

Youth Work in Poole

Poole Children's Services Authority Area

Age group: All

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Introduction

1. Youth work is part of the Children and Young People's Integrated Services group within Children's Services. It is delivered by the council's youth service which has a number of internal and external partnerships including a grant-aided programme that supplies the youth work teams for two voluntary sector clubs. The Borough of Poole has a population of 136,900 with some 12,500 young people in the 13 to 19 age group. The service's net budget for youth work in 2007-08 is £921,976 with £101,319 additional income from other sources. There are 29 full-time equivalent posts in the youth service

2. At the time of the inspection the youth service was completing a restructure to align its delivery with the three localities which Children's and Young People's Integrated Services has developed with its partners. In its Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) the local authority has committed itself to developing an Integrated Youth Support and Development Service (IYSDS) which will be fully established by 2010. From April 2008, the Connexions service in Poole will be delivered by Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Connexions through a service level agreement for a two year period. The service will be tendered for in April 2010 and it is intended that it will be part of the IYSDS. Within these emergent structures the youth service has already taken responsibility for young people's participation, positive activities and volunteering.

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. Youth work provision in Poole is adequate with some good features. The local authority sufficiently secures the provision of youth work. The Children and Young People's Integrated Services group is making good progress in developing an IYSDS. This has involved considerable restructuring and realignment of services which has been well managed and communicated. Achievement and youth work practice are generally adequate and workers succeed in engaging vulnerable groups. However, standards are inconsistent with poorer practice contrasting with some good and responsive practice. The effectiveness of the planning and evaluation of youth work is also too variable. The appointment of a Locality Co-ordinator (Curriculum Development) is timely as it is intended to provide a focus for the development of this area of work.

5. Partnership working is well developed within the emerging IYSDS and the capacity to work in this way is a major strength of youth work in Poole. Strong partnerships are providing a good foundation for embedding the change to a locality-based approach. The strategic direction of youth work in Poole is clear and

well thought through and the lead role which youth workers are taking in the implementation of the council's youth participation strategy demonstrates the service's capacity to innovate. However, there are key weaknesses in aspects of the management of delivery including quality assurance and planning.

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

- The participation strategy is being implemented effectively and is generating some excellent outcomes for young people.
- Effective work in multi-agency locality teams to address issues affecting young people and assist specific individuals.
- Excellent partnership working with a broad range of agencies.
- The management of change.

Areas for development

- Develop more robust and varied quality assurance systems.
- Address inconsistencies in youth work practice and the achievement of young people.
- Develop the range and quality of the curriculum with a particular focus on equalities, inclusiveness and diversity.

Part B: Commentary on the key aspects

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

6. Taken overall, the standards of young people's achievements and the quality of youth work practice are adequate. There are, however, inconsistencies in both achievement and practice in all settings ranging from outstanding to inadequate. Most youth work opportunities are enjoyed by the young people participating in them. They develop knowledge, for example, of their personal safety and that of their peers, are encouraged to participate in physical activity and to understand the principles of healthy eating. Their involvement in project groups to develop bids to the Youth Opportunities Fund is well designed; young people at Carter Community School who had prepared a successful bid for a community gym described enthusiastically their involvement in preparing and presenting the bid. Weaker achievement by young people was generally linked to workers not sufficiently considering how learning outcomes would be realised through the activities available. Opportunities for young people to learn from information and communications technology (ICT) are limited as computers are available at few locations.

7. Young people develop leadership capacity through experience as senior members in centres which allows them to eventually progress to become part-time youth workers if they wish. In addition, a well conceived six hour per week apprenticeship scheme offers young people the opportunity to acquire youth work and general work-related skills.

8. Young people's involvement in decision-making in their own clubs, groups and projects is generally adequate and sometimes outstanding; they develop good skills that enable them to function well socially and politically. The participation strategy, which the youth service is leading, gives young people many opportunities, both structured and unstructured, to become involved in decision-making about the services they receive and issues facing the wider community. Opportunities are missed within the activities associated with the participation strategy for young people to record their achievements and receive accreditation.

9. The range of accredited outcomes available to young people is currently limited. It is being expanded from the base that the service has developed with the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. The Poole Award Scheme provides an opportunity to celebrate the progress made by young people but recording and moderation systems are not well developed. The service has recognised this and an appropriate module is included within its new management information system.

