



Dudley Youth Service Report

Dudley Children's Services Authority Area

**Better
education
and care**

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Introduction

1. Dudley Youth Service is located within the Community Education Development Division of the Directorate of Children's Services. Youth centre-based provision operates from 12 venues and a further nine additional settings. Targeted work is delivered through detached teams, mobile units, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, Positive Activities for Young People (PAYP) and themed project work. The service has 60 full time equivalent staff (fte) comprising of 5.5 managers, 16 administrative staff. Of the 38-fte youth workers, 23 are full-time and 81 are part-time workers, including 7 full-time workers in training. The service's budget is £2,418,300. Additional external funding totals £327,967. The service reaches 28.7% of 13-19 year olds.

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. They reviewed service documentation and carried out a sample of youth work sessions throughout the area.

Part A: Summary of the report

Main findings

Effectiveness and value for money

2. Dudley borough council provides an adequate youth service for its users and offers satisfactory value for money. The local authority provides good strategic leadership and adequate financial support, and the youth service is linked well into wider corporate activity. The service provides a broad range of provision in a variety of venues and works effectively with partners to extend the programmes available for some groups. Young people are making good personal gains through their engagement, in particular in targeted provision. Positive relationships between staff and young people were evident throughout the activities observed in the inspection. There are inconsistencies in the standard of youth work practice and young people's learning is not routinely recorded or accredited. Young people are insufficiently involved in determining, planning and evaluating programmes. Although there are still some vacancies, the service has made effective responses to recruitment and retention difficulties. Good progress is being made towards addressing the areas for development identified in the self assessment through focussed action planning and an effective peer inspection programme.

Strengths

- Young people make good personal gains through their engagement.
- A broad range of provision is offered in a variety of venues.

- Effective alternative curriculum work is undertaken in conjunction with partners.
- There is good strategic management and financial support from the council
- Young people's health and safety is ensured through effective safeguarding procedures.

Areas for development

- Improve the recording and accreditation of young people's learning
- Ensure improvements in the standards of achievement and youth work practice
- Implement fully the curriculum framework
- Ensure that service targets are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time limited, and are reflected at unit level
- Implement quality assurance procedures effectively

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	2
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: 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

3. The service is making a satisfactory contribution to outcomes, in particular through its project work and targeted provision. Detached work, sex and relationship education (SRE) and life skills programmes are all helping young people to achieve their potential. Partnership work is helping disabled young people to achieve well, though they are less well integrated in mainstream youth

provision. A productive partnership with a voluntary sector organisation provides good information and advice services and specialist support for young people. Some 'alternative curriculum' work helps prepare young people for employment and further education. A young parents' group is providing high quality support and enabling the development of skills in parenting, sexual health and basic skills. A variety of programmes and provision contribute well to promoting healthy lifestyles, including the Junior Sports Leaders Awards (JSLA). Young people gain much from their involvement in the youth council, where they have undertaken very positive work that has promoted young people in a positive manner.

Part C: Commentary on the key aspects

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

4. Standards of achievement are satisfactory overall. Accreditation opportunities are beginning to be implemented in a variety of settings including the Prince's Trust XL programmes in schools and through the Duke of Edinburgh's (DofE) Award. However, the development of accredited programmes in centre-based work and in some projects is less well developed. Young people from Black and minority ethnic communities are underrepresented in accreditation figures overall. In the best work, young people were active in negotiating their needs and reflecting on their learning through compiling portfolios. At The Wheels Project, young people negotiated a contract of learning and behaviour, which provided an effective framework for them to engage in programmes of buggy building and car mechanics. Through the JSLA activity and some volunteering in centres, young people gain a range of skills and knowledge and make good contributions to the wider community. Standards vary considerably across the service and, in too many instances, young people were insufficiently challenged or stretched.

5. Where programmes are negotiated with young people and based on expressed need, young people engage well and are able to describe what they have learnt in areas such as self-confidence, taking responsibility and organisational skills. Some young people have progressed to become young leaders and peer educators. At the Cyberbus in Stourbridge, young people's self-confidence increased through their volunteering activity and assuming responsibility for programme planning. Work with a group of young disabled people at Valley Road youth centre provides a safe environment where young people interact well, develop personal and social skills and assume responsibility. Overall though the identification and recording of young people's learning is not sufficiently embedded across the service.

6. Through the Youth Council, young people are making good personal gains by developing a manifesto where they each assume responsibility for an area of work. Their work was recognised through Bronze and Silver Youth Achievement Awards. Effective work has been undertaken through young people's involvement as peer assessors where, working alongside youth workers, they assess other

youth work provision. Emerging youth fora activity is giving young people the opportunity to engage with Elected Members at Area Committees, but this work is at the early stages of development. Elections through schools for representatives to the U.K Youth Parliament are providing opportunities for young people's voices and opinions to be heard. Good consultation work by youth council members has helped to develop the youth pledge.

