

Kirklees Youth Service Report

Kirklees Children's Services Authority Area

Age group: All

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Introduction

1. The youth service in Kirklees is part of the Young People's Service (YPS) within the Children and Young People's Services Directorate. Within the YPS, the youth service is one of a group of specialised teams providing services and activities for children and young people. The Head of Young People's Service is supported by two assistants, one of whom has responsibility for the youth service element, and four operations managers. There is a network of area team leaders for the youth service. At the time of the inspection, there were 45 full time equivalent (FTE) youth workers, although within Young People's Service overall there were 123 FTE staff working with children and young people. Twenty seven per cent of the 13-19 population is in contact with the service, although the service acknowledges that this data is not entirely robust. In recent years the local authority has been increasing its spending on the YPS substantially above the rate of inflation. For the youth service, expenditure for 2006-07 was £2,927,000, representing £81 per head of the 13-19 population. Besides the increases in revenue, the YPS has been a clear beneficiary from capital funding.

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 and other types of work with young people. Telephone interviews were conducted with a sample of school managers and with a West Yorkshire Connexions manager. 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. Young people in Kirklees are well served by the Kirklees YPS and the youth service element within it. The achievement of young people is good and they benefit from the widespread opportunities for their achievement and learning to be accredited. The council recognises the importance of the work that the service is providing and is increasingly linking the service to corporate objectives and priorities. The revenue budget has been increased steadily in recent years from a low base to a satisfactory position and there has been, and will continue to be, substantial capital investment in new and refurbished facilities. The range of activities and support services provided for young people is both broad and increasingly coherent, as envisaged in the government's vision for wider integrated youth support services. Workers across the service have a sense of being part of a network of provision which meets the needs of young people effectively and their morale is good. While youth work practice and management are good, there is a need for further guidance on planning, and more rigorous

review and evaluation processes that use accurate data appropriately. The service needs to develop an approach to community cohesion that is understood and shared. The service is effective and provides good value for money.

Strengths

- Achievement and youth work practice are good.
- The Young People's Service provides a wide range of opportunities and support services that are increasingly integrated.
- Opportunities for accredited learning are well developed.
- Provision for some vulnerable groups of young people, particularly those with learning difficulties and disabilities is very good.
- Partnership arrangements are effective.
- There is good involvement of young people at project and club level.

Areas for development

- Provide more effective support for workers in the planning, delivery and review of provision.
- Establish more effective means by which good curriculum practice can be shared and developed.
- Develop the use of data so that it can support the evaluation of provision, including its cost effectiveness.
- Develop in consultation with other key stakeholders a shared, strategic approach to community cohesion issues.

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	3

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 Young People's Service judges that it makes a good contribution across all five ECM outcome areas. Inspectors took the view that it is a good contribution overall, and that the strongest contributions were 'enjoying and achieving' and 'making a positive contribution'. There are good links to health agencies and teenage pregnancy initiatives. The service contributes to anti-bullying work in schools and its safeguarding procedures are satisfactory. There is a good range of work done in partnership with many of Kirklees' secondary schools, who value the work highly. A number of projects and initiatives have encouraged children and young people to have their say on matters that affect them. Through its link to the Youth Offending Service, and through its outreach and detached work, the service helps provide positive choices and opportunities for young people at risk of offending or anti social behaviour. Furthermore, the service is very effective in its work with older young people who are not in education, employment or training, and others in this age group faced with challenges in their lives.

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 sessions observed was good, as the service judged in its self assessment. Personal, social and political development is also good. Through the work of the Involving Young Citizens Equally (IYCE) team, a charter for young people's participation has been established and workers across the service put its principles into practice well. Young people are keen to be involved in the planning and evolution of projects, and in some cases map their own development, such as those involved in the Journey Learning Group in Huddersfield. Older young people, for instance those in the groups for young fathers and young mothers, show ownership and attachment to their group. They develop strong, trusting relations with each other and to the workers.

6. Accredited learning has been a key priority and a high proportion of the young people involved in youth activities gain accreditation of some kind. Youthtrain accreditation through the Open College Network (OCN) is widely used. The service is the lead body for a flourishing Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme, and the use of sectional awards to draw young people into the scheme is good. In the best practice there is clearly sign posted progression available and appropriate celebration of achievement.

7. Too much of the work seen was dominated by young men. Although a few projects are aimed at particular groups of young women, such as Muslim girls, the overall provision is evidently not appealing to or retaining their interest. In a few

instances, the provision, designed to build community cohesion, has in practice met with cultural barriers and become segregated.

8. Youth work practice is good. Workers show energy and commitment. They develop good relations and are highly committed to building the capacity of young people to plan, develop and evaluate the activities. They challenge inappropriate behaviour and language and have a strong sense of the identity of the YPS. Documentation is kept efficiently, although not used effectively to evaluate the work. The experience of workers varies widely. Part time workers are not always used effectively.

