

Hampshire Youth Service Report

Hampshire Children's Services Authority Area

Age group: All

Published: 14 August 2007

Reference no: 850

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the local authority or at www.ofsted.gov.uk

Contents

Introduction	2
Part A: Summary of the report	
Main findings	2
Part B: The Youth Service's contribution to Every Child Matters outcomes	3
Part C: Commentary on the Key Aspects	
Key Aspect 1: Standards of young people's achievements and the quality of youth work practice	4
Key Aspect 2: Quality of curriculum and resources	5
Key Aspect 3: Leadership and management	6

Introduction

1. Hampshire Youth Service operates a broad range of approximately 200 projects and groups across the county. Youth work has recently been incorporated into the Children and Families branch of Children's Services. It is organised in 11 districts with senior youth workers reporting to Children's Services district service managers. There is a centrally located strategic and project team of five plus two youth officers. Overall there are 178 full-time equivalent staff comprising 83 professional grade workers, 243 youth support workers and 40 support staff. In 2005/06 the budget was £5 million with a further £900,000 generated externally. There are 110,000 young people in the 13-19 age range, 19% of which the service claims are active participants in youth work.

2. The Joint Area Review (JAR) was enhanced to enable coverage of youth work. Inspectors considered the service's self-assessment and met with officers, young people and a cross section of staff and partners. They reviewed key service documentation and observed a sample of youth work across the county.

Part A: Summary of the report

Main findings

Effectiveness and value for money

3. The youth service in Hampshire is good and provides good value for money. Young people achieve well; workers are experienced and resourceful and generally creative in their approach. The range of provision is good but some districts are less well served than others. Aspects of quality assurance are well developed but insufficient attention is given to staff deployment. The youth service enjoys the confidence of partner agencies. Low core funding limits flexibility and sustainability of some key projects. Leadership and management are good and the service is very well placed to help shape the emerging arrangements for the integration of young people's services.

Strengths

- Achievement is good and in a few instances very good.
- Youth workers create lively and constructive learning opportunities.
- Staff development and training make a good impact.
- Partnerships are well established and often pivotal to the success of projects.
- Leadership at district and county level is good and forward-looking.

Areas for development

- Staffing resources are not always deployed to best effect.
- In terms of provision, some districts are less well served than others.
- Youth work opportunities for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are insufficient.
- Low levels of core funding from the local authority undermine the longer-term sustainability of some 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	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 service makes an outstanding contribution to Every Child Matters outcomes. Young people's involvement in democratic processes and decision making is wide-spread and participants gain much from it. Local district councils readily consult with youth forums and act on young people's views. Staff are diligent in terms of safeguarding. Health promotion and, in particular, access to sexual health services are facilitated very effectively by youth workers. Targeted youth work provides very well for some young people otherwise not engaged in formal education. The service and its partners provide good personal support and guidance to 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. Achievement is good and in a few instances very good. The service works well with challenging students through alternative curriculum projects or in-school support. Those attending Fasst in Havant and Teenzone in Gosport are developing key social skills of listening, communication, anger management and co-operation. In some cases, these projects represent the only link students have with education or training and provides them with respite from otherwise difficult personal situations.
6. A focus by the service on representation and participation through youth councils, and Youth Opportunity Fund panels has had a marked impact on young people's political literacy and sense of citizenship. Active members of the Hampshire County Youth Council and the Eastleigh Youth Opportunity Fund readily take on new responsibilities: they give much to these projects and get much back in return.
7. Music features prominently in projects such as Genesis, Amp and Hype, where young people organise themselves, play confidently, support performers well and are knowledgeable in the use of sound equipment. They create a lively, constructive and participative atmosphere. Too few opportunities exist for young people to have their achievements accredited.
8. Thoughtfully and sensitively established sexual health work such as that at Chify in Havant and Brune Park Youthy in Gosport successfully encourages individual young people and couples to demonstrate foresight and maturity in seeking information and advice. Young people understand that they are responsible for their own sexual behaviour and its consequences and avail themselves of the service without embarrassment.
9. Weaknesses in young people's achievement, which are not always challenged by workers, include 15 and 16 year olds describing future career plans unrelated to their current levels of education and training. In work seen with these young people during the inspection, some of them handled disappointment badly and lacked confidence and patience in completing tasks if they were unable to see a quick solution. Achievement in a minority of group work sessions was impaired where, despite mutually agreed ground rules to the contrary, already confident and verbose members spoke above each other and imposed their own views.
10. Practice is good and youth workers enjoy what they do. They create a lively and constructive atmosphere that encourages achievement, and are generally adept at supporting and challenging young people in a firm, assertive and open manner. Necessarily, workers have developed strong relationships with young people to get to this point. Youth workers advocate well on behalf of young

people within the community and are quick to engineer situations that enable them to consider and express their views. A good case in point was at Richard Aldworth detached project, where workers arranged a meeting with young people and a community group to consider improvements in facilities. The preparatory work ensured that young people presented their case well and participated comfortably in discussion with adults and representatives from local organisations.

