

Nottinghamshire Youth Support Service

Nottinghamshire Children's Services Authority Area

Age group: All

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Introduction

1. Nottinghamshire's Youth Support Service (NYSS) is located within the Inclusion and Engagement Division of the Children and Young People's Services Department. The service comprises the Youth Service, the Teenage Pregnancy Partnership and the Nottinghamshire Training Partnership. The head of service is supported by a youth work senior management team of five youth service operational and development managers, and a senior administrative manager. A team of 18 senior youth workers manage seven geographical areas and 11 cross-cutting county-wide themes. The service has a total of 462 staff, comprising 40 full time equivalent (fte) professional youth workers and 117 fte youth support workers. Administrative staff account for 43 fte.

2. In 2007–08, the local authority allocated £6.3 million for youth work. The service obtained external income of £3.5 million and provided £183,000 to the voluntary and community sector through grant aid and commissioning. The youth opportunity fund made available £744,000 and the youth capital fund £437,000. In addition, the council has allocated £6 million to support a capital programme to enhance youth work facilities and accommodation. There are approximately 69,400 young people aged 13–19 in Nottinghamshire. In 2006–07, 24% participated regularly in youth work activities, while 35% had some contact.

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 quality of youth work provision in Nottinghamshire is good with outstanding features. The local authority sufficiently secures the provision of youth work. The standard of young people's achievement is good and at times outstanding. Participation in the service is high. Young people develop the skills and confidence, in particular to influence considerably the service, the authority and their communities. Achievement of accredited and recorded outcomes is good. However, the achievement of recorded outcomes is not sufficiently meaningful to the young people. The quality of youth work practice is good, with workers being particularly effective in facilitating opportunities for young people to take responsibility for decision-making. The curriculum range is good and supports very well the five *Every Child Matters* themes. Staff have or are working towards qualifications suitable for their roles, and appropriate safeguarding procedures are in place. Considerable recent and on-going improvement in facilities is enhancing curriculum delivery, with very significant investment by the county council in new buildings. The material investment in the service has resulted in high morale, with

both staff and young people feeling valued. Very frequent observations of practice are carried out and are effective in improving the quality of provision. Young people take part in the observation process. While partnership working is well established and adds to the range and quality of provision, progress towards integration of services has been slow and is not yet sufficiently developed.

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

- The standard of young people's achievements is good and sometimes outstanding.
- Young people develop particularly well the skills and confidence to influence the service and their communities.
- The standard of youth work practice is good.
- The good range of opportunities for young people provided by the curriculum is very well linked to the five key *Every Child Matters* outcomes.
- Observation of practice is being very effectively used to improve the quality of provision.
- Support from the local authority to improve and enhance facilities for youth work is good.

Areas for development

- Integration of services is too slow
- The acquisition of recorded outcomes is insufficiently meaningful to young people.

Part B: Commentary on the key aspects

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

5. The standard of young people's achievements is good and sometimes outstanding. The personal development of young people is good, with many able to articulate the confidence and positive change in behaviour that they and others have gained through contact with the service. However, formal evaluation by young people of the impact of youth work activity sometimes elicits a more superficial response. They show considerable enjoyment of and engagement with youth work activities. Young people who are not achieving well at school frequently describe the growth in self-worth and sense of achievement that their work with the service gives them. Young people with learning difficulties or disabilities achieve very well during sessions, developing in confidence and autonomy.

6. Achievement of both accredited and recorded outcomes is good overall. The service provides a good range of opportunities for young people to gain accreditation for their achievements, and these are especially motivational to those who have not previously been successful in gaining awards. Achievement of recorded outcomes is high. However, the acquisition of recorded outcomes is insufficiently meaningful to the young people, and there is some significant variation between areas in terms of young people's achievement of accredited and recorded outcomes.

7. Young people develop particularly well the skills and confidence to influence the service and their communities. The four members of the Youth Parliament have been influential at local, regional and national level on issues such as the environment and the debate on terrorism. Broxtowe Youth Council successfully raises the profile of the concerns of young people and youth representation at local, regional and national level. Young people are routinely involved in staff appointments and took part in the recent appointment of a new chief executive for the Local Authority, clearly carrying out their task with a high degree of responsibility. A team of youth inspectors has been trained to accompany the service's internal inspection team on observations of youth work practice, developing the skills and understanding to judge the quality of youth work. Disabled young people have similarly gained the skills to audit provision and premises, and also to act as youth inspectors. Young people successfully administer applications to the youth opportunities and youth capital funds.

