



Doncaster Youth Service Report

Doncaster Children's Services Authority Area

**Better
education
and care**

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Introduction

1. Doncaster youth service provides youth work through 16 youth centres, outreach work and targeted projects, one information, advice and support centre and through three mobile units. The service is managed by a Youth Service Manager and six youth officers. Eighteen full-time youth workers and 97 part-time youth workers deliver the service, this equates to a full-time equivalent of 30.7 staff. The budget of the service is £2,348,350 and 29% of 13-19 year-olds are reached annually.

2. The joint area review 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 key service documentation and carried out direct observation of a sample of youth work sessions.

Part A: Summary of the report

Main findings

3. Doncaster youth service is an outstanding service. It has successfully tackled the issues identified in its last inspection report in 2003 and built on existing strengths. Overall the service has significant strengths and few weaknesses. The outcomes for young people are very good and in several cases excellent. The curriculum is well matched to young people's needs: a very good proportion take part in the programmes offered. Young people are at the heart of service development. Leadership and management are excellent and create the environment within which youth work can flourish and youth workers can provide first-rate support for young people that enables them to make considerable progress.

Effectiveness and value for money

4. This is an outstanding service that provides very good value for money.

Strengths

- Young people's achievement is consistently very good.
- There is very good youth work practice.
- Young people's involvement in service development is very effective.
- An excellent range of programmes meet a wide variety of needs.
- Quality assurance procedures are well established and effective.
- There is excellent collaborative work with partners.
- Leadership and management are outstanding.

Areas for development

- Improve attendance at some youth club sessions to engage young men and women in more equal numbers.
- Enhance the quality and standard of some youth service premises.

Key aspect inspection grades

Key aspect		Grade
1	Standards of young people's achievement	4
	Quality of youth work practice	4
2	Quality of curriculum and resources	4
3	Strategic and operational leadership and management	4

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

5. The service makes a very strong contribution to outcomes in a number of areas. Established and well thought through projects based on young people's needs are the key to the service's strengths in this area. It is particularly effective in supporting young people's health and well being and in helping them to have a voice with policy makers. 'Streetreach' delivers programmes that successfully support very vulnerable young women. 10 health clinics within youth clubs and a mobile unit are delivered in partnership with health providers and have increased access to contraception and pregnancy testing services. Health education is well integrated into many youth work sessions. Training for staff effectively equips them to undertake their safeguarding duties and appropriate policies are in place. Youth work projects provide safe environments for young people to meet, socialise and learn. Some centres act as a haven for particularly vulnerable young people. Good support helps many young people on the margins of the education system achieve well. A very good range of programmes are available and nearly 1 in 3 young people in the 13-19 age group voluntarily take part in youth service activities each year. The service provides excellent support for young people's social and emotional development; the Bridge provides a good range of excellent information, advice and support activities. The youth council effectively enables young people to act on issues that concern them and others and they are able to influence decision making at the strategic and local level.

Part C: Commentary on the key aspects

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

6. The standards of young people's achievements are very good overall and in a number of cases they are excellent. In all settings where youth work practice was observed the achievements of young people were at least good. Outstanding progress is made by many in their personal and social development. For example, those excluded from school now have increased expectations in relation to work and college and have clear plans for their next steps. More vulnerable young people benefit from their long association with the youth service gaining practical help and support. They take pride in their work and are successfully overcoming barriers to their success. At the Think B4 Baby project, young women extended their insights into the responsibilities of parenthood. Through a cooking programme at Armthorpe youth club, culinary skills were being developed as well as an understanding of different cultures. At the same centre others learnt about the safe use of the Internet.

7. Young people make very good gains when able to take responsibility for themselves and others. Through the junior leaders programme at Moorends youth club they research, plan and deliver a constructive social and educational programme for a large number of younger children. Members committees at youth centres take responsibility for the development and running of their club. Through the borough wide youth council and youth forums young people grow in their self confidence and develop a wide range of skills including in communication and teamwork. Increases in knowledge are wide ranging from building a greater awareness of disability and diversity to understanding how the council and local democracy work.

8. The quality of youth work practice is very good. It is characterised by high expectations of young people and programmes that reflect their different needs and interests. Sessions are well managed and centres provide an environment where young people are safe and able to access excellent support for themselves as well as take part in programmes that are both fun and stimulating. Young people respond very well to youth workers; they trust them and value highly the help they receive. A very good proportion of youth work staff are well qualified; all are highly motivated and many are able to engage successfully those who present challenging behaviour.

