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education  
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# London Borough of Havering Youth Service Report

Havering Children's Services Authority Area

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## Introduction

1. Havering Youth Service is part of the developing Youth Support Service (YSS) within the Directorate for Children's Services, offering an integrated range of support services to young people. The YSS, and the core youth service within it, are led by the YSS Manager, who heads a team of four cluster co-ordinators and an administrative officer. The youth service comprises 32 full time equivalent (FTE) youth work posts, of which 13 are full time. Nineteen percent of the 20,400 13-19 population participates in the work of the service. The budget made available to the youth service by the local authority has risen by 10% over the last 2 years and currently stands at £1.79 million. Additional contracts, however, more than double this figure.

2. The Joint Area Review (JAR) was enhanced to enable coverage of the youth service. Inspectors considered the youth service's self assessment and key service documentation. They met with officers, a cross section of staff, representatives of the voluntary sector and other partners. Direct observations of a sample of youth work sessions were carried out in Harold Hill as part of the JAR neighbourhood study area as well as other observations of practice across the county.

## Part A: Summary of the report

### Main findings

#### Effectiveness and value for money

3. Havering youth service is a good service and provides very good value for money. The service's self assessment is accurate. Young people generally achieve well and youth workers engage very successfully with vulnerable and challenging groups. The assessment of young people's needs is thorough, and skilled workers implement effective programmes to meet them, although some open-access work is only satisfactory. Managers provide excellent leadership and are proactive and influential in promoting the interests of young people within the Children's Services Directorate. Resources are augmented by substantial additional funding and are efficiently and imaginatively deployed to implement a coherent curriculum in conjunction with a wide range of partners. The assessment of both young people's achievement and the practice of individual youth workers is inconsistent.

#### Strengths

- Standards of achievement and the quality of youth work practice are good.
- Leadership is very strong and resources are very well managed.
- Staff are well motivated and respected by young people.
- Accommodation and equipment are very good

- Partnerships are strong, varied and effective.

### Areas for development

- Increase the range and take-up of accreditation opportunities and implement consistent assessment of young people's progress.
- Improve the overall quality of practice in open-access settings.
- Improve the assessment of the impact of individual practice and share good practice more widely.

### 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	4

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

4. The youth service contributes well to all outcomes. The partnership with the primary care trust has been beneficial in providing health services to a wide range of young people, for example through the Big Deal project on substance misuse in schools. The two information shops include sexual health clinics and a counselling service and are well attended. Thorough risk assessments of programmes and activities help to ensure the safety of young people taking part in them. All staff are subject to child protection training and checks by the Criminal Records Bureau and young people feel safe when participating in youth service provision. Police and the Community Safety team consider that the work of detached youth work teams has contributed significantly to the reduction in anti social behaviour. Young people enjoy well targeted programmes that help them to learn and achieve. At borough level, through the current Youth Council, a representative group of young people is beginning to exert a positive influence on services provided by the local authority, while, at local level, there are good examples of young people's

involvement in shaping programmes. Young people, especially the more vulnerable, are helped to prepare for employment and training by information shop services and specific activities, such as the 'U' project, which respond well to their needs. Managers make a major contribution to the development of services for young people by the Children's Services Directorate.

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

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

5. Young people in Havering achieve well. In the sessions observed during the inspection, most were able to articulate their learning and their future aims. In project work, young people are very responsive and gain considerable knowledge and skills from their involvement. Young people from a bands project demonstrated high levels of musical skill at the Headrock concert in a well-run youth centre, which attracted an appreciative and enthusiastic mixed audience of 300. In the Revellers project, young people with a wide range of learning and physical disabilities are encouraged to develop greater autonomy and take on more responsibility. They are set targets, which are rewarded by a variety of certificates, including Youth Achievement Awards. Nevertheless, accreditation overall is underdeveloped. The range and accessibility of nationally recognised qualifications is limited, and consequently the number of accredited outcomes is too low. Although levels of achievement in targeted work are good, and for some vulnerable young people excellent, in open-access settings the picture is more variable and, sometimes, barely satisfactory.

6. Many young people acquire very good personal and social skills, demonstrating self confidence and good teamwork. In some projects, young people with multiple problems are progressing well. In a Youth Council meeting, young people demonstrated very good skills in conducting a meeting and displayed confidence in their dealings with local councillors, youth service managers and other professionals. In general, young people are very complimentary about youth workers, and relationships with them are extremely strong.

7. Youth work practice is good. Workers know their areas and young people well. They develop good programmes, especially for vulnerable groups. Activities are clearly responsive to the needs of local groups, although the needs and progress of individual young people are less consistently assessed. Workers in detached settings have good long term relationships with young people and have clear objectives for their learning. In most locations, high levels of commitment were observed among staff, along with very good teamwork and co-operation with partners. In some open access work, practice lacks the rigour and challenge of more focused targeted work. Good practice is publicised in a variety of ways but not across service clusters, nor systematically. Planning, recording and evaluation

of work are normally thorough. Young people are often involved, but the extent of their involvement is very variable.

