



Kingston upon Thames Youth Service Report

Kingston upon Thames Children's Services Authority Area

**Better
education
and care**

Publication Type	Published	Reference no.
All	12 December 2006	314

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Introduction

1. Kingston Youth Service is part of the new Youth Support Service in the Youth, Inclusion and Participation Division of the Learning and Children's Services Directorate. The service is led by a principal youth officer who is assisted by a manager with responsibility for curriculum development, quality assurance and training, and another for operational management and outdoor education. The total youth work team equates to 19 full-time equivalent staff, comprising 10 full-time youth workers and 46 part-time youth support workers. Of the 13–19 population, 28% is in contact with the service, and 16% actively participate in the youth service programme. At £1,168,874 in 2005-06, the youth work budget per head for 14-19 year olds is consistently above national figures and those of comparable authorities. Partnerships and success in securing external funding increase resources dedicated to youth work.

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. Meetings were held with officers, staff, representatives from the voluntary sector and other partners. Telephone contacts were made with schools. Direct observations of youth work sessions were carried out in the Chessington and Norbiton areas as part of the JAR neighbourhood study as well as other observations of practice across the borough.

Part A: Summary of the report

Main findings

Effectiveness and value for money

3. Young people in Kingston are served well by a good youth service providing good value for money. Provision is targeted well to need and achievement and practice are good. Contact, participation and accreditation rates exceed national benchmarks. The views of young people regularly inform strategy and the evaluation of provision. Well forged partnerships and effective multi-agency working have extended the reach of the service and improved outcomes for some of the borough's most vulnerable young people. The service is well managed and its contribution to the council's aims is recognised widely. The service measures its own strategic and operational impact well. It is very clear about its strengths and areas for further development. The youth service is positioned well for integrated working with other services as part of the Youth Support Service.

Strengths

- Young people achieve a good range of new skills and knowledge through varied, interesting and challenging activities.
- The quality of youth work practice is good.

- The involvement of young people in decision-making is effective and taken seriously by the council.
- Opportunities for accreditation are taken up well by young people.
- Strategic and operational leadership and management are good.

Areas for development

- Address health and safety issues in some centres.
- Tackle inconsistencies in session planning.
- Improve the quality of written evaluations by youth workers and young people.
- Further standardise quality assurance arrangements and performance management records.

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: A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for users:

Grade 3: A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users:

Grade 2: A service that delivers only minimum requirements for users:

Grade 1: 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 judges itself as making at least a good contribution across all five outcome areas and very good contributions to enjoyment and achievement and making a positive contribution. Inspectors concur with these judgements. Youth workers are well prepared to deliver Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes. Young people report being better informed about drugs and alcohol misuse and sexual health issues through youth club programmes, specialist outreach and street based work, one-to one work and a peer education project for young carers. Young people participate in a wide range of accredited physical activity. Good guidelines and procedures ensure a generally safe environment. The curriculum is

predicated on enjoyment, progression and achievement. A good range of youth programmes and projects provide regular opportunities to learn and gain recognition for achievement. The views of young people influence council and service policies as well as programmes, project planning and evaluation. Issues raised by them have improved facilities, broadened the range of activities on offer and increased participation. Targeted provision has contributed to vulnerable young people continuing in learning or gaining employment.

Part C: Commentary on the key aspects

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

5. Young people achieve well and many achieve very well. Their active involvement in the design, planning, delivery and evaluation of programmes and sessions results in good engagement in a wide range of interesting, enjoyable, worthwhile and challenging activities. In negotiating targets for their own achievement, young people take responsibility for developing new interests and learning new knowledge and skills, such as in musical performance. They are keen to gain accreditation and are consistently successful at doing so. Young people are confident in articulating their learning, for example, in a powerpoint presentation by the Gold Duke of Edinburgh's Award group and in the Searchlight Dance project. Written evaluations from young people are less strong.

6. Young people demonstrate good gains in their personal and social development and apply these skills in other contexts well. Through good opportunities for group and collaborative working, many gain in confidence and self-esteem, improve their communication skills and are more able to manage conflict and to forge personal relationships. The leadership and decision-making skills demonstrated by some young people are highly impressive, for example through Kingston Youth Council, the Peer Review Inspection project and in the production of Youth Unlimited magazine.

7. Practice is good overall and much is very good. The aims and core values of the service are consistent in planning and practice. In particular, the priority given to achievement, accrediting learning and personal and social development. Effective termly planning, which includes progression levels for activities, underpins good achievement but individual session planning is inconsistent; while some aims and objectives are sharply focused on outcomes, some are not. Evaluation informs subsequent planning well, but while some session reviews and recording of the progress of young people by youth workers are outstanding, others are much weaker. Youth workers demonstrate considerable skill in responding to the needs of individuals and groups, intervening skilfully to support, guide and challenge. Relationships between young people and adults, and between peers, are highly respectful. Staff have a good knowledge of the needs of individuals, offer appropriate advice and provide useful signposting to specialist

support. Young people feel able to discuss sensitive and personal issues with workers, such as bullying and anger management.

