

# Hammersmith and Fulham Youth Service Report

Hammersmith and Fulham Children's Services Authority Area

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**Age group:** All

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## Introduction

1. The youth service in Hammersmith and Fulham is located within the Local Authority's Children and Young People's Service. In addition to the Head of Service and two youth officers, there are 16 full-time workers and 41 part-time workers equivalent to 24 full-time posts. Youth work is delivered from five youth centres, two community centres and through detached provision. In addition, youth work is delivered in four community facilities managed by the voluntary sector through service level agreements. The service gives priority to the 13-19 age range, in which there are approximately 10,800 young people. The budget made available by the authority for 2006/07 was £1,363,648 augmented by £572,000 from external sources. The service reached 26% of young people aged 13-19 in 2006/07. In terms of its more regular contact with young people it successfully engages 15%.

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 and a cross section of staff and partners. They reviewed key service documentation and observed a sample of youth work sessions in the borough.

## Part A: Summary of the report

### Main findings

#### Effectiveness and value for money

3. Hammersmith and Fulham delivers a good youth service that provides good value for money. Leaders and managers have established a clear sense of direction and purpose. Staff are deployed and resources allocated effectively to meet the needs of disaffected young people. Very good partnership work is adding value to the quality of young people's learning, enjoyment and progression. Sessions are well planned and structured with a clear focus on learning. Young people are achieving well in all forms of provision, although the number gaining formal accreditation is low. Training opportunities are not easily accessible to part-time staff and a high percentage are unqualified. The involvement of young people in planning and assessing the quality of provision is inconsistent. The service has made slow progress in implementing its equalities strategy.

#### Strengths

- The standard of young people's achievement is high.
- The service has established strong and effective partnerships with a wide range of agencies.
- There is effective and well targeted provision.

- Good use is made of specialist staff to enhance opportunities for young people
- Managers and leaders provide a clear sense of direction and purpose.

### Areas for development

- Young people are insufficiently involved in reviewing and recording their progress.
- There has been slow progress in implementing the service's equalities strategy.
- There is limited access to training for part-time staff, a high percentage of whom are unqualified.
- Young people are not consistently involved in planning and assessing the quality of provision.

### 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	2
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 a good contribution to Every Child Matters outcomes in a number of areas. It plays a key role in the development of the borough's emerging strategy for youth participation. Good support for the Borough's Youth Forum and effective management of the Youth Opportunities Fund is ensuring that the views of the young people involved in these initiatives are heard and responded to. Effective collaboration with the police, Youth Offending Service and the anti-social behaviour unit enables diversionary programmes to be well targeted and these are

having a positive impact on levels of anti-social behaviour in a few communities. Personal advisers contracted by Connexions to work within the youth service are creative in their approach and effective in providing disengaged young people with information, advice and guidance to support their entry into training or employment. There are increasing opportunities for young people to gain formal accreditation for their achievements and potential to extend these opportunities further.

## **Part C: Commentary on the key aspects**

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

5. Standards of young people's achievement are high. Most young people are responsive and considerate of the views and feelings of others. Many are acquiring a range of practical skills as well as developing social responsibility and self-confidence. Most are seizing the opportunity, where offered, to take responsibility within their clubs and projects. Young people involved in the youth opportunities fund and in the Borough Youth Forum are learning about democratic processes and developing skills in decision-making, presentation, and communication. A few are setting themselves challenging but realistic goals for their personal development but overall, there is limited involvement by young people in reviewing and recording their own progress.

6. The quality of practice is good overall and no unsatisfactory practice was observed during the inspection. Most workers are positive role models for young people and demonstrate through their actions the same considerate attitude which they expect of young people. Relationships with young people are good. Workers have established and maintain appropriate boundaries for behaviour and resolve conflict well. They have very good links with other agencies to which they can refer young people for specialist advice. Workers are skilled at developing discussion and encouraging reflection, and programmes are responsive to the needs and interests of young people. Very good local networks, both formal and informal, ensure that workers are kept abreast of, and can respond to, any concerns arising in the neighbourhoods within which they work. Where work is less satisfactory, programmes are repetitive and fail to sustain young people's interest. In these sessions, the dominant approach of a minority of staff is not conducive to the development of young people or their colleagues.