11. Group work is used often and generally to good effect, with timely questioning and supportive interventions. Session planning and recordings are constructively used, and short but focused post-session 'mop up' meetings serve a useful purpose. However, workers and managers are insufficiently critical of staff deployment within projects and, on occasions, sessions are overstaffed. In targeted provision, workers actively seek to extend young people's interests and also seek to engage them in wider youth service opportunities. In the few examples of weaker practice observed during the inspection, experienced workers allowed others to struggle with facilitating basic group work without themselves having previously modelled best practice. Young people who accompanied inspectors on visits were rightly critical of those very few workers who simply failed to engage with young people.

Key Aspect 2: Quality of curriculum and resources

12. The quality of the curriculum is good. Detached youth work, award schemes, outdoor pursuits, residential activities, international exchanges and youth councils are used effectively in their own right as well as to augment youth club programmes. The mix of provision is, however, eclectic and patchy with some areas significantly better served than others. Information advice and counselling has differing outlets, some are located in the voluntary sector, some in the local authority and others have joint arrangements. Most are engaging well with young people but a shared view about approaches and minimum standards would potentially improve efficiency. Sexual health work is of a high order and enjoys the confidence of young people and other agencies. There are strengths in alternative curriculum work with schools.

13. Resources are adequate and young people benefit from good new buildings secured through partnership arrangements at Rowner and Fair Oak for instance. However, despite attempts to ensure that buildings are internally attractive and appealing, too many are past their prime and not fully accessible. Approaches to equality and diversity are satisfactory with some locally responsive work in respect of sexuality and youth culture. Youth work opportunities for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are not sufficient.

14. Staff development and training have a good impact. They help create useful networks across the county, assist with recruitment and provide good progression opportunities. There is a strong and responsive workforce and partner agencies express confidence in the specialist skills of workers. The central development team has an effective cross-county curriculum function in areas such as participation and accreditation and strengthens delivery locally.

Key Aspect 3: Leadership and management

15. Leadership and management are good. Strategic managers launched new proposals for an integrated youth support service at the time of the joint area review. These appear bold and rightly identify priorities for action, such as eliminating duplication, improving the spread of provision and strengthening performance management. Some fundamental issues have not yet been sufficiently aired particularly in relation to commissioning and staffing. The small core youth service central team provides a good policy lead, is forward looking and managing change well. The strategic decision to adopt the title 'Children's services' fails to capture work being done with young people and young adults.

16. There is a commitment across the county to young people's participation and the youth service has embedded well young people's involvement in decision making in the community and the service. District councils have been supportive and many use the local youth council to consult as a matter of course. Young people are confident that things have got better as a result.

17. The youth service has a long standing district delivery model which is mature and well grounded. Operational management occurs mainly at this level and is good. Budget management is sound, as are financial control systems. The success of the district model hinges mainly on the senior youth workers, many of whom are entrepreneurial and visionary. They have generated good interagency support which has had a positive impact on how young people are perceived. Not all however have been able to achieve progress in the same way. The very new children's services district managers hold the senior youth workers in high esteem and are keen to build on their experience. Partnership work has been pivotal to the youth service and is at the heart of new proposals. Partners are able to articulate clearly the role of the youth service.

18. Safeguarding is underpinned by good training and procedures for off-site activities and detached work are secure. Staff are confident in making child protection referrals.

19. Needs are well understood and articulated but resources are not always deployed efficiently. This is the case with some school-based work where staff spend time travelling to deliver inputs of a very short duration. Time and energy have been committed to developing quality assurance systems, self assessment and user surveys. These systems involve most staff in some way and have served a useful purpose in gauging the quality of young people's experiences. However, workers and managers are insufficiently critical of the use of time and resources and the needs of young people who do not use the service are not sufficiently sought. Whilst there have been very good attempts to ensure accuracy, data is less secure than the service considers to be the case. Workers have mixed perceptions about how supervision is applied but feel supported.

20. Core funding from the local authority is, proportionately, among the lowest in the country yet the service does much with the available budget. Enterprising work attracts some £900,000 per year but the low core budget has consequences for the long term sustainability of some programmes. For instance, as grant aided projects reach the end of their external funding period, managers have little flexibility to move resources around to meet demand or to absorb these projects into the mainstream.