployed. Youth centres are accessible, but not efficiently used. Attendances are erratic across the area and most centres are closed in school holidays and on many evenings, especially Fridays. An identified need for detached and outreach work is not being met, and the peripatetic team is capable of covering only part of the area. Some sessions with low attendances were overstaffed.

Key Aspect 3: Leadership and management

10. Leadership and management are adequate. The authority has articulated a clear vision for its youth service as a major partner in the new IYSS. The head of the IYSS and the lead elected member for children and young people see the youth service as fundamental to the universal core offer of integrated youth support in the future, and a revised structure for the service has been accepted by the authority's scrutiny committee. An increase in the number of localities to 5, in line with the new Local Strategic Partnership boundaries, will enable a similarly

increased number of locality managers to supervise the centres within their control more effectively. The service undertakes a substantial amount of work with children between 11 and 13 years old. Whilst a good case has been articulated for such work it and the resources spent on it, fall outside the national target age range for young peoples services.

11. Partnerships are strong, especially with Connexions, and there are many good examples of the youth service making a valuable contribution. Partners value the youth service's ability to engage young people and work effectively with other agencies. For example, youth specialists complement Connexions and the Youth Offending Service well and add a new and different dimension to programmes. The partnership with the voluntary sector is underdeveloped, but both sides are willing to increase capacity through an improved combined youth offer.

12. The youth service is effectively leading the development of the participation strategy of the Children and Young People's Partnership at authority level. It is the driving force behind the X-Press youth forum, which is very competently led by young people, who are beginning to exert a significant influence on political processes. Young people are also employed effectively in the 'youthproofing' of publicity and service documentation and as members of the panels which decide on the allocation of resources related to the Youth Capital Fund and the Youth Opportunities Fund. Involvement of young people in the localities is, as yet, underdeveloped.

13. Financial and human resource management are good. The new YouthZone management information system provides more reliable data, although the learning outcomes of open access work are not recorded. The recently-introduced quality assurance framework is producing useful results but is insufficiently refined and embedded to tackle the variable practice evident in the service. Assessments, for example of sessional youth club activity, are undertaken but are not always consistent and require moderation. Nonetheless, good practice worthy of dissemination is being identified, but it is not shared.