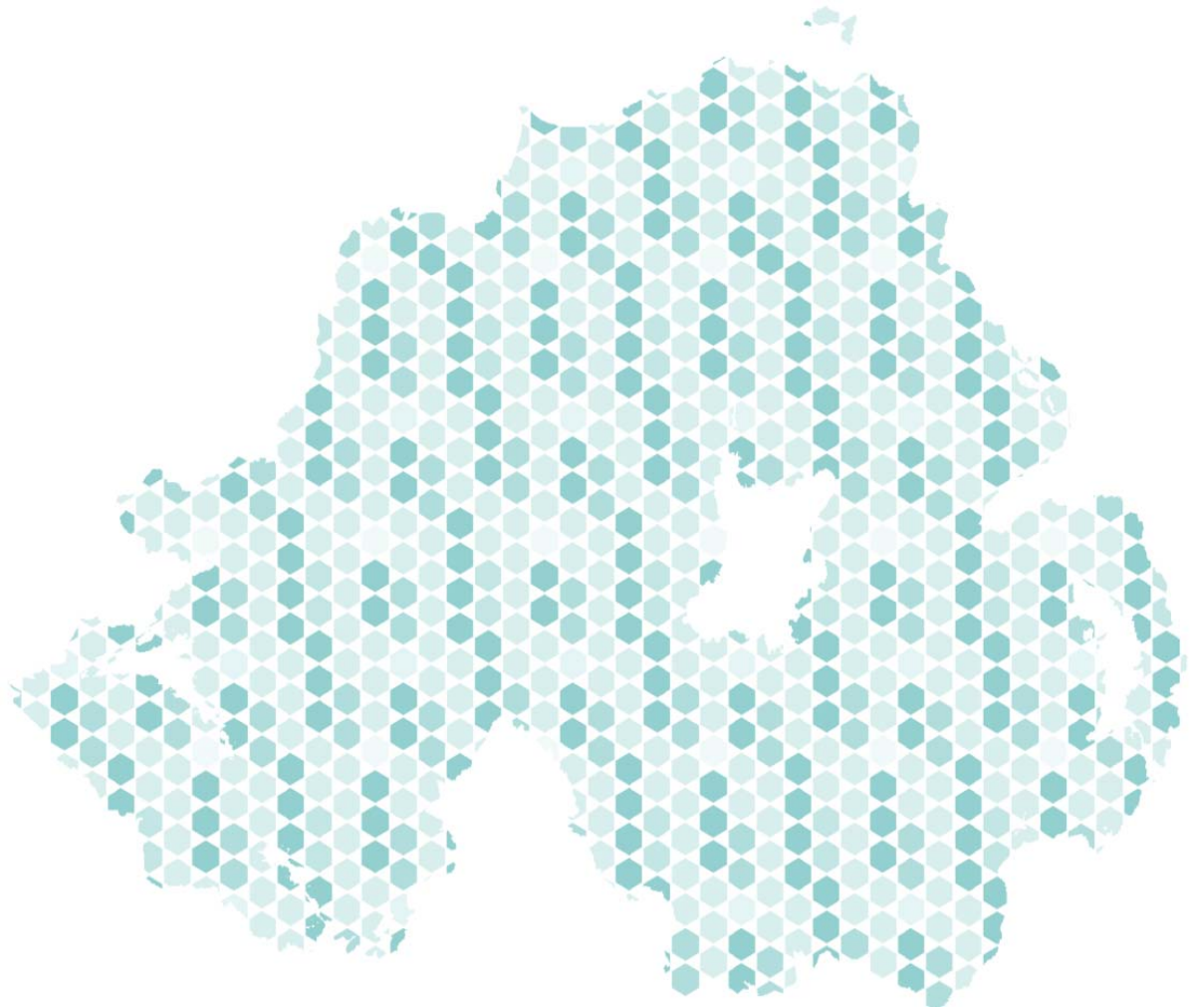


YOUTH INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

An Evaluation of the Belfast
Education and Library Board
Outreach Youth Provision

Report of an Inspection
in July-November 2009

CONTENTS

Section		Page
1.	CONTEXT	1
2.	CHILD PROTECTION AND PASTORAL CARE	2
3.	LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	2
4.	QUALITY OF PROVISION	3
5.	ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS	4
6.	SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS	4
7.	CONCLUSION	5

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75%-90%
A majority	-	50%-74%
A significant minority	-	30%-49%
A minority	-	10%-29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

In assessing the various features of the provision, Inspectors relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

1. CONTEXT

1.1 In 1995 the Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB) initiated a youth work apprenticeship scheme targeting the Upper Shankill and west Belfast areas. This initiative was a strategic response by the community and the BELB to address the lack of indigenous professionally qualified youth workers in the west Belfast and Shankill areas. It was initially funded by the Belfast Regeneration Office based on a partnership agreement with the respective community and political representatives. The Belfast European Partnership Board and the Department of Education (DE) provided subsequent funding to support and extend the apprenticeship scheme to a detached and outreach¹ youth work initiative to include east, north and south Belfast.

