

# Youth Work in Telford and Wrekin

Telford and Wrekin Children's Services Authority Area

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## Introduction

1. Youth work in Telford and Wrekin is provided by the Connexions 4 Youth (C4Y) service, which is located within the School and Community Service Area of the Children and Young People's Portfolio of Telford and Wrekin Council. C4Y was formed by combining the previous Youth Development and Connexions services in April 2007 and is temporarily jointly led by a principal officer from each service, responsible to the Head of School and Community Services. The new C4Y transitional structure fully integrates Connexions operational staff with Youth Development workers in five co-located area teams which mirror the borough's cluster working model. In 2007-08 the budget made available to C4Y by the local authority was £1.177 million, and the service was reportedly in contact with 21% of the 16,091 13-19 year-old cohort. The grant for the Connexions element of C4Y added £1.769m. There are 10 full-time and 88 part-time youth workers; a full-time equivalent total of 17.8. They are supported by 10 managers and 7.56 full-time equivalent administrative staff, whose responsibilities also include the Connexions element of C4Y.

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. Youth work provision in Telford and Wrekin is good, and the local authority sufficiently secures its provision. The integration of youth and Connexions services in 2007 has progressed quickly and effectively, producing a more coherent service for young people. Their achievement is good, especially in vulnerable groups. The outcomes of well-targeted project work are very positive and, for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities, outstanding. However, the narrow range and restricted availability of accreditation are denying a significant proportion of young people the opportunity formally to recognise their achievements. Youth work practice is strong, and workers typically enjoy good relationships with young people. There is a good mix of qualifications and experience, which is well deployed and supplemented by expertise from partner organisations. Young people's needs are thoroughly analysed at all levels, and responsive programmes are developed by youth workers to meet them. Youth work provision is dynamic and flexible, and, for target groups, is inclusive and well differentiated. Access to provision is variable, and in some locations there is a significant lack of suitable accommodation. Access to information and communications technology (ICT) is also too limited. Leadership and management are good. The business plan is clear and consistent with those of partners. Partnerships are very strong and varied. Management information and quality assurance of practice are barely adequate, although a single quality assurance system for C4Y is beginning to enhance sessional youth work assessments with the assessment of individual practice.

## 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	Leadership and management	3

*Inspectors make judgements based on the following scale*

*4: excellent/outstanding; 3: good; 2: adequate/satisfactory; 1: inadequate*

## Strengths

- Young people's achievement is good, especially among vulnerable groups, and, among those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, it is outstanding.
- Most youth work is good or better and is delivered by workers who are well qualified, motivated, experienced and respected by young people.
- The analysis of young people's needs is comprehensive and coherent.
- Youth work provision is flexible and responsive.
- The integration of the Youth Development and Connexions services is progressing well.

## Areas for development

- Increase the range and take-up of accreditation opportunities.
- Improve the overall quality and availability of accommodation and ICT.
- Establish a management information system which meets the needs of an integrated service.
- Improve the quality assurance of professional 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. The achievement of young people in Telford and Wrekin is good. C4Y is having a marked impact on the attitudes, values and self confidence of young people, especially vulnerable groups. Almost all young people enjoyed attending the sessions and generally engaged well, treating the centres and each other with respect.

5. Well-targeted project work is providing some very positive outcomes. There was some very good work with male and female groups to counter bullying, where young people were clear about what they had learned and the incidence of bullying had reduced substantially. Sessions on drugs, alcohol and sexual health had effectively encouraged young people to change their views and behaviour and caused them to reconsider their life-plans, such as deciding to defer becoming a parent until well into their twenties. Young members of the panel which judged bids to the Youth Opportunities Fund (YOF) were expertly making clear decisions against well-understood criteria. Programmes for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities are outstanding, and those in Club 17 were increasing personal and social achievements and self-confidence. Young people participating in performing arts conveyed a clear sense of pride in their certificated achievements. They experienced team work and developed positive approaches to physical health and emotional well-being. Accreditation, however, is underdeveloped overall. The range is narrow, and current numbers benefiting are too low. The success of the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and emerging ASDAN awards in the borough are good examples of the potential of relevant formal accreditation to motivate young people.

