



Lincolnshire Youth Service Report

Lincolnshire Children's Services Authority Area

**Better
education
and care**

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Introduction

1. The Lincolnshire youth service is part of the Children's Services Directorate. The Head of Service is supported by four Youth Service managers who oversee the three areas into which the service is divided and together form the senior management team. There is a part-time information systems manager and seven Senior Youth Development Workers who have designated responsibilities for key county initiatives. Of the 101 full-time equivalent (FTE) youth work posts, 43 are full time. Twenty five percent of the 13-19 population is in contact with the service, with a significant minority of these through the large Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme which the youth service coordinates across the county. For 2006/07 the local authority budget for the youth service is £3,203,290, an increase of 4.7% on the previous year. External income of an estimated £727,000 also supports the work of the service.

2. The Joint Area Review (JAR) was enhanced to enable coverage of the youth service. Inspectors considered the youth service's self assessment and key service documentation. They met with officers, a cross section of staff, and representatives of the voluntary sector. They carried out direct observation of a sample of youth work sessions across the range of provision. A meeting of the Lincolnshire Youth Cabinet was observed and telephone interviews were conducted with a sample of school managers and teachers. Evidence was also available from the inspection of the Youth Offending Service which had been carried out shortly before the JAR.

Part A: Summary of the report

Main findings

Effectiveness and value for money

3. The youth service was judged to be good at its last inspection by Ofsted in 2001 and inspectors judge that the service is still good. The provision is more diverse and work has developed that supports particular vulnerable groups of young people. The service works effectively with partners, particularly in the areas of health and crime reduction. Achievement and practice are good. There is some very good project work in the arts and sport. The skills and imagination of youth workers are valued highly by many of the partner agencies with whom they work. Although the local authority has supported the service well through its capital investment programmes the low level of revenue budget has stretched the capacity of strategic managers. It also results in certain types of provision, such as mobile and detached work, being limited in scope. A clear purpose for youth work within the emerging youth support services has not yet been established. The service is effective and provides good value for money.

Strengths

- The achievement and personal development of young people are good
- The very good quality and leadership of youth workers
- Partnership arrangements are very effective, particularly at a local level
- Good quality buildings
- The range of activities and the very good contribution to ECM outcomes

Areas for development

- Develop a clear strategic purpose for youth work within integrated youth support services
- Improve child protection training arrangements
- Increase the capacity of senior managers to measure the impact of youth work and the cost effectiveness of the service

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	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

4. The service makes a very good contribution across the five outcome areas of Every Child Matters (ECM). There are productive links to teenage pregnancy initiatives and Community Safety Partnerships. Day to day work is planned according to ECM outcomes. Health-related provision is evident at all centres and the service's involvement in piloting the C card scheme has made a valuable

contribution to the reduction in teenage conceptions. The service coordinates a large, multi-agency programme of diversionary activities in school holiday periods (Go For It) which is effective in targeting support to vulnerable young people. The service provides an Entry to Employment (E2E) programme at Grantham, judged satisfactory by the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) at its monitoring visit in March 2006. Various kinds of work are done in schools, ranging from alternative education programmes such as the Excel ASDAN scheme under the auspices of the Prince's Trust to involvement in anti-bullying and citizenship provision. Links between the Youth Offending Service, the police and the youth service have led to nationally recognised anti-social behaviour initiatives.

Part C: 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 achievement in the youth work sessions observed was good, as the service had judged in its self assessment. Young people respond well to the challenges presented to them and have high expectations of themselves. Displays on the walls of centres reflect considerable achievement through a range of activities, often celebrated and recorded appropriately. The service effectively supports the large network of centres and schools offering the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Other opportunities for accredited learning in youth settings have been slow to develop, but the service has begun to use the Youthtrain accreditation system and is meeting targets to increase the number of young people benefiting.

6. Personal and social development is also good. Much of the youth work provides young people with time and space for reflection as well as relaxation. Some of the arts projects, in particular, are skilfully planned to allow groups of vulnerable young people opportunities for respite and personal expression. Social skills are fostered by an emphasis on group work in school settings. Youth centres such as at Sturton encourage and develop a strong sense of community by arranging annual parties for local elderly people. Young people express opinions freely and contribute positively to shared initiatives. Although there were a small number of examples of poor behaviour, in the majority of centres and projects, young people demonstrate pride and a strong sense of ownership. The service is committed to the development of opportunities for participation and supports a network of youth councils and the Youth Cabinet. These bodies are beginning to have an impact, for example on improvements to sex and relationships education in schools.

7. Youth work practice is good. Workers develop very good relations with young people. Poor behaviour such as swearing is not accepted. Workers show great skill in managing, enabling and empowering young people to play key roles in the running of centres. They demonstrate skill and patience in meetings needs. For example the workers conducting a Duke of Edinburgh Award session at a special

school for severely disabled young people adapted fencing and first aid sessions very effectively. Preparation is good and there is a strong sense of teamwork. Professional colleagues in other services, such as the Youth Offending Service and those working on Behaviour Improvement projects in schools, pay tribute to the imaginative and skilful contributions of youth workers.

