

North East Lincolnshire Youth Service Report

North East Lincolnshire Children's Services Authority Area

Age group: All

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Introduction

1. North East Lincolnshire Young People's Service delivers youth work through a mix of open access provision and project work. The service is located in the Children's Services Directorate and is managed by the Head of Services to Youth. Two senior managers are responsible for the day-to-day management of the service and there are close working relationships with those responsible for the delivery of other local services. The previous Ofsted inspection in 2001 judged the service to be satisfactory.

2. In 2006-2007, the core budget was £1,040,581 and the service attracted additional external funding of £575,297. Approximately £15,000 is allocated to the voluntary sector. The full-time (FTE) equivalent staffing complement is 38.6, of whom 14 are full time, 94 part time and 16 are volunteers. In addition, there are 6.4 FTE support staff. There are also 11.5 staff seconded to the Connexions Service. The Young People's Service reports engagement with 3,000 of the 16,487 young people aged 13-19, approximately 18.2% of the total. Some 3% of these young people are from black and minority ethnic groups, a similar proportion to that found locally.

3. The Joint Area Review (JAR) was enhanced to enable coverage of the youth service. Inspectors considered the service's self-assessment and met officers and a cross-section of staff. They reviewed key service documentation and carried out direct observation of a sample of youth work sessions.

Part A: Summary of the report

Main findings

Effectiveness and value for money

4. Overall, North East Lincolnshire has an adequate youth service. Some important aspects, such as the achievement of the young people and the quality of youth work practice, are good. The service is making a positive difference to the lives and aspirations of many of the most vulnerable and hard to reach young people. Relationships between workers and young people are very good and most youth workers provide effective leadership. Even though the service is working with a small core budget, it is making a strong contribution to the Every Child Matters outcomes. However, young people are not consistently involved in shaping and prioritising the provision. Management information is now being generated, but this is not always used well. Youth service managers know where the most and least effective work is located and have started to measure its cost effectiveness. The service is providing good value for money.

Strengths

- Most young people achieve well and make good progress.
- The quality of youth work practice is good and some is outstanding.
- The service is making a positive difference to the lives and aspirations of many of the most vulnerable and hard to reach young people.
- The service has particularly strong provision for sexual health education.
- Staff value and benefit from good professional development.

Areas for development

- Involve young people in shaping provision more consistently.
- Ensure curriculum documentation is used more effectively to plan and evaluate work and improve target setting.
- Make better use of management information to help measure the impact of the service's work.

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	2
3	Strategic and operational leadership and management	2

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

5. The service makes a strong overall contribution to the Every Child Matters outcomes particularly to being healthy, staying safe and enjoying and achieving. Through its projects and its young people's centres' activities, it is providing many young people with enjoyable opportunities to develop personal qualities, self-

esteem and useful skills. Provision to promote better sexual health through its representation on strategic planning and commissioning groups and projects such as the Access New Start is impressive. Streetbased Youth Work helps to reduce anti-social behaviour by providing alternative activities. Young people are not involved sufficiently in planning and shaping provision. All young people's centres include effective activities to promote healthy living within their programmes. There is an established culture of safeguarding young people.

Part C: Commentary on the key aspects

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

6. Young people's achievement is good. Strenuous efforts are being made to increase levels of accreditation. Several examples of high achievement were observed during the inspection, including a session seen at the young carers group. These young people not only enjoyed the session but benefited greatly from their involvement. They could identify what they had learned and could evaluate the group sessions, astutely commenting accurately on what progress both they and the group had made. Each young person has an individual plan drawn up through discussions with their youth worker, which is regularly reviewed to ensure progress is in line with expectations.

7. Most young people are making good or very good progress in their personal and social development and in acquiring relevant skills. At the Shalom Youth Centre, ten of the younger members of the club were challenged about a recent spate of anti-social behaviour. At first they were reluctant to acknowledge what they had done but eventually accepted full responsibility. They went on to suggest the need to apologise properly to those whose property they had damaged and then discussed maturely ways of putting matters right.

8. The quality of youth work practice is good. At a Streetbased Youth Work in Grimsby effective leadership was shown when two workers challenged racist language and attitudes patiently and with skill. Their work was proving highly effective in other areas, not least in engaging a group of young people with challenging behaviour to plan a day's outing.

9. Workers are committed and enthusiastic and develop good relationships with young people. The sessions they lead are purposeful and worthwhile. Their energy and drive in many instances motivates young people to engage with work that they would not otherwise have chosen. However, while they record attendance accurately and share the planning of sessions informally with one another, some are not sufficiently reflective about their practice and how it is impacting on young people.