6. Youth work practice is strong and was good or better in two thirds of the work observed, although good practice is not systematically shared. Workers know their areas and young people well. They develop good programmes, which are responsive to need, especially for vulnerable groups. In a well-run and effective healthy eating drop-in session, youth workers were using a variety of complementary approaches to enable young people to own and develop the session. The team were simultaneously identifying young people's immediate needs and concerns and helping resolve them. Several sessions demonstrated very good use of the Youth Opportunities Fund, with workers supporting young people, who had hitherto achieved little, to win funding for their preferred projects. Session planning is consistently good and well differentiated to cater effectively for the range of ages and abilities of groups such as Club 17. However, evaluation is too variable, and young people are not always sufficiently involved. In the very small minority of unsatisfactory work, low level recreational activities offered no stretch, the sessions were poorly structured and unchallenging, and young people had low expectations of both themselves and the provision.

## Key Aspect 2: Quality of curriculum and resources

7. Curriculum and resources are good overall. Provision is flexible and responsive to need. The curriculum document provides a sound framework for youth work but does not give exemplars to assist in programme planning. Analysis of need is thorough. Borough-wide partnership assessments link through to local needs analysis, well conducted by operational staff and their partners. Priority groups are clearly identified for relevant targeted work, which is constantly under review. Less effective joint working has occasionally resulted in local duplication, but more often groups such as teenage mothers, young people with learning difficulties and disabilities, travellers, looked after young people and those from black and minority ethnic communities benefit from jointly-planned, well-differentiated programmes. The interests of the TF7 boys group in Sutton Hill were skilfully converted into programme ideas and, through a successful YOF bid, became an innovative, exciting activity with clear behavioural gains and vocational links. All staff work very effectively to *Every Child Matters* outcomes, which have become axiomatic in programme planning.

8. Youth workers are well qualified, experienced and respected and enjoy very good relationships with young people. They are effectively deployed and their skills are supplemented by expertise from partner organisations. Teams are well motivated and have high morale.

9. Resources are variable across the borough. Although in many locations accommodation and equipment are of good quality and readily accessible by young people, in a significant number they are not. Low attendances in a minority of instances represent poor value for money. Detached and outreach work and a limited mobile facility are successful but are not an effective substitute for premises which have been closed due, for example, to fire or discovery of asbestos. The recently-launched Youthzone website is a very recent, promising C4Y-led, cross-service development by an inclusive group of young people and has the potential to promote the borough's Youth Offer. However, access to ICT facilities across C4Y provision is generally poor, and often non-existent.

## Key Aspect 3: Leadership and management

10. Leadership and management are good. The C4Y business plan is clear and accessible. Service objectives, articulated against *Every Child Matters* outcomes, are strongly linked to community priorities in the Children and Young People's Plan, and progress is effectively quantified. Drivers for economy and efficiency are clearly identified, demonstrating the benefits being gained locally from integration. Principal risks are adequately identified.

11. The integration of youth and Connexions services has moved very quickly, and effective leadership and management have ensured that staff remain committed to the process, as evolving integration creates greater understanding between staff of the two original services. There is early evidence that the blending of skills and experience from the original Connexions and youth services is enabling young people to derive more benefit from the Youth Offer. Youth workers see cluster

planning as helpful in determining their contribution. The coherence of the Youth Offer has been further strengthened by the integrated service management pilot in the Newport cluster, where the cluster manager (from C4Y) is responsible for an extended team, including educational welfare, family support, Children's Centre outreach and behaviour support functions. Sound child protection procedures are in place, and the widespread use of the Common Assessment Framework and referral to the multi-agency "Team around the Child" are firmly established.

12. The budget made available to C4Y by the local authority in 2007-08 was below comparable authorities. Per young person, it was 18% below the national average. The budget is well managed, but resources to provide suitable and well distributed accommodation are lacking.

13. Partnerships at strategic and operational levels are very strong and varied. The service is well represented on a range of multi-agency partnerships, which contribute to the development of 13 - 19 year olds, particularly through provision for more vulnerable groups. Partners are complimentary about C4Y and value its ability to engage young people and work closely with them. C4Y is effectively increasing the capacity of the voluntary sector to contribute, by providing training and other forms of support.

14. The service has inherited two management information systems and is awaiting a single comprehensive system intended to meet all the requirements of children's services, including C4Y. As it stands, the existing data base for youth work is barely adequate and does not capture the totality of work across services for young people. Management supervision of staff is systematic. Implementation of a single quality assurance system for C4Y is just beginning to enhance sessional youth work assessments with the assessment of individual practice, and it usefully involves young people. C4Y involves young people at borough level in shaping and influencing what is provided for them and provides a sound model of effective practice. However, local practice is inconsistent.