1.2 The BELB delivered 'in-house' training to all the newly-appointed outreach youth workers, who, in most instances, had voluntary youth work experience but no youth work qualifications. The BELB worked with the University of Ulster and the George Williams College in London to ensure that professional youth work training was available for the outreach youth workers. Currently, 45 outreach youth workers have attended university level training with the majority completing the Diploma in Community Youth Work. The outreach youth workers became an integral part of the area projects and are managed by the team leaders with the support of the Area Youth Officer (AYO).

1.3 In 2005, DE provided funding through the Executive Programme Fund to develop further the outreach youth work in all areas of Belfast. The funding was used to appoint two professionally qualified youth workers to each area project. The rationale for developing outreach youth provision in the BELB was based on the need to engage 14-25 year old young people who were not attending traditional youth work facilities within their local community, to empower them to participate in youth and community activities, and to foster better relationships among the young people and their community. These aims still remain the central focus for the delivery of the outreach youth provision.

1.4 In 2006-07 and 2007-08, the BELB was allocated an additional £250k each year for outreach youth work in north Belfast and the Shankill areas from the Department of Social Development through the Renewing Communities initiative. The intended outcomes for this initiative were refined to build the capacity of the young people to contribute more positively to their local community and to help reduce community tension and conflict.

1.5 Each outreach youth worker produces an annual plan of their expected key result areas, under the headings of the five themes of the BELB corporate plan, and in response to the identified needs of the young people. The BELB expects each area project to have a local steering committee which is representative of other youth providers and stakeholders within the local community, including political representatives. These local steering committees direct the work of the local area projects and subsequently decide the focus and delivery of the outreach youth provision.

¹ This will be referred to as outreach youth work throughout the remainder of the report.

1.6 The Department of Education has allocated the following funding to the outreach youth work initiative:

Year	Amount Allocated
2007-2008	£437,000 + £108,000 *
2008-2009	£670,000
2009-2010	£677,000

* This additional amount was allocated to employ four peer educators in south and east Belfast.

There are currently 13 outreach youth work posts located across the five area youth projects. Since 2005, funding has been on a yearly basis. The BELB report that the ongoing uncertainty over future funding has contributed to poor morale among outreach youth workers, a high turnover of experienced staff and difficulty in planning for future delivery.

1.7 The inspection team held discussions with the acting Assistant Senior Education Officer, one AYO and each of the area team leaders. Inspectors observed practice in three area projects and held discussions with a total of 50 young people.

2. CHILD PROTECTION AND PASTORAL CARE

2.1 The BELB has very good comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children and young people. These arrangements reflect well the guidance issued by DE. All staff employed by the BELB youth service have received appropriate recognised training.

2.2 The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the area projects is very good. Members of the inspection team held discussions with 23 young people and talked informally to other young people during observations. Almost all of the young people interviewed stated that they felt safe during the activities. The majority of the young people spoke positively about their experience of the outreach youth service. They appreciated in particular the opportunities to achieve accredited programmes and become more actively involved in their local communities.

3. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

3.1 The current outreach youth work is supported well through the structure of the area projects. The outreach youth workers have good local knowledge and they use their key result areas to plan for their work in response to the identified needs of the young people and the community. The intended outcomes of the short and longer term programmes are relevant and realistic. However, the monthly reports and annual reports tend to be descriptive and lack sufficient evaluation to demonstrate fully the extent of the young people's learning and achievements.

3.2 The team leaders do not record consistently or analyse sufficiently the level of participation and progression by the young people. The statistics often record only the number of contacts made with young people, rather than a record of the specific number of individual young people with whom the outreach youth workers have engaged, and the duration of the young people's participation in the subsequent programmes or activities. The

current limited statistical records do not provide adequate data to ascertain the full success of the programmes, to inform future planning and to lead to sustained improvement in the outreach provision. In the best practice, the team leader in one area project recorded the young people's level of participation over a four-year period and charted their achievements and accreditations in a range of relevant opportunities and experiences.

