



# Calderdale Youth Service Report

Calderdale Children's Services Authority Area

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**Better  
education  
and care**

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## Introduction

1. Calderdale youth service operates a range of projects and provision across the council area, including 33 youth centres and clubs, 18 detached and outreach projects, an information shop, an outdoor activity centre, and work in schools, the pupil referral unit (PRU) and Calderdale College. It has five management staff, and 53 full-time equivalent staff made up of 35 full-time and 134 part-time youth workers. In addition is a Connexions-funded team of two full-time personal advisors, 2.5 positive activities for young people (PAYP) key workers and a team leader. The service is located within the services to students and communities section of the local authority. The budget made available by the local authority in 2004–05 was £2.3 million. It is estimated that 37 per cent of young people aged 13–19 are reached annually by the service.

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 key service documentation and carried out direct observation of a small sample of youth work sessions throughout the area, including north Halifax, as part of the JAR neighbourhood study area.

## Part A: Summary of the report

### Main findings

#### Effectiveness and value for money

3. Calderdale borough council provides an adequate youth service for its users and offers satisfactory value for money. The local authority provides good strategic leadership but some aspects of curriculum leadership and quality assurance are weak. The service provides a broad range of provision and works effectively with a wide range of partners to extend the programmes available for priority groups. Opportunities for young people to contribute to decision-making in the wider community are underdeveloped. The service's self-assessment report accurately identified the main strengths and weaknesses of the provision, but inspectors did not agree with the grades awarded to each of the key aspects and for the service overall.

#### Strengths

- Young people have a broad range of provision.
- Partnership working is productive.
- Project and targeted work is effective.
- Good use is made of external funding.

## Areas for development

- There are insufficient opportunities for young people to become involved in local democracy and the management and evaluation of youth service.
- Curriculum planning and management of generic centre-based provision is weak.
- Quality assurance lacks rigour.
- Insufficient attention is paid to equality and diversity within the content of generic youth work programmes.

## 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

4. The service makes a good contribution to outcomes through its project work and provision for priority groups. Detached work, projects and targeted work in youth centres help young people to achieve their potential through programmes and activities that are accessible, relevant and challenging.

Youth service managers work well with other agencies to offer responsive programmes for young people that provide initial information and advice services and referral to specialist agencies for those who need it. Work with schools and the college helps to prepare young people for employment or the move to further education. Good quality provision for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities and for looked after children is also provided. Opportunities for young people to contribute to decision-making in the wider community are underdeveloped.

## **Part C: Commentary on the key aspects**

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

5. From the sample of work observed, the overall standard of young people's achievement was adequate. In detached, targeted and project work it was often good, however in open access youth clubs standards were lower. Across the service, sporting activities were used effectively to improve young people's physical skills, self-confidence and their ability to work as a member of a team. During the school holidays, residential programmes, trips and creative arts activities – planned and organised by young people attending the UProject and PAYP activities – help participants to develop their listening and negotiating skills and to raise their aspirations to continue in full-time education. In generic youth clubs, the use of formal accreditation and informal methods of recording the achievement and progress of individual young people are underdeveloped. Although the service offers a good range of opportunities for young people to gain formal qualifications, the numbers who successfully complete these are low and declined last year.

6. The quality of youth work practice varies considerably across the service. The best sessions were well-planned and provided a good range of structured activities based upon workers' extensive knowledge of their communities. For example, at a girls' group attended by mainly Asian young women, youth workers provided a range of culturally sensitive activities for both newer and long-term members. These gave the participants the opportunity to develop their sewing skills, to engage them in helping to manage the centre by running the coffee bar and gave them the opportunity to take part in discussions on health and moral issues. Youth Works, a very effective detached and drop-in project provides support for some of the most vulnerable young people in several areas of Calderdale. One-to-one support from youth workers and referral to specialist agencies helps young people develop the skills to address problems in their lives, such as homelessness, drug use and lack of employment.

7. In contrast, where work was less good, youth workers were insufficiently aware of the needs of the young people attending and little or no attempt was made to apply a broader curriculum. In a number of centres, the programme did not vary from week-to-week and consisted of a limited range of recreational activities providing little opportunity for young people to learn new skills. In these sessions, youth workers often acted in a supervisory role and failed to challenge young people to help them to develop new skills, or to consider their attitudes and values.

