

Tameside Youth Service

Tameside Children's Services Authority Area

Age group: All

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Introduction

1. Tameside Youth Service is part of Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council's Services for Children and Young People. In 2007/08, the Youth Service core budget was £2.1 million supplemented with an additional £1.1 million of external funding. The service is structured around four localities and is complemented by a range of borough-wide services. The head of service is supported by five senior managers. The service operates from 16 centres and in over 30 community settings and employs 22.5 full-time workers, 74 part-time workers, equivalent to 44.4 full-time staff, and a further 15.8 externally funded workers.
2. Tameside is a metropolitan borough made up of nine towns to the east of Greater Manchester. It is the 56th most deprived area in England. Ten per cent of Tameside's 214,000 residents are young people aged 13-19.
3. 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

4. The local authority sufficiently secures the provision of youth work. The quality of provision in Tameside is adequate. Young people's achievement is good overall. They are given the opportunity to learn new skills and develop their self-confidence as a result of their involvement in an inclusive, and at times, imaginative programme. Accreditation arrangements are comprehensive and well-established with robust systems in place to record young people's learning. The numbers of young people participating in youth work is increasing but remain low. Youth workers are aware of local issues and most have positive relationships with the young people they work with. However, the quality of their practice is variable. Whilst workers demonstrate a high level of empathy and care towards young people they are not always sufficiently challenging. Accommodation has benefited from a recent investment programme and partnerships with other organisations are providing access to specialist resources to support learning. Planning arrangements are comprehensive but a lack of milestones and measurable outcomes restrict effective performance management. Furthermore, the deployment of youth workers is not always well matched to demand and too much of their time is spent on planning and review. The workforce is well supported by appropriate policies and procedures and good access to continuing professional development. Managers are well-respected by youth workers and morale is high. Quality assurance arrangements and management information are underdeveloped and this limits the ability of managers to make robust judgements against agreed standards.

Key aspect inspection grades

Key Aspect		Grade
1	Standards of young people's achievement	3
	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

- The standard of achievement by young people is good.
- An inclusive range of activities and opportunities is on offer.
- The effective use of accreditation to recognise young people's achievement is valued by them.
- There are good opportunities for young people to make a positive contribution.
- The commitment of youth workers and managers to improving the service is high.

Areas for development

- Increase the numbers of young people participating in youth work.
- Ensure youth work practice motivates and challenges all young people.
- Improve the deployment of youth workers.
- Improve management information and quality assurance procedures.
- Ensure all plans include measurable progress and outcome indicators.

Part B: Commentary on the key aspects

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

5. Achievement is good overall. Most young people acquire new skills and make gains in self-confidence and self-esteem as a result of their engagement with youth workers. Young people are aware of what they are learning and how this is benefiting them. Levels of achievement are highest on those programmes which enable young people to take the lead in the planning and evaluation of the work. Information and Communications Technology is increasingly being used effectively to support young people's learning.

6. Young people respond well to opportunities to have their achievements recognised. Accreditation is well-established and young people are able to access a good variety of different awards. Significant effort is made to celebrate young people's achievement and accreditation rates are now increasing.

7. Young people gain much from their engagement in decision making groups. Often over a considerable and sustained period of time, they learn how to negotiate, compromise and reach a consensus. Others take part in community action projects or are supported to become volunteers or peer educators which enable them to increase their understanding about social issues and understand their impact. Young people are given the opportunity to apply their learning. On one programme young people were using newly acquired campaigning skills to lobby for improved skateboarding facilities.

8. Young people from vulnerable groups are supported to achieve as well, if not better, than others. An excellent programme supports young people with disabilities to explore relevant issues and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people are supported to develop and deliver peer education programmes designed to tackle homophobia.

9. The quality of youth work practice is adequate. There is a considerable amount of good practice but it is not yet consistent across the service. Youth workers have a good understanding of local issues and the challenges facing young people. They demonstrate empathy and care towards the young people they work with but they are not always sufficiently challenging. As a result some youth work practice is limited by low expectations and fails to sufficiently engage young people.

10. Behaviour is generally well managed by youth workers. One example of good practice took place during a visit to an allotment where the youth worker responded in a positive and pragmatic way to challenging behaviour by a group of young men.

11. Youth workers are aware of neighbourhood and borough-wide services and are able to refer young people when necessary. Close to a third of all youth workers have been trained to use the Common Assessment Framework which has increased

their engagement in providing more integrated packages of support for young people.

