



Isle of Wight Youth Service Report

Isle of Wight Children's Services Authority Area

**Better
education
and care**

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Introduction

1. The Isle of Wight Youth and Community Service is located within the learning effectiveness division of the council's children's services. There are six full time centres in the main towns and a further six part-time centres in more rural parts of the island. The service manages detached youth work, a youth empowerment project and the Duke of Edinburgh's award. It supports the work of three programmes with charitable status - Challenge and Adventure, the mobile youth initiatives project (MY-I), and the Island Youth Water Activities Centre (IYWAC). The service employs 29 full-time-equivalent staff that includes seven full-time youth workers and five senior managers. The service budget for 2006-2007 is approximately £1.4 million, a 6.6% increase on last year; it attracts approximately £111,000 of external funding. Current levels of participation for the 13-19 age group are approximately 40%.

2. The joint area review (JAR) was enhanced to enable coverage of the youth service. Inspectors considered the youth service's self-assessment and met with officers, a cross section of staff and young people. They reviewed key service documentation and carried out direct observation of a sample of youth work sessions throughout the island and as part of the neighbourhood study area.

Part A: Summary of the report

Main findings

Effectiveness and value for money

3. The Isle of Wight has a good youth service that provides good value for money. A broad range of opportunities enable young people to learn new skills and achieve well. Contact and participation rates are high, with significant seasonal increases during the holiday season. Effective management of the curriculum has prepared youth workers well for delivering Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes through interesting and innovative programmes. Workers are committed and focused, although their high levels of goodwill are at risk of erosion while the youth service's future remains uncertain. Strategic support from the council has diminished in recent months and a budget cut of approximately 10% is proposed. Analysis of data is not used sufficiently to inform planning. Some aspects of performance management at corporate strategic level are weak.

Strengths

- Young people achieve well and are learning a range of new skills and knowledge through a varied and interesting programme of activities.
- The quality of youth work practice is good.
- Management of the curriculum is effective and workers have a good grasp of planning and evaluation processes.

- Innovative projects and adventurous activities are balanced with a wide range of informal opportunities for young people to meet and participate.
- Operational management is good.

Areas for development

- Develop the role of detached youth work to take better account of seasonal variations that affect delivery adversely.
- Improve the use of needs analysis and local mapping to better inform generic youth work practice.
- Improve aspects of performance management at strategic level.
- Clarify the strategic positioning of the youth service within the council structure.

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: 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 contribution made to most ECM outcomes is good. Workers have a good understanding of curriculum planning and demonstrate this well in the work they undertake with young people. Many opportunities are offered to develop personal and social skills as well as safe participation in creative and adventurous activities at home and further afield. In many circumstances, young people are effectively supported to take responsibility and to resolve problems for themselves. Interest in leading programmes and democracy projects, such as the youth council, is growing and an increasing number of young people are becoming youth volunteers and peer educators. The service is responsive to the seasonal nature of the island and provides a good range of support services such as sexual

health, drug and alcohol support to cater for the large influx of young holiday makers and foreign students, while maintaining on-going provision for local 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

5. The range of opportunities available to young people is extensive and in many settings they are acquiring new knowledge and skills through their involvement. Increasing numbers of young people have seized opportunities to develop their skills in, for example, outdoor adventure activities, music, drama, filming, and sports of all kinds. Formal accredited learning is offered through a broad adventure curriculum and some project work but is underdeveloped in generic youth work. At KJ's youth project in Newport, a small group of over 16 year olds were learning car maintenance skills. A young woman who owns a car described confidently how she had rectified a mechanical problem herself at a much reduced cost than using a commercial garage. Young people with learning difficulties and/or difficulties at the Gateway Club were achieving high standards of attainment through the Duke of Edinburgh's award, one member having recently achieved gold. Many young people were able to articulate how they had developed self confidence and self esteem through their involvement, which in turn had helped them with other aspects of their lives, most notably at school.

6. Workers and young people enjoy good relationships. Young people demonstrate high levels of tolerance, and behaviour is consistently good. Those involved in peer inspection, local volunteering in youth clubs and in work of the youth council show good aptitude, commitment and awareness. Their willingness to learn about systems and procedures in order to take responsible positions and to support each other provides good testimony to the quality of the work achieved with them.

7. The quality of youth work practice is consistently good. Curriculum planning and evaluation are embedded and programmes show good awareness of links to ECM outcomes. For example, the MY-I mobile project clearly demonstrates how its work around a range of health issues directly relates to ECM. Workers are enthusiastic in their approach and have high expectations of the young people. They know much about the lives of those they work with and have good local knowledge. However this information is not always used effectively to inform programmes, particularly in generic youth work and some detached provision. In a minority of provision, programmes are insufficiently challenging and are unnecessarily restrictive in the range of activities on offer. In these instances there has been too much local autonomy and a sense of complacency and unwillingness to take risks has become the norm.

8. The climate in which youth work takes place is supportive and enabling. Workers respond sensitively to the needs of young people while ensuring that boundaries about behaviour and diversity are understood. In the majority of practice, workers are able to challenge young people assertively when wishing to explore attitudes about social difference and inclusion. In the best examples, staff encourage young people to contribute and influence programme planning and give them consistent encouragement and feedback. At Brading, part-time club workers met a range of diverse needs in a creative and supportive environment whilst constantly encouraging lively suggestions and debate about activities. Youth workers are well informed about the specialist provision such as counselling or health support to which they can refer young people when necessary.

