

Youth Work in Cornwall

Cornwall Children's Services Authority Area

Age group: All

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Introduction

1. Cornwall has a population of 524,200 people of which 45,849 are 13-19 years old. Around 1% of the population in Cornwall are of minority ethnic origin. Youth Cornwall is the newly formed integrated youth support service which is located within the Children, Young People and Families Directorate of Cornwall County Council and has been operational since April 2008. Two operations managers lead Youth Cornwall working directly to the Assistant Director, Secondary, Post 16 and Youth.
2. Youth work is delivered by three area team in 28 youth centres and projects, and four information advice and guidance shops. There is extensive partnership working with Cornwall Youth Partnership which is an umbrella organisation for the voluntary sector and the Local Authority Controlled Company has managed the Connexions contract for Cornwall since April 2008. The staffing for Youth Cornwall is 72 full-time equivalent posts. The budget provided by the local authority is £3.45 million with additional external funding of £870,000 in 2008-09. Youth Cornwall makes contact with 27% of young people aged 13-19; 81% of these participate in the provision.
3. This inspection was carried out under section 136 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, which provides that the Chief Inspector may inspect particular local authority functions. The joint area review (JAR) was enhanced to enable coverage of youth work.

Part A: Summary of the report

Main findings

4. The quality of youth work provision in Cornwall is adequate. The local authority sufficiently secures youth work. There is a strong commitment from the local authority to increase youth work provision in the county but it does not communicate clearly a vision and plan for the future. Following recent changes in management there is adequate leadership of the service and morale is showing signs of improving. The standard of young people's achievement is adequate and they make satisfactory progress in their personal and social development. Young people gain useful skills in particular in decision making and music. The quality of youth work is adequate overall with effective work on confidence building and young people recognising the implications of risk taking behaviour. Some good support is provided to encourage young people to participate in education and training post-16. However, there are too many sessions which are solely recreational in nature, lack challenge and provide insufficient opportunities for young people to gain new skills and progress. Workers form strong and supportive relationships with young people and use a good range of methods and styles of youth work to match young people's needs. These include open youth work, mentoring, counselling, and detached and project work. There is some creative work with young people with learning difficulties, young people who are looked

after and young people with mental health problems. Accommodation is adequate overall but there is insufficient access to Information and Communications Technology (ICT). There are many examples of effective partnership working with the voluntary sector to extend youth work provision. Youth workers are very well trained for their roles. Quality assurance systems are not rigorous and do not focus sufficiently on young people's achievement and progress. Young people are not sufficiently involved in planning, delivering and evaluating provision.

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	Leadership and management	2

*Inspectors make judgements based on the following scale
4: excellent / outstanding; 3: good; 2: adequate/satisfactory; 1: inadequate*

Strengths

- Young people engage well in programmes and respond with enthusiasm.
- A good range of methods is used to deliver youth work.
- Some well used centres provide a highly responsive and attractive programme.
- Partnership working is strong.
- A very high proportion of youth workers are well trained.

Areas for development

- Bring greater clarity and detail to strategic and operational planning.
- Increase the opportunities for young people to plan, deliver and evaluate the provision.
- Ensure that youth work practice is more consistent and better focused on improving outcomes for young people.
- Improve quality assurance systems and practice.

- Extend access to ICT for staff and young people.

Part B: Commentary on the key aspects

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

5. Achievement is adequate. Young people attend projects and sessions regularly and in the majority there is a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere. Young people engage well in programmes and respond with enthusiasm.

6. There is effective work to promote safe sex practices and young people have good access to information on risky behaviours. The C card provides access to condoms and accompanying guidance at the majority of youth work projects. At Bodmin youth project workers enable young people to think through consequences of their actions and make informed choices in relation to substance misuse. At Torpoint youth project young people develop self confidence and advocacy skills through engagement in anti-bullying work in school. In the small minority of inadequate sessions there were poor relationships characterised by a lack of respect for staff, a reluctance to participate in activities on offer and poor behaviour.

7. Young people engage effectively with decision makers through their involvement in the County Youth Forum and United Kingdom Youth Parliament although youth councils at local level involve small numbers of young people and have limited impact. At Porthleven young people voice their opinions well and influence decision makers through involvement in the skate park and a mosaic project resulting in improved facilities.

8. Youth workers engage effectively with young people who are not in education, employment or training through a good range of projects and styles of working. Mentoring supports young people in schools and colleges well and promotes course completion. Music is a strong feature of Youth Cornwall provision and young people learn musical instruments, song writing and performance skills through good participation in Cornwall Youth Music Action Group projects. Despite such strengths, young people are not sufficiently engaged in the development of programme or session planning beyond a basic consultation on their interests. They are not sufficiently involved in evaluation of youth work.