8. The quality of youth work practice is good, with all sessions observed by inspectors being satisfactory or better, and most being good or better. Youth workers have a good understanding of the areas in which they are working, and establish positive relationships with the young people, through which they both support and challenge them. They have high expectations of young people and of what they are capable of learning and achieving through their involvement with

youth work. They facilitate particularly well opportunities for young people to take responsibility for decision-making. Many of the young people with whom the service works are facing particular disadvantage, and youth workers skilfully move them forward and raise their aspirations. For example, workers supporting disabled young people provide them with challenge and the opportunity to influence decision making, both within their group and in services more broadly. In other work, young people who are homeless receive excellent information and support, with youth workers making skilled use of resources to provide accurate information on risk taking, keeping safe and consequences of their choices.

Key Aspect 2: Quality of curriculum and resources

9. The quality of curriculum and resources is good with outstanding features. The curriculum is broad, and enhanced by cross-cutting themes which are well used to enrich delivery at local and county level in the arts and adventurous pursuits, and to target provision at those young people facing particular disadvantage.

10. The curriculum is particularly well linked to the *Every Child Matters* outcomes. Provision to promote an understanding of sexual health issues and safe behaviour is good. There is a very good range of opportunities for young people to gain accreditation for their achievements. Accredited work is undertaken with young people at risk of exclusion from school. The range of opportunities to achieve awards for adventurous and physical pursuits is also good. Numerous opportunities for young people to successfully undertake the Duke of Edinburgh's Award are provided. There is also a good range of Entry to Employment provision supporting career direction and progression. Opportunities for young people to make a positive contribution to the service and to their communities are particularly good.

11. Although the quality of accommodation is variable, much is very good, and supports the curriculum well. The service benefits from considerable investment in refurbishment and new buildings. There are very good specialist venues to support the arts curriculum, and outdoor and adventurous pursuits. The new mobile units are of very good quality and support detached and outreach work in parts of the county less well served by youth work bases, mitigating access issues. Some of the poorer accommodation is hired by the service from other organisations because it is in the right location and so supports access, but is not well suited to youth work activity. While the curriculum and resources are targeted at those experiencing disadvantage, further analysis is planned to better match resources to need.

Key Aspect 3: Leadership and management

12. The service is well managed. Following a period of considerable change, there is now clear leadership and direction, and a communicative, open and approachable management style across the team. Staff and young people are

proud of their service. Plans at all levels link to the Children and Young People's Plan.

13. There is good support from the local authority to improve and enhance facilities for youth work. The level of funding provided by the Local Authority to support youth work is good, with the budget for each young person 13 to 19 above the national average. The council is investing considerable sums to improve facilities and accommodation for youth work. A consequence of this support is a perception, clearly articulated by both staff and young people, that they are valued in Nottinghamshire.

14. Staff are well supported with opportunities for staff development and training. Induction provides a comprehensive basis for understanding the service, and training up to Level 5 provides workers with opportunities for progression. Managers have received appropriate management training for their new roles. The service helps increase capacity within the voluntary sector by making available its training opportunities.

15. The service has a comprehensive quality assurance system which is well understood and used by staff. Frequent observation of practice is used very effectively to improve the quality of provision. Staff value the visits. Observations lead to action planning and are well linked to the service's improved system of supervision. Young people play a significant part in the observations as youth inspectors, and peer observation also acts as a mechanism for sharing good practice across the service.

16. There are improved systems for collecting data on participation and achievement which remain predominantly paper based. However, the service is planning to move to an electronic system which will allow for more prompt recovery and more sophisticated manipulation of data than is currently available to support management analysis and planning.

17. Partnership working is good and impacts well on young people. Youth workers have good, well-established working relationships with statutory and voluntary organisations, which are effective in particular in supporting those young people experiencing the greatest disadvantage. However, at a strategic level the move towards integration of services has been too slow and is not yet sufficiently developed. In particular, the voluntary youth work sector has been insufficiently supported by the local authority to provide them with the capacity to play a full and timely role. Working relationships between the service and the statutory sector are further developed. However, there remains a lack of awareness in both the voluntary and statutory sectors of the implications of integration and of how it differs from partnership.