Key Aspect 2: Quality of curriculum and resources

9. The curriculum has broad scope, reaches high numbers of young people and is delivered through a good variety of methods and youth work approaches. Adventure activities make very effective use of the natural land and seascape; opportunities for residential and international activities are good particularly through the work of Challenge and Adventure and IYWAC. The service works well with targeted groups and gives adequate coverage for both specialist and generic youth work to cater for those young people who live in more rural areas. Detached work is less well resourced and consequently under-developed.

10. Work to improve delivery through the curriculum has been ongoing and most workers have a good grasp of planning and evaluation. Programmes reflect a sound knowledge of the broad curriculum themes which have integrated and are underpinned by the key ECM principles. Curriculum management is highly effective and workers show competence in recording outcomes and involving young people in the process. A stubborn minority of sessions remain where workers still direct programmes too much and take little account of young people's own ideas.

11. Staff are well deployed. All full-time posts are filled and only a few part time posts are vacant. New recruitment arrangements enable the service to appoint unqualified workers, whilst ensuring access to qualifying training. Training for part time staff is well supported but opportunities for full-time staff to undertake further professional development are restricted owing to budget constraints. All staff undertake mandatory child protection training and are checked with the Criminal Records Bureau.

12. Resources are of good quality, regularly updated and well used. Buildings are welcoming and maintained to a satisfactory standard, although in many instances they are not Special Educational Needs Disability Act 2001 compliant and would require significant expenditure to bring them up to specification. Some part-time centres are underused but often provide the only meeting place in rural areas for young people to gather socially. Workers and young people take pride in their local facilities and work hard to provide a caring and inclusive environment. Displays reflect an understanding of social inclusion and show young people's

involvement in a range of activities. The service meets its statutory duties under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. Staff are fully informed of health and safety responsibilities and safeguarding issues.

13. Joint working with a number of external agencies including Connexions, the Get Sorted drugs and alcohol project, teenage pregnancy and sexual health services are effective. My-I mobile provision offers key support services in many local areas and has developed very good practice on issues of teenage pregnancy and parenthood. The Multi-agency Group Services project in Newport is supported by the Education Welfare Service, CAMHS and local schools and offers effective therapeutic group work for young people with complex needs who struggle to maintain school attendance. Uniformed voluntary organisations receive access to resources, advice and guidance as well as grant aid through the Youth Service.

Key Aspect 3: Leadership and management

14. Leadership and management are adequate overall. Recently, however, a lack of direction and impetus at the corporate strategic level has undermined the morale of the service and the resulting uncertainty is beginning to impact negatively on the good will of staff. In spite of this, the head of the service and operational managers have retained a strong sense of purpose and commitment and the service has continued to deliver its objectives. Managers give good steer and support even though uncertainty about the future of the service has been unsettling. Training and curriculum management have been effective and ensured that outcomes for young people have been maintained and developed.

15. Funding is in line with authorities of similar size and the service has been successful in drawing additional external funding. This has enhanced provision considerably, but there is still insufficient funding to support developmental youth work at local level and detached provision. Buildings continue to drain resources owing to constant demands for maintenance and the pressing need on workers to increase funding through private and community lettings.

16. Issues of social inclusion and diversity are central to the ethos of the service and workers generally display a good understanding of the issues. Young people with learning difficulties and disabilities achieve well and there is generally good integration to specialist and mainstream provision. New provision for lesbian and gay young people is increasing in both demand and importance and other targeted work is addressing the needs of young people who are hard to reach or who have more complex needs. Although training on diversity issues takes place regularly, a minority of workers are not challenging racist and homophobic behaviour effectively.

17. Partnership arrangements at local level are good. Area managers and workers have developed good links with key statutory and community agencies and local work in urban areas reflects an improving range of support services. Access to these services in rural communities is less frequent and budget

constraints prevent more equitable coverage. Strategically the Youth Service participates in most of the key corporate groups, with the exception of safer communities, but its influence and contribution to the broad children and young people agenda is afforded less significance by senior officers and elected members than at operational level, where ECM principles have been thoughtfully woven into youth work delivery.

18. The involvement of young people in planning and review of provision is generally satisfactory. In projects, for example Dr. Ugs Experiments, this work is highly successful and young people have major responsibility for planning and achieving clearly defined outcomes. The Isle of Wight Youth Council, developed and supported by the youth service, is a strongly representative campaigning group with an impressive record for promoting key issues for young people. Recent lobbying of council members secured a 50 pence flat rate transport fee for all young people aged 13 to 19. Young people's involvement in internal inspection of provision has also been effective and the quality of reporting shows clear insight and awareness. Such high quality engagement is not consistent. In a minority of generic youth provision, workers' expectations are piecemeal, and in detached work, developmental approaches with young people are not a strong focus.

19. Operational management is good. Workers are pleased with the consistency and quality of line management and support. Quality assurance arrangements are coherent and understood by staff. Management information has been regularly collected, but is not always used effectively in strategic planning. Participation rates are high, although there is concern that in some instances understanding of what constitutes contact and constructive participation has become blurred. Youthbase has been installed and workers trained to input data more consistently. Monitoring of the work however is sound and the head of the service and operational managers have a good understanding of the service's strengths and areas for development.