## **Key aspect 2: Quality of curriculum and resources**

8. The service has a broad range of activities in a wide range of settings. This includes detached work, outdoor education, and work in youth centres, schools, the college and an information shop in a rural area. In addition, good quality projects are in place to meet the needs of priority groups, including young people at risk of dropping out of education, minority ethnic groups, looked after children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The extent of the provision has grown as result of the service's successful participation in a range of externally funded projects and multi-agency partnerships. These provide information and advice to young people on issues including sexual health, substance abuse and career options. Detached youth workers, working in partnership with community development officers and the police, have been successful in providing a programme which supports community cohesion.

9. Youth workers engaged in delivering targeted work provide a well-planned curriculum determined by the objectives of multi-agency partnerships or by the external funding body. This provides a good framework for them to develop programmes based on extensive needs analysis, which results in activities which young people find relevant, enjoyable and challenging.

10. The service's curriculum statement has been revised recently to describe a range of activities, which youth workers should provide, listed against each of the five *Every Child Matters* outcomes. However, youth workers have not been given sufficient support, guidance and training in how to implement this approach. Much of the curriculum in open access youth clubs is poorly planned and evaluated and insufficient attention is given to addressing equality and diversity.

11. Professional development and training have not been used effectively to improve the quality of youth work. Although the service has sufficient numbers of staff for the provision offered, some youth clubs rely on recently appointed part-time unqualified staff. Others are staffed by workers who have been with the service for a number of years and whose practice is not always up-to-date.

12. The quality of accommodation is variable, but youth workers use posters and decoration designed by young people to ensure that centres feel safe and welcoming. The Mixenden outdoor centre and youth club were in the final stages of refurbishment during the inspection. When finished they will provide a well-equipped facility for outdoor pursuits as well as a refurbished youth centre able to provide a modern curriculum, including IT. Some facilities, particularly for art and crafts, music and IT were underused, and there was a lack of centrally devised learning resources available to help youth workers to implement a wider curriculum. A review of buildings has been carried out to meet Special Educational Needs and Disability Act requirements, with the majority providing access for people with limited mobility.

### **Key aspect 3: Leadership and management**

13. Strategic leadership and management of the service are adequate. The youth service enjoys good strategic support from the local authority. The lead member for children and young people has been well-informed by senior managers about the issues the service faces. A thorough scrutiny of the service was carried out in early 2004, which accurately identified the strengths and weaknesses of the service. Expenditure on youth work by the local authority is high in comparison with services nationally. Although the service reaches a high proportion of young people aged 13–19, the cost per young person reached is significantly higher than the national average. Recent improvements in financial management are ensuring that resources are more effectively and efficiently deployed. Good use of external funding has extended the range of provision available.

14. Policies and procedures are in place for child protection and health and safety. The outdoor education centre is externally inspected and regulated. All new staff are checked by the criminal records bureau (CRB); however, arrangements for checking staff who have been with the service for a long period of time are unclear, and child protection training for youth workers has not occurred on a regular basis. Support to voluntary organisations enables them to access CRB procedures.

15. Overall day-to-day management of the curriculum is adequate. Inspectors agreed with the service's self-assessment that project work is well-managed but that there are weaknesses in the management of generic youth club provision. In 2004, the service management was restructured to address this by providing a greater focus on neighbourhood areas. In addition, systems for curriculum planning, quality assurance and performance management have been strengthened. However, these changes have not as yet had sufficient impact on the quality of generic centre-based provision.

16. Senior managers do not have sufficient amounts of reliable information to be able to carry out some aspects of their roles in relation to improving

standards. For example, much centrally held data on accreditation and attendance, which is collected manually, is not readily available or reliable.

17. Mechanisms for consulting with young people are not well-established across the service and the youth parliament is not representative of the wider community of young people in Calderdale. The members of the executive have not been given sufficient support from the youth service to be able to carry out their respective roles to a good standard. There are insufficient opportunities for young people to become involved in management decisions in relation to the youth service.

18. Partnership working is strong and well-managed. Multi-agency working with the police, the PCT, the voluntary sector, and Connexions is very responsive to the needs of some of the most vulnerable young people in Calderdale and to the authority's priorities, such as the need to reduce the incidence of anti-social behaviour and to raise levels of educational attainment. Work with social services and schools is well-established and effective, but the respective roles and responsibilities of youth workers and other professional are not always sufficiently clear.