

City of London Youth Service Report

City of London Children's Services Authority Area

Age group: All

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Introduction

1. The City of London provides youth work through the Integrated Youth and Connexions service which operates within the Youth and Play service. The service has 20 staff (equivalent to some nine full-time posts) including one youth and play manager, two senior youth and play practitioners, one youth practitioner, one youth participation worker, two part-time youth practitioners and nine part-time youth workers. In 2006/07, the budget allocated by the local authority was £256,700, with additional external funding of £265,500 and a further £100,000 from the Youth Opportunities and Youth Capital Funds.

2. The Joint Area Review (JAR) was enhanced to enable coverage of youth work. The service's self-assessment and key documentation were reviewed and meetings held with staff, partners and volunteers. A sample of youth work sessions was observed.

Part A: Summary of the report

Main findings

Effectiveness and value for money

3. The City of London values its youth work provision highly and provides a good youth service. The service has expanded its staffing in the past two years from one full-time professional to five. A high and increasing proportion of City residents aged 13 to 19 participate in youth provision, along with young people from neighbouring boroughs. The City of London provides a good level of funding and staff secure significant additional funding. The service provides good value for money. Young people's achievements are good and an increasing number gain accreditation for their learning. The overall quality of youth work practice is satisfactory. Some very good work provides successful support for young people, but insufficient planning and evaluation makes other provision less effective. A broad curriculum is available. Managers provide a clear strategic direction and have a good understanding of how to improve further the quality of provision.

Strengths

- Participation by young people is very high and their achievements are good.
- Staff develop very good relationships with young people and give effective personal support.
- The curriculum is broad and includes well planned summer activities.
- The close working between Connexions and youth workers enables good information, advice and guidance to be provided in youth work settings.

- Managers provide clear strategic direction and have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the service.

Areas for development

- Planning and evaluation are superficial in a minority of sessions.
- Young people are not sufficiently involved in running and evaluating provision.
- Observation of the quality of youth work is not sufficiently rigorous.

Key aspect inspection grades

	Key Aspect	Grade
1	Standards of young people's achievement	3
	Quality of youth work practice	2
2	Quality of curriculum and resources	3
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 overall to the outcomes for young people. A healthy environment is provided for young people and youth work includes healthy eating options, sexual health and relationship education. Centres promote an awareness of risks to safety through discussion of topics including bullying and drugs education. A recent project helped young people make sure their bicycles are maintained correctly for road safety. The service focuses appropriately on safe use of the Internet. Comprehensive risk assessments are carried out for all external trips and residential activities. Child protection procedures are in place and workers are aware of what to do in the event of any concerns being raised. However, there has not been any child protection training for youth service staff for two years. Young people derive much enjoyment from their work with the service and levels of accreditation are high. Young people are involved in decision-making through an active Youth Forum, although they are not involved sufficiently in running their clubs at a local level. The service works well in partnership with many organisations to reduce anti social behaviour. The

contribution of the service to the economic well being of young people is very good.

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 good. At 32 %, participation rates are very high for young people resident in the City and those living in neighbouring boroughs. Young people have a very good relationship with staff and derive much enjoyment from attending provision. They talk with confidence about their learning and make considerable gains in personal development and self-esteem. Members of the Youth Forum play an active role in coordinating the funding bids of young people, displaying a mature and socially aware approach to their work. Residential trips develop team-building skills and young people benefit enormously from their experience of a rural environment whilst acquiring skills in outdoor pursuits such as caving and orienteering. An innovative textiles fashion project carried out by the City Girls' group enabled the young women to make clothes of their own design and exhibit them with a show and photo shoot.

6. A high and increasing proportion of young people gain accreditation for their work, obtaining certificates of achievement and formal qualifications such as sports coaching awards. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme is well-established in the City and popular, with innovative work taking place to engage young people who were homeless and now live in temporary accommodation.

7. The quality of youth work practice is satisfactory. The best work occurs in work targeted on the needs of specific groups, where young people participate fully in interesting and varied activities. The close integration of the youth and Connexions' service offers young people high-quality information, advice and guidance in a youth work setting. Intervention to help young people takes place early, often avoiding the need to involve specialist services. Partnership work is strong and leads to effective learning. For example, a crime and disorder reduction project raised the awareness of young people as they worked alongside the police, fire brigade and other emergency services.

8. The less effective sessions are characterised by superficial planning and evaluation. Managers acknowledge this and have plans to improve the quality of all sessions through staff training and a re-structuring of staff teams.

Key Aspect 2: Quality of curriculum and resources

9. The quality of the curriculum and resources is good. The small service offers a broad range of activities that fully contributes to the Every Child Matters agenda. The summer scheme comprises many varied activities and is highly regarded by young people. General youth clubs take place at four shared sites across the City

in easily accessible locations, although there is limited work at weekends. Youth workers are well-qualified and experienced. Information technology and the Internet are used well to promote learning at some clubs. However, the service has limited specialist equipment and resources are not shared sufficiently between centres. Twice as many young men as young women participate in the service. To address this gender imbalance, a girls-only club meets the needs of the mainly Bangladeshi girls who are not encouraged by their parents and carers to attend mixed-gender clubs.

10. Equality and diversity issues are considered carefully. The needs of the relatively low number of vulnerable young people resident in the City, such as those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are met well. Appropriate activities are considered on an individual basis and young people are directed to specialist services when appropriate. A new curriculum framework has been developed, but insufficient staff training has taken place to ensure it is used properly.

Key Aspect 3: Leadership and management

11. Strategic and operational management are good. The service receives a high level of funding from the local authority and secures a relatively large amount of external funds. However, due to the small size of the service, it is difficult to make economies of scale; staffing and resources at a local level are no more than adequate. Managers recognise the need to increase the use of performance indicators to evaluate the cost effectiveness of its work more rigorously.

12. Young people are involved closely in decision-making at a corporate level through an active Youth Forum and well-attended youth democracy events. They are not involved sufficiently at a local level in the running of clubs or evaluating provision. Managers have an accurate view of the quality of youth work practice through informal contact, but recorded observations of youth work practice are not carried out systematically. Performance management and supervision takes place regularly and is valued by staff. A healthy environment is provided and comprehensive risk assessments are carried out. Safeguarding arrangements are sound.

13. The service is showing a trend of improvement, with a growth in full-time staff, high and increasing numbers of young people participating in the provision and better achievement by young people. Managers have a clear strategic direction and a sound understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of their service. Many of the problems identified by inspectors are acknowledged by managers in their self-assessment and business planning documents and appropriate actions are planned to improve the situation.