Key Aspect 2: Quality of curriculum and resources

10. The quality and range of the curriculum is adequate. The youth service provides activities that contribute to each of the authority's main priorities but the scale of the work is often limited because of capacity and funding constraints in relation to identified need. Some areas of provision are impressive, such as the sexual health education programme, but other areas are less so. For example, more provision is needed for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities as the service's self assessment acknowledges. Most work is undertaken on weekdays, evenings and holidays and, by comparison, relatively little at weekends.

11. Management of the curriculum is uneven. The distinctive contribution of the youth service to the Every Child Matters agenda is being determined and articulated well. It is already impacting positively on delivery. Over the last two years, more targeted work has been introduced to good effect but further curriculum change is needed to meet the needs of young people. Most youth workers use the curriculum guidelines as a check list rather than the driver for shaping provision and delivery. Some staff see recording as primarily being for the 'centre' rather than as an essential tool for improving their own practice. They do not recognise the link to a wider youth service strategy. In general, too low a priority is given to evaluating the impact of work on young people.

12. Most staff are appropriately qualified and there is a good programme of professional development including support for staff to gain professional qualifications. Full-time staff access the programme more frequently than their part-time colleagues. The service recognises the challenge this presents and is taking appropriate action to address it. Staff are not always appropriately deployed. In some sessions observed, the ratio of staff to young people was high in relation to their needs or the risks presented.

13. The resources to deliver the curriculum are adequate. Currently there is little specialist accommodation and this, in turn, limits provision for example in music and the arts. Information technology provision is also limited and during the inspection none was used by either young people or staff at the sessions visited. Workers and young people make effective use of the premises and most are fit for purpose. Nearly all buildings meet the standards required by the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act 2001 (SENDA).

Key Aspect 3: Leadership and management

14. Strategic leadership and management are adequate. The authority provides support for the youth service's development plan but allocates only a small core budget. The service relies heavily on short-term funding, which does not always match local priorities. There is a strong link between the planning processes of the service and the overall planning for the children service's directorate. One of the benefits is that the service is now represented in those areas where managers can make an important contribution, for example on 14-19 matters. The precise

contribution the youth service is expected to make to directorate-wide priorities is less well defined and understood. Provision is not yet regularly evaluated to check its contribution to the authority's priorities and plans.

15. The promotion of equality, inclusiveness and diversity is good. The service provides targeted projects for many vulnerable groups of young people. Good progress is being made towards meeting the requirements of SENDA. Appropriate policies for equality and diversity are fully in place. Generally, the service provides a healthy and safe working environment. Child protection issues were handled appropriately in the centres visited and service-wide policies are in place and applied effectively.

16. After a slow start, satisfactory progress is now being made to promote the voice of young people. The authority has recently adopted the Hear by Right standards and is developing a service plan. Young people are increasingly well represented on forums and they have made a significant contribution to decision making through the Youth Opportunities Fund forum. However, in other areas, young people's views and advice are not sufficiently influencing practice or priorities. At project level, the involvement of young people is at very different stages of development. In some provision, young people have taken part in planning and delivery for a substantial time whilst, in other projects, they are only just starting to become involved.

17. Partnership working is undertaken with enthusiasm and overall the quality is satisfactory. Most partners value their links with the service and are keen to extend them; a minority are highly critical. Networking at a local level is frequently good but the extent to which the youth service's ambitions are based on a shared understanding of local needs varies across the borough. The contribution made to the youth service through joint working is not always fully understood by partners or the service. These deficiencies are often reflected in service level agreements, which focus on processes rather than outcomes for young people.

18. Operational leadership and management are satisfactory. Workers speak very highly of the senior management team and they report a marked improvement in the last two years in the effectiveness of the support they receive as workers and in the support for the service itself. They, in turn, provide good leadership and role models for young people. The service has made satisfactory progress in mapping the needs of young people across the borough using many relevant sources of data. However, in most projects, this information has not yet been taken fully into account in shaping delivery plans.

19. Quality assurance arrangements are also adequate. Management information is much improved but the use made of the data to inform service wide planning is uneven, for example in planning the deployment of staff and identifying staff training needs. The service collects the recorded and accredited outcomes manually to benchmark against others in the region. Peer observations of youth work are undertaken. However, this practice is not fully established across the

service and there is limited evidence to show how the issues raised in these visits are addressed.

20. The service has started to measure its cost effectiveness but it still has work to do before it can demonstrate the impact of all its work. The service is working effectively with a small budget to deliver much high quality youth work engaging mainly with vulnerable and hard to reach young people. It provides good value for money.