9. There is a good range of awards within the county to accredit young people's achievements but a significant number of workers are unwilling to embrace these awards and are failing to allow public recognition of young people's achievements. The performance of Youth Cornwall is significantly below the national benchmark in the proportion of young people gaining accreditation. More optimistically, the well-founded Cornwall Award is developed on the needs of local young people and works well to provide a focus and structure to develop and record positive learning experiences.

10. The quality of youth work is adequate. Youth workers are skilled at forming trusting and caring relationships to engage and support young people with a wide range of needs. In the best sessions, they successfully deliver programmes which are fun and engaging, relate to young people's interests and enable learning to take place. Yet too many sessions are recreational in nature and do not provide sufficient challenge for young people. In these instances, workers have limited aspirations for young people and do not always plan clear outcomes. As a result young people are not afforded sufficient opportunities to develop new skills.

11. Workers are inclusive in their approach to young people and there is some good work to support vulnerable young people. Creative work takes place with young people with learning difficulties and those who are looked after. However, there is insufficient promotion of equality and diversity within programme content with particular gaps in anti-racism and work with gay, lesbian and bi-sexual young people.

Key Aspect 2: Quality of curriculum and resources

12. The curriculum offer is broad. The greatest contribution to the *Every Child Matters* outcomes is to 'being healthy' and 'enjoying and achieving'. There is a good range of approaches and styles of working. Creative use of mentoring, counselling, group work, detached and open youth work as well as the SHARE services provide a rich tapestry of service delivery. The curriculum framework is well conceived and provides a good model for planning youth work, however it is not used consistently by workers.

13. Youth Cornwall provides a good range of educational leisure time activities as well as targeted support at some centres such as K2, Wadebridge and Fourways. The offer is responsive, flexible and designed around the needs of young people. These centres make provision that is well rooted in the local community and provide good models on which to build; they are increasingly open at weekends and times young people choose.

14. All youth workers are well qualified for their roles. There has been extensive training for youth workers in recent years with good attention to mandatory and optional training for different roles. The programme was cut last year and a training budget has only recently been re-secured; the training plan for the year is still therefore to be developed. Access to training for administrative staff is poor and morale is low following significant increases in their workload.

15. The quality of buildings is adequate and the majority meet health and safety and SENDA requirements. Most are adequately equipped although there is poor investment in ICT and limited resources for programme delivery.

Key Aspect 3: Leadership and management

16. Adequate strategic and operational leadership is now being provided to Youth Cornwall since the restructuring of the management team. The vision for Youth Cornwall is strong and based on a commitment to providing a comprehensive youth offer and increasing the amount of youth work provided. There are good strategic arrangements to ensure that the development of Youth Cornwall is in line with wider developments across Children and Young People's Services. Plans however for the transformation to an integrated youth support model lack detail and resources are not aligned to the identified priorities in the creation of Youth Cornwall. The basis for the reallocation of resources to achieve increased services is not evident and there is no clear articulation of the shape of future services. The creation of a new commissioning post is planned to help address this.

17. At operational level the vision for integration and the necessary detail of what this will mean for individual workers is poorly communicated. There has been very low morale within the staff team and although this is now starting to improve there remains a level of scepticism and uncertainty about the future shape of services and individual roles.

18. There are adequate safeguarding checks made on volunteers and new staff appointments. Youth workers are sufficiently aware of safeguarding procedures and there is a good attention to health and safety requirements.

19. There are long standing and strong partnerships with a good range of statutory and voluntary sector organisations which are highly valued and extend provision.

20. Systems are in place to engage partners in consultation at a strategic level but communication at an operational level is less well developed. The voluntary sector enjoys strong support from the Local Authority to develop the wider workforce and there is good access by it to training and professional development.

21. The local authority is developing its commissioning role across children and young people's services. In its approach to youth work it envisages engaging new and existing third sector providers to provide specific programmes and activities. Progress on this front has been slow with a budget not yet allocated to support such planned changes. Some areas of the county are significantly better served than others for youth work provision. Connexions is a key contributory element of Youth Cornwall and the contract has been secured. Arrangements to monitor both contract compliance and quality are emerging at a satisfactory rate.

22. Quality assurance systems are well established but do not have a sufficient focus on evaluating the quality of youth work or the standards of young people's achievement. Self assessment lacks critical appraisal and the extended management team does not have a sufficiently detailed or rigorous approach to monitoring the quality of youth work provision. There is no involvement of young people within the quality assurance framework.