Key Aspect 2: Quality of curriculum and resources

8. The quality of the curriculum and resources are good. The curriculum takes account of the five ECM outcomes and sets a broad framework for personal and social development. It is embedded in all youth work planning and practice, provides good opportunities for accreditation and offers opportunities for young people to engage actively in local, regional and national democratic structures. Programmes and projects are thoroughly planned and progression routes to accredited outcomes are mapped well. A good balance of youth work approaches reflects the needs of most young people.

9. The curriculum observes and promotes the principles of equality, inclusiveness and diversity well, exemplified in particular in the interaction of diverse groups in centres. However, some charging for admission limits accessibility. Targeted work is undertaken with vulnerable young people, those with disabilities, young carers and young people from minority ethnic groups, although daytime and late evening provision is limited. There is currently no provision specifically for gay and lesbian young people.

10. The service contributes well to preventative work for young people at risk of offending or anti-social behaviour through enhanced outreach projects in targeted neighbourhoods. Diversionary activities include sports sessions with Fulham Football Club. Some partnerships, such as that with the police in the Chessington area, demonstrate a well co-ordinated response to young people's needs by including them in programme design. This work has contributed to a decrease in recorded crime. The Positive Activities for Young People programme contributes successfully to reducing anti-social behaviour through diversionary activities and one-to-one support for those who are disengaged or at risk of disengagement.

11. An extensive range of resources is used very well. Good quality equipment in centres, effective use of space, some excellent specialist resources, for example a music rehearsal room and recording studio, and good use of outdoor education facilities including canoeing and horse riding, enable the provision of rich and challenging activities. Qualified, skilled and specialist workers add considerable value to experiences on offer and are contributing to raising young people's aspirations, for example through signposting employment routes. Young people are proud to draw attention to their achievements and those of their peers from very high quality displays in centres and interesting portfolios. Some schools celebrate and build on these achievements well.

12. A suitable programme of training and regular team development sessions ensure staff are suitably qualified and supports change well. Plans are in hand for update training on child protection.

Key Aspect 3: Leadership and management

13. Strategic and operational leadership and management are good. The service was previously inspected by Ofsted in 2001, when weaknesses far outweighed strengths. Progress has been good, particularly in overall management. Morale is high and there have been significant improvements in performance and quality. Comprehensive policies, plans, guidelines and protocols covering all aspects of youth work reflect the council's priorities and support practice very well. Robust quality assurance and performance management arrangements are well established and assure continuous improvement although procedures would benefit from more standardisation of recording. Management information is used well for planning, review and the allocation of resources to areas of most need but, despite recent investment, data capability is limited by the current system. Replacement plans rightly prioritise data and information sharing arrangements suitable for the integrated service. In the interim, targets for the strategic performance of the youth service could usefully include measures to demonstrate the impact of the service on the progress of vulnerable young people in particular.

14. The youth service contributes strongly to addressing inequalities, tackling vulnerability and improving outcomes for young people and it is well respected and appreciated for its achievements. The council's spending on the service is consistently above national figures and those of comparable authorities, reflecting its priority to improve outcomes for vulnerable groups. Some impressive outreach work, underpinned by a very good knowledge of local neighbourhoods, engages young people effectively. Through effective open youth work in centres young people are referred appropriately to other projects.

15. Partnerships with private and voluntary providers and success in securing additional funding, has extended the range, reach and impact of the service. Provision includes work in and with communities, and with young people with disabilities. Productive partnership working on summer programmes and through group and one-to-one contact, has contributed successfully to the reduction of young people not in education, employment or training. The highly successful Motivations programmes in schools have raised aspirations, prevented exclusion and improved the attendance and achievement of disaffected young people, some with learning difficulties. The Yo Yo club supports unaccompanied asylum seeking young people who are leaving care to independent living well.

16. The service promotes consultation and young people's participation very strongly. Their views are taken very seriously, for example, through the Peer Inspection project, in decisions on the design and use of the refurbished Hook Youth Club, and in the production of Youth Unlimited Magazine and the Young Livin' website, both providing accessible advice and information and good signposting to services. Kingston Youth Council is highly active and influential within the borough and assumes a significant role in the development of other youth councils. It strives to ensure diverse membership and action is underway to secure closer links with school councils and extend links with vulnerable groups. As a consultative body of the council, members attend meetings of elected

members and represent young people on other strategic groups. Their views inform the strategic decisions of the council, for example, the Children and Young People's Plan. Young people on the Children and Young People's Participation Steering Group have a key role in implementing the participation strategy and action plan.

17. In providing for a healthy and safe environment, all venues and outdoor activities are subject to robust risk assessments but there are some health and safety issues in centres. Youth workers are provided with clear guidelines and suitable training to protect young people from significant harm, for example, accident prevention, managing allegations and concerns of child abuse and risks associated with internet activities. Outreach workers are very aware of health and safety issues on the streets. All buildings are reported as having full disability access.