



Better
education
and care

Hackney Youth Service Report

Hackney Children's Services Authority Area

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Introduction

1. Hackney Youth Service is currently placed within the Leisure and Community Directorate but is soon to be relocated into the new integrated services for children and young people. The service operates from five youth centres located across the borough and seconds staff to run youth work sessions from other buildings owned by the private and voluntary sector. The service has 28 full-time equivalent (fte) staff which includes three fte administrative staff and five senior and operations managers. The service's budget for 2005/06 is £1,500,000, an increase of £300,000 from the previous year. It has attracted additional external funding of some £700,000. Hackney has 18,109 residents aged between 13 to 19 years. Figures manually collated for 2004/05 showed a 13% reach overall.

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 area.

Part A: Summary of the report

Main findings

Effectiveness and value for money

3. This is a service with good potential. Young people's achievements are adequate, as is the quality of youth work practice. However, it has been poorly funded and ineffective leadership and managerial oversight have progressively led to deterioration in support structures and a loss of strategic direction. As it stands, the service is, therefore, judged inadequate and providing unsatisfactory value for money. The lack of robust systems, a weak curriculum and poor quality assurance mechanisms have further impeded development. Too many staff are unqualified and very little training has been in place to support professional development. The picture is changing however, and inspectors acknowledge that there are recent improvements. Senior managers are now aware of the service's shortcomings, hence the recent attention to its overall performance and the appointment of a new Head of Service. Funding has been further increased for 2006/07 and a clearer sense of strategic direction is evident. It is, however, too early to identify sustained positive impact on delivery and outcomes for young people.

Strengths

- The range of opportunities for young people to gain local accreditation is good overall.
- There are a growing number of opportunities for young people to gain practical and creative skills through specialist provision.

- Consistently very good and productive relationships between young people and workers.

Areas for development

- The range of youth work provision is insufficient to meet the needs of young people aged 13 to 19 years.
- Opportunities for girls and young women are limited.
- Quality assurance and management information systems are inadequate.
- Curriculum leadership, management and development are weak.
- Staff training and development is insufficient to meet the training and professional development needs of the work force.

Key aspect inspection grades

Key aspect		Grade
1	Standards of young people's achievement	2
	Quality of youth work practice	2
2	Quality of curriculum and resources	1
3	Strategic and operational leadership and management	1

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 contribution made by the youth service to Every Child Matters outcomes is adequate across some of the outcome areas. Inadequate curriculum management has prevented a consistently planned approach to this work. However, standards of achievement are generally satisfactory and all settings provide a safe environment for young people to meet, to engage in a range of enjoyable activities and to gain local accreditation. Recreational and physical activities, such as dance, football and keep fit are available in most youth centres. In the best practice, youth workers are helping young people to find their own

solutions to difficult issues such as drug prevention, sexual health awareness and managing conflict. Recent new investment in project work and detached provision is starting to engage larger groups of young people who have previously been hard to reach. The Positive Activities for Young People programme is highly effective in targeting activities during school holiday periods for young people most at risk of offending or anti-social behaviour.

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 is adequate overall. In many settings, young people gain local accreditation and this aspect of work is good and increasing in both range and quality. The links to formal accreditation, however, are underdeveloped. The variety of activities offered is good for a comparatively small service. Young people can choose to take part in drama, dance, sports of all kinds, canoeing and kayaking, filmmaking, art, personal and social development where they learn new skills and develop in confidence and self-esteem. Events are held regularly to celebrate young people's achievement from youth settings across the borough.

6. Relationships between young people, their peers and youth workers are consistently good. In all settings, young people demonstrate tolerance, understanding and sensitivity; their awareness and understanding about community safety is high. Examples of work initiated by young people to improve community cohesion and to tackle youth crime are innovative and are having a positive impact at local level. Behaviour is well managed and young people show strong commitment to those projects they attend. A growing number of young people across the borough are gaining experience in peer mentoring and peer motivational work. For example, at Parkside youth centre, young people have developed mentoring skills in sexual health and drugs awareness. Members of the Youth Parliament have become Millennium Volunteers and actively promote this work with other young people.

7. The quality of youth work practice is adequate. In the majority of sessions observed in the inspection, workers had clear aims and identified the learning they wished young people to achieve. Planning and evaluation are, however, inconsistent, often superficial and short term. The new planning forms are not understood by all staff, and attempts to involve young people in the process are piecemeal. Workers generally have good local knowledge but do not always use this information to plan or target resources.