Key Aspect 2: Quality of curriculum and resources

12. The quality of curriculum and resources is adequate with some good features. An inclusive offer brings together targeted work with locality-based open access youth work and individual support. Outreach and detached work supplements building based work. Provision is reliable and the young people who use it feel safe. Later evening work is not offered with many programmes finishing at, or before, 8pm. Weekend work is limited. A range of approaches is used to promote and raise awareness of youth work activities. However, information and publicity is not available in alternative or accessible formats such as larger print or audio described.

13. Considerable time is invested in the planning and review of youth work. Within each three hour and 36 minute youth work session, one hour and 36 minutes are set aside for planning and review. On some programmes this is leading to overly structured sessions which restricts young people's engagement in planning and the ability of youth workers to explore issues arising from informal conversation and more spontaneous activity. On all programmes it significantly reduces the amount of time available for young people to participate in positive activities.

14. Accommodation has benefited from recent investment. Most of the buildings used for youth work are welcoming and fit for purpose. Young people have access to some high quality resources, such as a recording and mixing studio, a well equipped bike workshop and outdoor sports facilities. Partnerships within the local authority and with other organisations provide young people with access to more specialist workers and support. A good example of this is the collaboration with Reel Manchester which enables young people to make use of professional script writing and film making services.

15. The youth work curriculum, which is closely aligned to the Every Child Matters framework, is understood by youth workers and is well embedded. It effectively supports youth workers to think about the approaches available to them and to focus on the educational purpose of youth work. However, it does not enable youth workers to develop a shared sense of what outcomes they might be able to achieve through youth work.

16. A significant number of programmes do not attract sufficient young people with open access sessions the least well attended. As a result the deployment of youth workers is not always appropriate to the numbers of young people taking part. Insufficient attention is paid to understanding the reasons for this and to taking action to make the curriculum more responsive to the needs and interests of young people. An equality impact assessment is not in place.

17. Youth workers are appropriately qualified. A partnership with Tameside College provides access to a nationally recognised training qualification for new staff. The continuing professional development needs of the workforce are well

considered. Youth workers receive regular and supportive supervision from their managers.

Key Aspect 3: Leadership and management

18. Leadership and management are adequate. The funding made available by the local authority is sufficient and is enhanced by a significant amount of external funding. The head of service supported by senior managers provide visible leadership and are passionate about youth work. This contributes to high staff morale and youth workers are positive about the future.

19. The service has been through a period of change over the last two years. An internal review carried out in 2006 found the service to be inadequate. Standards have improved significantly as a result of action taken by senior managers and the service is now better placed to move forward.

20. A comprehensive planning process is in place which is well understood by managers and youth workers. Plans themselves lack measurable progress and outcome indicators and this limits the impact of performance management at an individual, team and service-wide level.

21. The service has failed to accurately monitor or report the numbers of young people it is reaching. Managers acknowledge weaknesses in the previous paper based arrangements and action has recently been taken to secure a new electronic data collection system. From the data that is available, the reported 2007/08 contact rate of 27.1% is adequate. At 8.4% the participation rate for the same period is low but increasing. Managers are committed to raising participation rates but a detailed action plan is not in place.

22. Managers regularly observe youth work but these efforts are not sufficiently underpinned by agreed quality standards. This leads to inconsistent and at times subjective recording arrangements. Weaknesses in quality assurance and data collection mean that managers are unable to adequately consider value for money issues when making judgements on performance. Young people's role in quality assurance is under developed.

23. Partners value the contribution of the youth service to joint projects such as work with those at risk of offending. The use of contracts and service level agreements is under developed. At the local level youth workers and managers work closely with the voluntary and community sector. A good example of this collaboration is the youth work being delivered by the St Peters Youth partnership. However, there is no clear borough-wide strategy for developing new youth work providers or making better use of the potential of the voluntary and community sector.

24. Youth workers are provided with a safe working environment. Risk assessments are in place and workers understand what to do if they have concerns about the safety or welfare of a child or young person.

25. Progress is being made towards developing more integrated youth support arrangements. An impressive new office is providing a base for several youth support services and this is enhancing multi-agency working. Common assessment processes are in place and starting to be used to identify and respond to additional needs. Managers are aware of the opportunities that are presenting themselves as services become more integrated and are committed to further service redesign where it leads to improved outcomes.