10. Youth workers are flexible in responding to the varying and changing needs of young people and involve them in programme planning. However, too many activities fail to offer sufficient learning opportunities or challenge both in open access opportunities in youth clubs or in targeted activities with individuals and

groups. Youth work practice provided by the mobile unit is good. Co-funded by the police, it allows youth workers to locate themselves in places where young people congregate. Workers effectively target the more challenging young people and work skilfully to help reduce their risk of involvement in anti-social or offending behaviour.

Key Aspect 2: Quality of curriculum and resources

11. The quality of curriculum and resources is adequate. The youth work offer is responsive to the wishes of young people and draws on the analysis of needs undertaken at corporate and directorate level. The effectiveness of planning and evaluation of the subsequent work is too variable. The curriculum document describes the offer but does not offer stimulus to support planning and evaluation in youth centres and projects. Managers have recognised the need for improvement here and in terms of sessional planning through the appointment of a locality co-ordinator with a brief to develop curriculum planning across the service. A key aspect of this is to bring work on equalities, inclusion and diversity to the forefront of youth work. This is timely since, notwithstanding isolated examples of good work such as the celebration of Diwali, this area of work is underdeveloped.

12. The personal and social development of young people is addressed well in all contexts. The partnership with the council's sports development team has increased the opportunities available to young people to participate in physical activity and innovations such as bringing together football and street dance have attracted young women. There is a generally good clear focus on *Every Child Matters* and some excellent outcomes have been achieved for individuals who are not in employment, education or training through collaborative working with Connexions and the alcohol and drugs service.

13. Youth workers are well qualified and appropriately experienced. Good support is offered to those with less experience and regular management supervision is prioritised by all concerned. The investment made in continued professional development is valued by workers who consider that it meets their needs. As the IYSDS is established, access to professional training beyond the technical needs of youth work will be increased.

14. Buildings are well maintained and offer a pleasant, welcoming and safe environment for young people. Youth opportunities funding has been used to upgrade the resources and equipment available for young people to use. However, the provision of more ICT equipment, particularly in centres, would enhance young people's learning and broaden the curriculum offer.

Key Aspect 3: Leadership and management

15. Leadership and management are satisfactory; the strategic planning for the development of IYSDS is comprehensive in its scope. Operationally, however, underpinning quality assurance and planning systems are insufficiently developed

to fully support the emerging strategy. At 1.33% of the overall education budget (2007), the council is funding its youth service marginally above the national average and to a higher level than its statistical neighbours.

16. Children's and Young People's Integrated Services are well placed to respond to the challenges of "Aim Higher". The recent restructure to align youth work to the localities was well managed and communicated. Consideration is being given to the principles and processes through which youth work will be commissioned and the CYPP has set a target of April 2010 for this to be fully implemented. Staff understand that there will be further change as the IYSDS is developed.

17. Partnership working is an area of great strength and expertise at all levels within the youth service. Partners speak highly of the responsiveness and flexibility of the Strategy Manager (13-19) and her team. For example, the local full-time youth worker played a leading role in establishing a sexual health clinic for young people at Bourne Valley. Many full-time workers are Common Assessment Framework trained and one has acted as "lead professional" for a young person. There is a well established link with voluntary sector youth organisations whose development is supported by a senior youth worker seconded to the voluntary service council and managed in partnership with them. This role includes some capacity building with potential new providers of youth work from the voluntary sector.

18. Both the universal and targeted work attract young people. The service's own data indicate that 25% of those aged 13 to 19 participate actively in youth service activities and that youth work reaches 37%. However, the collection of robust performance management data by the service has, in part, been frustrated by the failure of its first management information system. A new product is currently being implemented and is on target to "go live" in April 2008. The availability of more accurate data will support better planning in the service. The majority of centre and session plans are weak because they are limited to a brief description of the activities to be undertaken and lack the baseline data and judgements necessary to set achievable targets and measure progress.

19. The quality assurance system is not currently sufficiently robust to support the service's ambitions. It lacks the capacity to provide benchmarks to help staff compare youth work in Poole with that provided in other authorities or to help them to develop the critical evaluation skills required. Despite some good involvement of young people in planning youth work, the opportunity has not been taken to train them to participate in monitoring processes.

20. The participation strategy gives many good opportunities for young people to become involved in decision-making. The young people's shadow board has participated in the selection of three senior posts in both Children's and Young Peoples Services and the Primary Care Trust, undertaken a survey of young people's use of youth clubs and other venues and designed a poster for young people introducing them to the work of Children's and Young Peoples Services.

21. Criminal Records Bureau checks are made on employees and personnel files are well maintained. Youth workers understand the principles of safeguarding and contribute well to the Borough's work in this area.