8. Workers are highly committed and enthusiastic about their work. They provide effective informal support and some centres collaborate well with external agencies to ensure young people gain practical information about drugs,

substance misuse, sexual health and youth crime. The best work observed was creative and challenging. Drama techniques were used to very good effective at The Crib to enable young people and police officers to explore the increase in youth crime and to consider a range of positive solutions to this disturbing issue. Workers at the Clissold Centre of Excellence have capitalised on its strong sporting focus and are using creative peer-led approaches to encourage young people to gain formal accreditation in leadership roles. Not all the work is as challenging and much is recreationally-based, with poor attention to extending learning opportunities.

Key Aspect 2: Quality of curriculum and resources

9. The quality of curriculum and resources is unsatisfactory. The range of universal and targeted provision is insufficient to meet the diverse needs and interests of the 13-19 age group. Staff levels are inadequate and resources are poorly deployed across the area. Curriculum leadership and management are inadequate. Attention to curriculum planning has been neglected and awareness of key initiatives, for example the Every Child Matters agenda is patchy. Curriculum resources in centres have been unevenly distributed. Some centres have built up good specialist equipment, but there are few opportunities for workers to share good practice or pool resources. There is no central record of equipment or curricular materials available. The service has recently introduced a new curriculum framework, but training to support it has not been fully implemented.

10. The Youth Service struggles to retain well-qualified and experienced workers. Morale of front line staff is low owing to a long-term frustration at the lack of resources and inadequate staffing. There is a heavy reliance on the use of agency workers who have short-term contracts and are often unqualified. Training for part-time staff has been inconsistent and induction for new workers to the service is inadequate. All staff are Criminal Records Bureau checked and undertake mandatory child protection training.

11. The traditional sports and recreational focus of the generic youth work has attracted larger numbers of boys and young men with approximately twice as many taking part in activities than girls and young women. Detached work has only recently become a priority with a new team established in the north of the borough, but generally this area of work is underdeveloped. A new mobile unit is beginning to attract young people who did not previously attend youth activities. Specialist group work has been established in some localities to promote inclusion for harder to reach groups such as young mothers, travellers, refugees and asylum seeking children, lesbian and gay young people, and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This work is satisfactory overall, but is discreet from mainstream provision and the numbers of young people participating more generally are small.

12. Partnership work with a number of small voluntary and community groups has enhanced the curriculum for a minority of young people and targeted

programmes using drama, filming, and creative arts are effective. The Laburnum Boat Club runs a successful integrated canoeing and kayaking programme where young people, many with learning difficulties and disabilities gain formal accreditation and take part in various residential and holiday schemes. The Positive Activities for Young People programme, managed by the Youth Service and in partnership with the voluntary sector, has been successful in engaging young people in activities through holiday periods and on longer term projects in areas designated 'hot spots'.

13. The five statutory youth centres, which vary in condition and quality of resources available, are insufficient in number to meet need. There is heavy reliance on voluntary sector and privately owned buildings but these often restrict the range and scale of programmes the service can offer and are not always in good repair or easily accessible. Risk assessments are undertaken in these premises and health and safety audits are completed in statutory buildings.

Key Aspect 3: Leadership and management

14. Strategic and operational leadership and management are inadequate. Weak management has contributed to a decline in important support structures and in the range of provision. Similarly, the lack of appropriate training, poor curriculum management and inequitable deployment of resources has not been addressed.

15. The contribution made by voluntary and community sector partners is too variable. Service level agreements lack clarity and, in some circumstances, the youth service is unable to influence how its resources are used. At local level effective partnership arrangements with specialist agencies extend the range of provision and address social inclusion and diversity issues effectively. There is very limited support to the service from Connexions personal advisers. The service meets its statutory duties under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 but compliance with the Special Educational Needs Disability Act 2001 has not been fully achieved.

16. Operational management is inadequate. Although supervision by managers has been satisfactory and has been effective in maintaining an adequate standard of work, it has not contributed sufficiently to service-wide improvements. Quality assurance procedures are unclear; a new planning system has been implemented but training is at an early stage. Financial management is satisfactory, but all budgets are held centrally and senior workers do not have sufficient control over resources at a local level. Plans are in place to delegate budgets from 2006/07.

17. The involvement of young people in planning and evaluation at club and project level is underdeveloped. Encouraging work is taking place, however, to engage young people in developing the borough-wide youth participation strategy. This work has been inclusive of a diverse range of young people from different groups. The Youth Parliament is still in an embryonic stage, as are four area youth forums but these initiatives are now progressing well and approximately 140

young people are involved. Training for this work is comprehensive but resources are insufficient to enable any significant increase in participation rates.

18. Management information systems are poor. Data collection is completed manually but the information is unreliable and the service is unable to analyse which, and how many, young people are using the service at any one time. Managers have been unable to interpret the data to monitor participation or to identify priorities. As a result the service cannot evaluate its performance or measure its cost effectiveness. New recording processes have been introduced recently and an electronic system is to be implemented shortly.