8. Youth workers across the service show very good leadership. Full-time workers demonstrate a commitment to developing the capacity of their sessional colleagues. Workers in charge of centres show enterprise and pride in building the range of work that the centres offer. Project workers, such as those leading sports and arts programmes, show imagination and determination. In some cases the evaluations of projects, and reports on programmes, especially those run jointly with partner agencies lack a clear sense of what was achieved.

Key Aspect 2: Quality of curriculum and resources

9. The quality of curriculum and resources is good. The range of activities offered at youth centres is wide and contributes well to ECM priorities. Arts-based projects, such as the tuition in musical instruments provided by Soundlinks, are widespread and productive. Provision has become much more deliberately inclusive since the last inspection. For example, the One World Sport Integration Project at Lincoln provides young refugees and asylum seekers the opportunity to play sport and gain accreditation. The Fairplay Football scheme in Boston, run in collaboration with partner agencies has been extremely effective in reducing anti-social behaviour and offending.

10. The service provides good guidance to workers for planning. Workers frequently use the comprehensive Standards and Curriculum Handbook as a point of reference and opportunities for them to share good practice have improved considerably. As the work of the service has diversified in recent years, in response to local and national external factors, competing priorities have led to some loss of direction. Work with schools, for example, varies in quality and effectiveness and lacks coherent guidance. Further guidance is required on the use of information technology in youth centres. Although special projects abound, there is limited resource going into mobile and detached provision across this large rural county.

11. The quality of accommodation is very good. The local authority has supported the service in recent years by means of substantial capital investment. Besides a number of new, purpose built centres, many others have been refurbished. Most centres are bright, welcoming, well-decorated and well-equipped, many with specialist facilities such as attached sports areas or kilns. The well-equipped REAL bus is an excellent resource serving the east of the county. Premises are, where reasonable, compliant with current Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) legislation. Sufficient resources are available for workers, and there are many examples where they have supplemented these through successful negotiations with district councils and other partners. For

example the Karting project in the east of the county, developed in collaboration with the local council and businesses.

12. The service has satisfactory staffing arrangements. Staff are either fully trained or in appropriate training. The service has responded to difficulties in recruiting qualified workers by successfully establishing its own internal training programme. Training and development are satisfactorily managed and link effectively to appraisal. There are some good links with partners for training purposes. The strategy of the service has been to concentrate resources on front line work and the ratio of youth workers to young people is slightly better than national benchmarks. Since the last inspection, the service has managed to reduce the overall number of sessional posts although there are still difficulties caused by high turnover rates.

Key Aspect 3: Leadership and management

13. Strategic and operational leadership and management are satisfactory. The local authority and its partners are part way towards establishing an approach to the provision of integrated youth support services in Lincolnshire. Integration between the youth service and the local Connexions partnership is already taking place but as yet, there is no clear direction for the youth service. At senior management level the process of integration is being accelerated but youth workers are not yet clear what their role is to be or the extent to which youth work, and the skills that they possess, are understood and valued.

14. One reason for this uncertainty is that the service's revenue budget is amongst the lowest in the country. Although capital investment has been good, revenue budget pressures have adversely affected the service. Rural areas are less well served than the more urban areas. There is a clear lack of capacity in the senior management team, with area managers having significant cross-service responsibilities but without the time to carry them out effectively. There have been increases above inflation to the revenue budget in the last two years, but these have been tied to front line initiatives, increasing the pressure on service managers.

15. The local authority's approach to equality and inclusion is good. For example special provision has been made to support Portuguese young people from migrant worker families in the Boston area. The approach to promoting diversity is less well-developed. Procedures to provide healthy and safe environments are satisfactory. Activities are risk assessed and health and safety audits are carried out. Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) and corporate child protection procedures apply. Whilst workers receive basic child protection training, the provision of enhanced training is insufficient.

16. Good collaborative arrangements are in place with a range of partners, in particular at area and local level. For example there are effective referral processes for young people to the holiday diversionary activity programme "Go For It". Links to the voluntary sector are satisfactory. The service manages the

system of grant aid efficiently and has established criteria which focus on the needs of vulnerable groups of young people. However, the system lacks transparency and the involvement of stakeholders is insufficient. Young people are often well involved in the running of youth centres but opportunities for their involvement at a higher level are limited.

17. The day to day running of the service is good. Induction and support arrangements are widely valued. Appraisal operates effectively. Areas are well managed and workers believe in the service. Quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory. However, the service has had difficulty establishing an efficient data collection system and is not able to use management information sufficiently to analyse and improve both its performance and its cost effectiveness.