Key Aspect 2: Quality of curriculum and resources

9. The quality of curriculum and resources is good. The range of the activities and opportunities offered by the YPS has broadened significantly over the last few years. The service comprises a number of specialist teams of staff who are working together with growing coherence. These include teams for the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, outreach and recreation work, leadership programmes, a participation team (IYCE), personal advisers, and key workers who support older young people as they encounter a range of challenges in their lives. There are summer activities, and satisfactory opportunities for residential and international experiences. The essential rationale of providing young people with opportunities for personal and social development, and for them to have appropriate new learning experiences accredited is well understood. The youth work curriculum statement offers limited guidance. It is beginning to be used by staff as a reference guide to accreditation systems that might support their activities and, by its arrangement of possible activities under the ECM themes, provides reassurance that their planned activities have a rationale. Workers in some settings are confused between seeking to provide what young people say they want to do, which some refer to as meeting their needs, and at the same time seeking to address local and national issues. Insufficient guidance is provided by managers with regard to planning, and there is too little opportunity for the sharing of good practice and curriculum development.

10. Much of what is provided demonstrates the service's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. There are good projects aimed at marginalised groups, such as young parents and pupils excluded from school. The service has received recognition for its work through the PEARS foundation to spread Duke of Edinburgh's award opportunities to minority ethnic groups. Project D, which uses the award as a vehicle to provide opportunities for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities, is outstanding. Although there is some targeted provision for young women, provision was dominated by young men and insufficient thought is given to the needs of young women. There is a clear commitment within YPS to the aims of community cohesion, but the polarised nature of many of the communities within Kirklees often presents the service with significant barriers. Faced with this challenge, exacerbated in recent years by several events of national prominence, the service currently lacks a clear strategy or approach.

11. The qualifications, experience and deployment of staff are satisfactory. Staff are well qualified and supported by good training arrangements. The service has thorough arrangements to ensure core training is provided, supported by higher level training provision available through the council and external providers. There is productive liaison with the University of Huddersfield. Workers across the different teams within YPS have good levels of specialist expertise. As a consequence of the growth of YPS in recent years, the profile of staff is a youthful one, and although this brings clear benefits, many lack experience and, for those placed in challenging situations, more guidance and support is needed than is available at present.

12. The quality of accommodation and resources is good. The buildings seen during the inspection are at least satisfactory and many are good or outstanding facilities. Some are the result of recent council investment in the service and some are shared with partner agencies such as Connexions. Centres are welcoming, bright and often stimulating environments. Premises are, where reasonable, compliant with the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001. The outdoor and recreation team make good use of the many multi play courts located across the area. There are good information technology facilities in many centres, although further guidance is required on its appropriate use within the curriculum. Very good use is made of additional funding streams such as the Youth Opportunities Fund (YOF) to enhance resources and engage additional expertise.

Key Aspect 3: Leadership and management

13. Strategic and operational leadership and management are good. The council is demonstrating increasing faith in and support for the Young People's Service. This is reflected in significant budget increases, albeit from a low base, over recent years as well as in substantial support from capital funding for new buildings and refurbishment projects. The YPS is closely linked to council priorities and targets and is playing a key role in strategic developments such as the localisation of the Connexions service and the development of localities within the Kirklees borough. Already good links between local area teams of the YPS and the newly-established local area committees are evolving rapidly. The council monitors the work of the service satisfactorily, although new monitoring processes that are ready to be implemented will clearly be an improvement, adding an important qualitative dimension.

14. Sufficient core revenue budget resources from the council are supplemented substantially by additional income from a range of sources. The deployment of resources and staff is effective, with partnership and transport arrangements, backed up with outreach and detached work, blended appropriately. Deployment of staff, however, is not always cost effective. The uncertainty caused by a high level of short term funding in support of particular projects creates anxiety among some staff as well as absorbing valuable management time as workers seek further funding.

15. The council's approach to equality, inclusion and diversity is satisfactory. Much of the focus of YPS is on providing support and opportunities for young people who are vulnerable or at risk of social exclusion such as the Positive Activities for Young people programme aimed at those at risk of criminal or anti social behaviour. Procedures to provide healthy and safe environments are good. Activities are risk assessed well. Criminal Records Bureau checks are carried out and corporate child protection procedures are in place. The service facilitates safeguarding arrangements for voluntary sector partners. Staff receive good training to ensure their own safety and those working with particularly vulnerable young people receive enhanced training.

16. Good collaborative arrangements are in place with a range of partners. Two youth workers are seconded to the Youth Offending Service and are providing effective support under the Resettlement and Aftercare Project. There are imaginative initiatives over buildings, for example the excellent redevelopment and shared use arrangements for Brian Jackson House, in partnership with National Children's Homes. The YPS has a range of contracts with West Yorkshire Connexions to deliver projects with older young people. A wide range of valuable work is done with pupils in secondary schools, although this takes place without any over-arching strategy. The YPS acts on behalf of the council in managing contract arrangements to the voluntary sector. These arrangements, although in many cases supportive and effectively done by local service agreements that are well monitored, lack transparency and the involvement of stakeholders is insufficient.

17. The day to day running of the YPS is good. Induction and training are widely valued. Morale amongst staff is good. Managers are supportive, responsive and committed. There is good communication across the service. Performance management and supervision arrangements are in place. Systems by which work is reviewed and evaluated, and the lessons then applied to subsequent planning, are insufficient. Furthermore, although there are examples of under performance being tackled and contracts being terminated when outcomes are not delivered, the service does not have clear mechanisms, employing appropriate data, to evaluate its work and judge its cost effectiveness. The service is in transition to a new management information system which should enable the improved use of data in management processes.