9. Youth workers strike a very good balance between focusing on what it is to be learnt and making learning enjoyable. Young people play an active part in determining the content of programmes. Youth workers have a very good awareness of their needs and use this well to plan programmes. Accreditation is well established and used effectively across all youth work programmes. Those who participate are encouraged to keep records of their work and this helps them

reflect on what they have learnt. Although overall males and females participate in roughly equal numbers in the service as a whole, in some youth club sessions provision was dominated by either young women or young men to the detriment of the other users

Key Aspect 2: Quality of curriculum and resources

10. Overall the quality of curriculum and resources are very good. An excellent range of projects and programmes engage young people whose needs and circumstances differ. The service's commitment to include as wide a range of young people as possible is reflected in the breadth of programmes including youth clubs, work with young people out of school, mobile units and provision for specific groups.

11. Marginalised and vulnerable young people can access the service. Provision is made for black and minority ethnic young people, those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, young people at risk and leading chaotic lifestyles and those looked after by the local authority. Each area has programmes specifically for young women and for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities. 'Streetreach' successfully works with young women involved in prostitution. A good balance is maintained between targeted work with specific groups and local community based provision.

12. Whilst young people attend specific groups that meet their individual needs they are encouraged to attend other programmes and many do. For example, young people from black and minority ethnic groups take part in the area youth forum as well as meeting as a group and pursuing their own interests.

13. Ten health clinics for young people are well integrated into provision. Youth workers and health professional's work together to provide a very good range of locally accessible services on sexual health, contraception and wider health matters. Information, advice and guidance provision is also effectively incorporated into the general youth work offer to young people as well as through the highly successful Bridge drop-in facility in the town centre. Mobile units are used well to engage young people in communities where there is a lack of provision.

14. Curriculum management and planning is good and this results in popular and relevant programmes with high levels of participation. The service has both well-established work and new projects that meet new needs and demands. Newer work is well researched and resources are redirected effectively to meet emerging priorities. Service planning considers local demographic information and takes account of young people's needs at every level. Youth work staff are familiar with planning and recording systems and use these well. Young people's issues and needs are systematically recorded at youth work projects and used to feed the content of the curriculum. As a result, the curriculum is closely tailored to what young people both want and need.

15. The deployment of staff is good. They receive regular supervision and support from their managers and an annual training programme is in place. There are good progression routes for staff and for young people who show an interest in becoming youth workers and who wish to develop their skills further.

16. The service has some excellent premises and resources such as the three modern well equipped mobile units, ICT facilities and a barge. However some buildings are historically located; others require upgrading and have poor lighting and signage. There is no clear strategy for improving and upgrading premises.

Key Aspect 3: Leadership and management

17. Leadership and management are outstanding. The service's goals reflect those of the local authority and partners. Elected members and officers are aware of the service's performance and value youth work provision highly.

18. The head of service provides exceptional leadership and has successfully aligned the youth service to the new council structure, kept senior managers well informed of the performance of the service and ensured that young people are at the heart of service development. Managers create a positive climate that is tightly focused on young people. They have an excellent knowledge and understanding of young people's needs and of the local and national priorities for youth work which are incorporated effectively into service delivery. The service is funded below the level of similar authorities but has a high level of external funding well matched to the priorities of the area.

19. The range of partnerships is extensive: they significantly extend the breadth and impact of the work. They are closely monitored and the service is flexible and responsive to new demands. The service delivers Connexions services through 11 personal advisers who link well with youth work staff. Needs assessment is good and planning takes account of the issues effecting young people and involves them in the process.

20. Management information systems are reliable and produce very good data which the service uses well. The systems are effectively operated by administrative staff. Management information helps youth work staff review their work and feeds into curriculum planning. Quality assurance processes are extensive and well developed. Regular observations of youth work sessions by managers give them very good information on the quality of work and ensure they are well aware of the issues effecting young people. Young people are central to reviewing local provision. They have devised their own criteria for assessing youth work projects, visit regularly and feedback their findings. Action plans and improvements flow from these visits.

21. A good range of policies and procedures are in place to ensure the health, safety and welfare of staff and young people. Staff are competent in dealing with child protection matters and well trained. Good progress has been made on

meeting Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) 2001 requirements. Young people with learning difficulties and disabilities have visited all youth work projects and undertaken their own audit of provision commenting on the programme offered, the attitude of staff, on displays and on the overall environment. The service effectively meets the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. The understanding of those with different backgrounds and from different communities is effectively encouraged through displaying positive images, bringing together different groups and implementing specific learning programmes.