7. Youth work practice is satisfactory. No unsatisfactory provision was observed during the inspection and some work was good or better. The most effective work was in targeted and project work: it was based on clear needs analysis and a programme negotiated with young people. Youth workers have a thorough knowledge of young people. Full-time youth workers are well qualified, motivated and relationships with young people are good. Some of the best work observed involves staff working with partners who bring specialist skills and knowledge complementing the youth work role. In these sessions, programmes were imaginative, well paced and young people were having fun whilst learning new skills. The less effective work was insufficiently focussed on outcomes and there was an over emphasis on purely recreational activity with no clear educational purpose.

Key Aspect 2: Quality of curriculum and resources

8. The quality of curriculum and resources is adequate overall. Youth work takes place in a variety of venues including open access settings, targeted detached work and mobile provision. Some areas of the borough though are not well served. In particular, one of the most socially deprived area of the borough has no building based provision and there are gaps in some areas of provision particularly in relation to work with girls and young women, lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender young people and some Black and minority ethnic groups. Partnership agreements with voluntary sector providers enhance the range of provision effectively. The youth service contributes significantly to supporting the 'What Centre' in Stourbridge, which offers very good advice, information and counselling services for young people. Targeted work with Asian young women at the Muscharat girls' group is offering a well-matched response to their needs. Good quality work with partners for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is extending the range of work, but insufficient emphasis is given to integrating these young people into mainstream opportunities.

9. The management of the curriculum is not sufficiently robust and is failing to give adequate clarity for staff on their priorities, target setting and accountability. The service has recently launched a new curriculum document, based on Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes, which offers a good framework for staff to operate. It is not yet fully implemented across the service however. Curriculum priorities are unclear and not routinely reflected in unit programmes. In too many instances, staff are unsure about service expectations and unit programmes, particularly in centre-based work, do not fully reflect what the service is trying to achieve. In some curriculum areas, such as youth participation, the guidance is good. Here clear plans are established and there are examples of effective

activity. Outdoor education work is undertaken predominantly through the DofE, where there is a good system of safeguarding off-site visits.

10. The service has had significant recruitment and retention difficulties, but has been successful in addressing most of the issues and, currently, all full-time staff are qualified. However, a large proportion of sessional workers are not qualified. The appointment of seven full-time worker-in-training posts is a positive development. Staff supervision is regularly undertaken and valued by staff. There are well-developed induction and initial qualifying courses up to NVQ level three. The training and staff development programme contains a satisfactory range of courses based on the performance, review and development priorities identified. However, the training programmes overall are insufficiently linked to the service's delivery plan targets.

11. Overall, the accommodation used for youth work is of a high standard. Youth centres and the mobile provision are well maintained, well equipped and have good health and safety standards. Good use is made of other accommodation in a large shopping complex, which includes a crèche to facilitate the work with teenage parents. Some very good ICT equipment and access to sporting facilities are available in centres, largely provided via partnership work with the Lifelong Learning service. Other specialist resources including those for music and the arts are less prevalent. All buildings have been assessed for accessibility and currently only one centre is not fully accessible for young people with mobility difficulties.

Key Aspect 3: Leadership and management

12. Strategic and operational leadership and management are adequate. There is good strategic management. Financial support from the council has increased over the last two years to extend targeted detached work. The service is linked well into wider corporate activity and represented on a number of strategic groups. The service plan identifies the contributions made to ECM outcomes, but its targets are not sufficiently robust and are not reflected adequately at unit level. The service's own internal inspection programme is leading to improvements in the standards of practice, but the wider quality assurance procedures are confusing for staff and are not implemented effectively through youth work programmes.

13. Insufficient strategic direction is given to equality and diversity issues overall. An equality and diversity policy has recently been produced, but the targets are not sufficiently specific and are not understood or implemented effectively yet. The service is making satisfactory responses to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA) issues and there are effective processes in place to safeguard young people. All full-time staff and most part-time workers have received child protection training. A race impact assessment has been undertaken, as part of the council's progress towards the Race Equality Standards. The council has adopted the Hear by Right standards and has allocated additional funding for the next financial year to expand young people's participation into wider corporate activity. This work is well planned and good work has been achieved to date to

involve young people in democratic processes at a strategic level. Work overall to involve young people in service development, however, is at an early stage of development and young people are insufficiently involved in needs' analysis and in the planning and evaluation of local projects

14. A wide range of partnerships are in place that are extending the service offered. In particular, work with the Teenage Parenthood Strategy Team and with Connexions is good. Imaginative use of the mobile provision, with partners, to offer a combination of advice, information and SRE work are also proving effective at local level. Effective safeguarding procedures are in place, including risk assessments for activities and accommodation, comprehensive child protection procedures and off-site guidelines. Procedures for the reporting of racist incidents are in place. Criminal Records Bureau clearance processes are effective. Coordinated area planning involving a range of partners, is leading to better joined-up work at a local level. Management information, though good, is not used effectively to inform needs' analysis or programme planning.