3.3 The team leaders of the area projects have responsibility for managing the work of the outreach youth workers, under the direction of the respective local steering committees, and with the support of the AYO's. The BELB youth service does not implement a coherent city-wide strategy across all of the area projects, or disseminate the good practice observed by the inspection team. The AYO's and team leaders do not sufficiently monitor, evaluate and record the outcomes for the young people and the extent to which the outcomes of the outreach work have been achieved.

3.4 The local steering committees for the west and north Belfast area projects have experienced some difficulties in sustaining an effective representative group of stakeholders and political representatives. The BELB youth service needs to recruit sufficient members for the steering committees to support all of the area projects.

3.5 The role of the local steering committee is central to the concept of the area projects. The members of the local steering committees have a substantial breadth of experience and involvement in their communities. They are enthusiastic and work on a consensual basis to respond to the needs of the young people. The local steering committees, which are operating effectively are good examples of how collaboration between statutory, voluntary and community groups can provide an effective partnership to address the needs of the young people. The area projects have good links with a range of fora including the West Belfast Partnership Board, Community Safety fora, Neighbourhood Renewal groups and, more recently, the Integrated Services Programme for Children and Young People in west Belfast. These links support and constructively challenge the work of the area projects, and in some instances, secures additional funding for services for the young people. The area project team leaders support the steering committees well through their good assessment of local needs and their effective presence within the community

4. QUALITY OF PROVISION

4.1 The quality of the outreach youth work observed by the inspection team ranged from satisfactory to very good. The outreach youth workers use a good range of recreational, educational, outdoor activities and issue-based programmes to meet the needs and aspirations of those young people who are not engaged in structured youth provision. There is a good range of creative group work processes. The outreach youth workers demonstrate very good interpersonal and group work skills with interventions, which support and challenge the young people to increase their knowledge and to make positive life choices.

4.2 The outreach youth workers assess the young people's needs well and respond to them appropriately. In one area project, for example, the team leader identified a specific group of young people who had been involved in outreach youth work, but who had not participated in training programmes. In response he organised a five-day residential training camp for 30 young people. The training camp was in partnership with Belfast Activity Centre, the Belfast Sports Development Unit and the Forum Against Substance Abuse.

4.3 The examples of very good outreach youth work practice are evidenced through activities in which the level of challenge is appropriate and well-matched to the needs of the group. In another area project, for example, nine young people working towards the Open College Network (OCN) Level One Trainee Leader Award, engaged positively in good relations work within their local community.

5. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

5.1 According to the documentation completed by each area project a small number of young people achieve recognised accreditation through, for example, OCN Trainee Leaders' courses and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. A significant minority of the young people also complete non-accredited training including peer mentoring, outward bound courses and international courses. The young people respond positively to the outreach youth workers and the staff of the area projects. They recognise and articulate well the benefits of participating in the extensive range of education and recreational activities. They identify their personal development in terms of greater self-esteem, overcoming challenges, becoming more resilient, and acquiring greater communication and problem-solving skills. They are also able to work more effectively with others.

5.2 The young people who had been involved in the five-day residential training camp acquired new and very specific skills through, for example, sampling sea-kayaking. They participated in a Drugs Awareness course and completed a personal journal, charting their thoughts and feelings in relation to their new experiences and challenges and reflected well on their learning.

5.3 The inspection team held discussions with 23 young people who had participated in the training camp and a group of six young women who were participating in an evaluation residential. Both groups of young people recognised the improvement in their self-esteem, thinking skills and capabilities. They are highly motivated to continue with their own personal development and to make a positive contribution to their own community through their commitment to various youth projects.

6. SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

6.1 The strengths of the provision include:

- the good range of the young people's achievements and, where appropriate, relevant accreditation;
- the progression of a minority of the young people to leadership roles within their local communities;
- the effective and creative response by the outreach youth workers to the needs of marginalised young people; and
- the commitment and effectiveness of the majority of the local steering groups, including the effective involvement of the team leaders.

6.2 The areas for improvement include the need:

- to implement a coherent city-wide outreach youth work strategy and a consistent approach by each area project;
- to record and analyse more rigorously the level of participation and the retention rate of the young people; and
- to develop more effective methods of evaluation of the outreach provision, to promote and sustain improvement.

7. **CONCLUSION**

In most of the areas inspected, the quality of the outreach youth provision is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh the areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in leadership and management; these areas need to be addressed if the needs of the young people are to be met more effectively. The Education and Training Inspectorate will, over the next 12 to 24 months, monitor and report on the organisation's progress in addressing the areas for improvement.

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2010

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part, except for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, provided that the source and date thereof are stated.

Copies of this report are available on the ETI website: www.etini.gov.uk