8. Youth workers are well respected and enjoy very good relationships with young people. A group of partners considered youth workers to be innovative and playing a vital role in combating anti-social behaviour through expanding activities to engage young people at risk of offending. Youth workers are effective in helping young people to take part in democratic structures, which are beginning to give them a voice in the political process at borough level. Involvement at local level, however, is too variable.

## Key Aspect 2: Quality of curriculum and resources

9. The quality of curriculum and resources is good. The curriculum is a major strength and the curriculum document is attractive and accessible to young people and staff. It is broad, relevant, well understood and based on a clear rationale of youth engagement and empowerment. It caters very well for the needs of young people and is well aligned with the strategic and operational plans of the service, partners and the local authority. In recent years, the balance has shifted towards work with more vulnerable groups. This responds well to wider local and national agendas and helps justify the relatively high cost of each young person reached. The 'hotspot toolkit' is useful in prioritising work locally within broader objectives and is supported by the police and the Community Safety team.

10. Bi-monthly curriculum themes provide a sharper focus to which most staff respond positively. The themes promote equality, diversity and inclusion and give rise to very successful targeted activity, for example the Brooklands and Square Wheel projects, which promote self development and community safety. In a session with a group of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people, activity related clearly to the curriculum and Every Child Matters outcomes, and the worker was very knowledgeable about both. Work clearly met the needs of the group and was well differentiated. However, some other groups, such as black young people and young women are less well served.

11. Overall, the service has a good mix of qualifications and experience which are well applied and supplemented by the expertise of colleagues from partner organisations. Teams are committed and have high morale. The retention of full time staff is good, and eight workers have been supported through national qualifying training. Part-time staff, many of whom work a small number of hours, are not obliged to undertake local training and the qualification level of these workers is too low. Individual performance management is sound, but the quality of individual workers' practice is not sufficiently assessed.

12. Accommodation and resources are very good. All premises are comfortable, well equipped, respected by young people and graffiti-free. They comply with current Special Educational Needs and Disability Act legislation. Information and communications technology equipment, health education resources within Information Shops, the resources supporting music and skate projects and the

popular mobile truck are further examples of developments appreciated by young people. An informative interactive website enables staff and young people to leave messages and engage in topic discussions. The emphasis on targeted activity has resulted in inconsistent access to youth service facilities, and young people in the southern and northern extremities of the borough are relatively disadvantaged. Emerging plans to address the deficiency need urgently to be finalised and implemented.

### Key Aspect 3: Leadership and management

13. Strategic and operational leadership and management are excellent. Strong strategic leadership and management provide a clear direction for staff, and the service is rightly recognised by the local authority and Children's Trust as a key contributor to the development of children's services. Council members are knowledgeable about the service and support its alignment with local and national priorities. Managers have responded very effectively to the development needs identified in the Best Value Review. The Youth Support Service is very responsive to change and is moving towards a broader concept of services to young people, with the youth service at the centre. It is already responsible for the education welfare service (secondary), the teenage pregnancy contract and the majority of Connexions work in the borough, which have been very well harmonised with the youth service, adding value through economies of scale.

14. The youth service is well resourced. The budget has increased 5% a year over the last three years, and substantial elements of external funding are attracted and used imaginatively and efficiently to enhance and augment services for young people. Secondments and careful commissioning enrich the range of activities through the acquisition of additional accommodation and new skills and experience. The targeting of resources, including deployment of staff, is efficient, effective and closely tailored to Havering's needs assessment.

15. Mechanisms for the involvement of young people in shaping the service at borough level are developing well and young people are enthusiastic about their involvement. The recent establishment of the Youth Council and the embryonic nature of the Youth Participation Board mean the present impact is limited. Nonetheless, the youth service provides a good example to partner services and is in a strong position to lead co-ordinated development. Despite some very good examples, such as the involvement of young people in the inspection of services, young people's involvement in management, quality assurance or in long term development of the provision is variable.

16. Senior managers are proactive and influential in their work with other services which support young people and the Youth Support Service has proved an effective catalyst in bringing groups together and setting up activities. Partners perceive the Youth Support Service as very effective in: engaging with vulnerable groups, using limited resources efficiently and practising 'real' partnership. The long-term relationship of the voluntary sector with the statutory service has been good and is being revised to meet future challenges effectively.



17. Quality assurance systems are well established. Management information has improved markedly since the installation of the YouthBase system six months ago, and central management of data is very thorough. The service can confidently report very good performance against national benchmarks for reach and participation. The Best Value Review judged the Youth Support Service to be cost effective, and all projects and most other aspects of the service are monitored for cost effectiveness.