7. Sessions are well planned and structured with a clear focus on learning. A good range of opportunities for accreditation is being developed but some workers lack the confidence and skills to integrate these opportunities effectively into their practice. The number of young people achieving formal accreditation is low.

## Key Aspect 2: Quality of curriculum and resources

8. Overall, the service offers a satisfactory range of opportunities. Some of the service's curriculum priorities such as environmental awareness and volunteering are underdeveloped. Access to information, advice and guidance is good. The curriculum framework is comprehensive and priorities are clearly linked to young people's needs and *Every Child Matters* outcomes. The quality of curriculum planning at unit level is variable. Priorities are not consistently reflected in practice, objectives lack precision and plans do not always reflect the needs of young people that have been identified.

9. The service has identified priority groups with whom it will work and there is well-targeted provision for young parents, young disabled people, young unemployed people and lesbian, gay and bisexual young people. The service is successfully engaging a high proportion of young people identified as disaffected or at risk. The needs of some groups are not being met effectively. There is a significant gender imbalance in the participation of young women in the service and an under-representation by white young men. The service does not have a strategy to identify the needs and barriers to access of young people who do not currently use the service. There is limited twilight and weekend provision.

10. There are high vacancy levels but the impact of this has been minimised by the effective deployment of full-time staff. Whilst the service offers a good range of relevant training opportunities, programme the timing of many courses limits access by part-time staff and the take up of training opportunities is low. As a result a high percentage of part time staff have not completed qualifying training. There are insufficient opportunities to share good practice.

11. Very good use is made of specialist expertise to enhance opportunities for young people. The service is greatly benefiting from the expertise and enthusiasm of staff recently appointed to lead the devolvement of participation and accreditation. There are good links with specialist sexual health and drugs workers who deliver training and workshops for workers and young people. More could be done to use the expertise of full time staff to support and co-ordinate the development of the curriculum across the borough, particularly in those areas which are currently underdeveloped.

12. Most premises used by the service are well maintained, suitably located and well resourced. Internally, they are warm and welcoming though the exteriors of some centres are shabby and uninviting and many have inadequate signage. Most are accessible for the disabled and where this is not the case, steps are being taken to re-locate provision to more suitable premises.

13. Good attention is paid to health and safety including rigorous and regular accommodation audits, risk assessments for off-site visits and staff guidelines for dealing with violence and aggression. There is a planned programme of child protection training for those staff who have yet to complete it. Not all staff have

completed child protection training. Criminal Record Bureau checks have been undertaken on all staff but not yet refreshed in line with the authority's policy.

### Key Aspect 3: Leadership and management

14. Leaders and managers have established a clear purpose and strategic direction for the service. The service plan is suitably ambitious and appropriately aligned to corporate priorities and Every Child Matters outcomes. There is good collaboration between officers and members with regard to a planned review of youth service provision, which will include a consideration of cost effectiveness. For what it seeks to achieve, the authority provides a good level of resource which is used efficiently. Financial management is sound.

15. Full time staff are well informed and involved in decision making processes. Mechanisms for communication and consultation with part time staff are less effective. Regular supervision and appraisal provides a good balance of challenge and support and is valued by staff. Comprehensive practice guidelines clearly set out the service's expectations and encourage reflective practice.

16. The Youth Opportunities Fund is well managed and has been instrumental in enabling some young people to play an active role in shaping projects and evaluating their impact. More broadly, young people are not consistently involved in planning and evaluating service provision. Plans for the involvement of young people in recruitment and selection and in assessing the quality of provision have yet to be implemented.

17. The service has established strong and effective partnerships with a wide range of agencies to identify needs achieve shared objectives and enable young people to overcome barriers to achievement. Partnership working is underpinned by sound referral procedures and information sharing protocols.

18. The service has made slow progress in implementing its equalities strategy. Plans to increase involvement in the service by young women and white young men have had little impact. The service's marketing and promotion strategy pays insufficient attention to formats other than written English. More work is needed to integrate young people with learning difficulties and disabilities into mainstream provision.

19. Managers know their service well and have produced an accurate self-assessment. Data collection is robust and enhanced by regular visits to practice by service managers. Information gathered is scrutinised regularly and used to drive service improvement. The service measures progress in achieving national priorities but targets for the achievement of local objectives are insufficiently precise at unit level. Detailed service level agreements with the voluntary sector are monitored annually but judgements about quality are not fully informed by visits to observe and evaluate practice.