

Youth Work in the London Borough of Camden

London Borough of Camden Children's Services Authority Area

Age group: All

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Introduction

1. Camden Youth and Connexions Service (YCS) is located within the Access and Inclusion Division of the Children, Schools and Families Directorate in Camden. The service is coupled with the Youth Offending Service and is responsible for the Positive Activities for Young People (PAYP) programme. There is a single head of the YCS service. The YCS also commissions programmes and activities from 25 partners in the voluntary and community sector. The 13 to 19 year old population in the borough is 15,000 of whom 15% participate regularly in youth work activities and 37% are reached by these services. Young people of Black and minority ethnic heritage constitute 45% of the population.

2. The head of service is supported centrally by three youth work service managers. Between them they manage five geographical areas and each has additional responsibilities which include cross-borough work for disability, detached work, accreditation, participation, the Youth Opportunities Fund., curriculum, Summer University and PAYP. The senior team also comprises a finance manager and a Connexions service manager, responsible for the under 25s advice and guidance centre. The head of service, and two of the service managers, have been in post since April 2007. Youth work is supported by 46 full-time equivalent (fte) staff of which 19 are full-time and 43 part-time. For 2007-08, the YCS has a total budget of £4.53 million of which almost £2 million constitutes external grant funding. The YCS allocates £268,000 to commission youth work activities and programmes from voluntary and community sector providers.

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 provided in Camden is adequate overall with some good features; the council sufficiently secures youth work. The service makes very good use of activities and centres commissioned from the voluntary sector. The council supplements this work well with cross-borough initiatives including an effective detached team and a well attended Summer University programme. Overall, the range and diversity of opportunities is broadly responsive to young people's needs and ensures there is a good range of places to go and things to do in the borough. Although activities reflect the cultural diversity of the local community they are not well promoted to some vulnerable groups. Achievement and youth work practice are adequate and in a few instances very good. Young people make good progress in their personal and social development. Buildings, and resources, are of acceptable quality with good provision in some areas. Although a new curriculum has been developed it is not yet well established. Too

few youth workers remain adequately qualified and there is insufficient investment in continuing professional development. Opportunities to share good practice across the borough are limited. Significant changes to senior managers and its location within the council's structures places the service well to contribute to the development of an integrated approach. The service has good advocacy by elected members and scrutiny is now good. Quality assurance procedures are satisfactory and good progress has been made recently in the collection, analysis and use of data. Criminal Records Bureau, and other checks, are systematically undertaken and closely monitored by the council and relatively minor flaws in the YCS and voluntary sector are being tackled.

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 make significant gains in their self-confidence and personal and social development.
- Youth workers know the young people, and their communities, with whom they work, well.
- A broad and diverse range of projects and activities are in place with some very good specialist provision.
- Engagement with voluntary sector providers and other agencies is very good.

Areas for development

- Increase the involvement of young people in developing, monitoring and evaluating all aspects of the work of the service.
- Increase significantly the proportion of the workforce that is appropriately qualified.

- Provide greater access to appropriate continuing professional development for youth support workers/fractional staff.
- Develop and implement an action plan to support the move towards integrated youth services.

Part B: 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 achievements is adequate overall. Young people often make good progress in aspects of their development as a result of their involvement in youth work programmes but do not always have the opportunity to set sufficiently challenging targets for further learning. The majority of young people are well motivated and engaged and enjoy participating in a range of activities that successfully develop their self-confidence, self-esteem and personal and social development. Programmes such as the Summer University enable a large number of young people to acquire knowledge and gain new skills. Young people feel safe and understand the standards of behaviour expected of them. Relationships between young people and youth workers are good.

6. Young people participate in consultation events and help to plan and evaluate work in some centres and activities. In such cases, they develop good social and political skills but such opportunities are inconsistent across the service. The Youth Opportunity Fund enables young people to contribute to effective decision-making in their own communities and members have been trained to evaluate youth work. At New Horizons, young people have participated in the management committee. Area youth forums are being developed. Small numbers of young people participate as peer motivators and peer educators and a Youth Council steering group is planning elections for early in 2008.

7. Youth workers are flexible in responding to the changing needs of young people. They are inclusive in their practice and committed to engaging with underachieving and vulnerable young people. Generally, youth workers understand the educational principles of youth work but not all have the necessary skills to implement them. Planning and evaluation are inconsistent and on a few occasions superficial.

8. Good practice was observed in open access sessions as well as targeted and specialist provision. In these sessions, there was positive recognition, recording, accreditation and celebration of young people's achievements. In the better practice, young people agree challenging targets with youth workers and their achievement is meaningfully recorded and monitored. These features are absent from the weaker practice which offers only limited opportunities for young people to evaluate their achievements and identify new learning outcomes as a result.

9. There are some examples of effective use of accreditation, for example, through the 7 O'clock Club. Generally, youth workers have insufficient understanding of processes underpinning accreditation and on occasions work is set at too low a level. Systems for tracking young people's progress are not consistently applied.

10. The well developed Detached Project and the innovative Under 25's Advice Centre provide effective examples of youth work practice that empowers young people to take the lead in their learning, and advocates on their behalf. However, there are insufficient opportunities for this good practice to be shared across the service.

Key Aspect 2: Quality of curriculum and resources

11. The quality of curriculum and resources is adequate. The service, and its partners, provide a significant number of broad and diverse projects and activities weekly, with some good specialist activity for example for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The service is responsive to the needs of young people from a wide range of backgrounds. Workers make good use of their knowledge of young people to offer appropriate activities. Care is taken to ensure that activities do not replicate existing provision in the area. However, whilst generally inclusive and aware of the need to engage more young women and vulnerable white boys in its activities, the service does not promote itself well to some key vulnerable groups such as young carers, looked after young people, new arrivals and young people who are gay, lesbian, bi-sexual or transgender.

12. Curriculum planning is linked to *Every Child Matters* outcomes and much of the learning content is related appropriately to local priorities and young people's interests. A new curriculum document and toolkit has been developed since April 2007 but implementation and assimilation of these by staff are at an early stage. Not all workers in the statutory and voluntary sector have received appropriate training. The new framework is designed to improve consistency in the quality of provision and a greater focus on the impact of work on learning outcomes. However, it does not tackle the opportunities and implications of imminent integrated working with colleagues in Connexions, the Youth Offending Service and other agencies.

13. The quality of resources available to support activities is good and these are well respected by young people. The Somers Town youth club has excellent facilities including an outstanding fitness suite. Access to information and communications technology is good. All centres are broadly compliant with the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 in providing mobility and toilet access, other than at Coram Fields, a voluntary sector provider, which is being redeveloped. Whilst there is a commitment to encourage young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to engage in mainstream provision, insufficient attention is given to providing appropriate adaptations to resources and equipment.

14. The number of qualified youth workers is inadequate: an issue reported by Ofsted in a previous inspection in 1999. Only eight out of 19 full-time staff and 14 out of 43 youth support/fractional staff are appropriately qualified. The new management team has recognised the urgent need to improve this situation but no strategy is in place. Whilst workers in the statutory and voluntary sectors have good access to the council's corporate training programme and the Children, Schools and Families Directorate (CSF) programme, funding and access to continuing professional development specifically related to youth work are poor. The staff development policy does not reflect the needs of the youth support workers staff.

Key Aspect 3: Leadership and management

15. Leadership and management are adequate with some strong features. The new political administration advocates well for youth work and scrutinises the performance of the service. Members made available significant additional funding this and last year to what is already a well resourced service. Since establishing the CSF, the council has taken appropriate action to stabilise and improve the youth service following a period of significant change at senior level. The new senior management team has introduced a more systematic and effective approach leading to improved consistency in the planning and delivery of youth work. In general, managers are aware of the strengths and areas for improvement in the service.

16. A broad strategic view for the future of integrated support services for young people from April 2008 is in place and provides a satisfactory framework for extending universal and targeted services. The emerging arrangements offer good opportunities to integrate the work of the Youth Offending Service, Connexions and the youth service and to incorporate what is available to young people within wider council services including culture and leisure. However, an implementation action plan has yet to be developed and a significant number of full-time and youth support workers/fractional staff are not sufficiently aware of the processes taking place to shape the new service. Although the youth service and Connexions have been jointly managed for some years, there is no formal integration of the work.

17. The partnership between the statutory and voluntary sector adds significant value to the overall provision. Assessment of needs across the borough is adequate but does not make sufficient use of information available in local areas. A recent review of provision, which involved some young people, is informing planned developments and the commissioning of services but has left some providers anxious about the future. The developing Youth Provider groups offer an invaluable opportunity to share ideas and learning. A productive relationship with the Community Safety partnership and the police has enabled youth workers to contribute to reducing anti-social behaviour. Less effective progress has been made in engaging with schools and the primary care trust.

18. New arrangements for the collection and analysis of data have been introduced and the service is more confident of its claim of contact with 37% of young people. However, it recognises more needs to be done to ensure accurate information is recorded from activities and centres and that management information systems are sufficiently robust to provide useful data to inform developments.

19. Performance targets are negotiated with all clubs and centres. A target to ensure 40% of those attending programmes are young women is aspirational. Activity/centre plans vary in their quality. The Detached Team is a model of good practice.

20. The service applies appropriately corporate performance management arrangements. Regular and challenging supervision is in place for all full-time and youth support/fractional staff. Observation of practice by senior managers is recent and inconsistently applied. In the best practice written records are evaluative but few provide recommendations for improvement. Senior workers and leaders do not sufficiently apply the principles of value for money when evaluating their work. Not enough opportunities exist to identify and share good practice. Young people are not yet sufficiently involved in the planning, development and quality assurance of youth work. A draft participation strategy is at an early stage of development. CRB and other checks are systematically undertaken and closely monitored by the council: relatively minor flaws within the YCS and voluntary sector are being tackled.