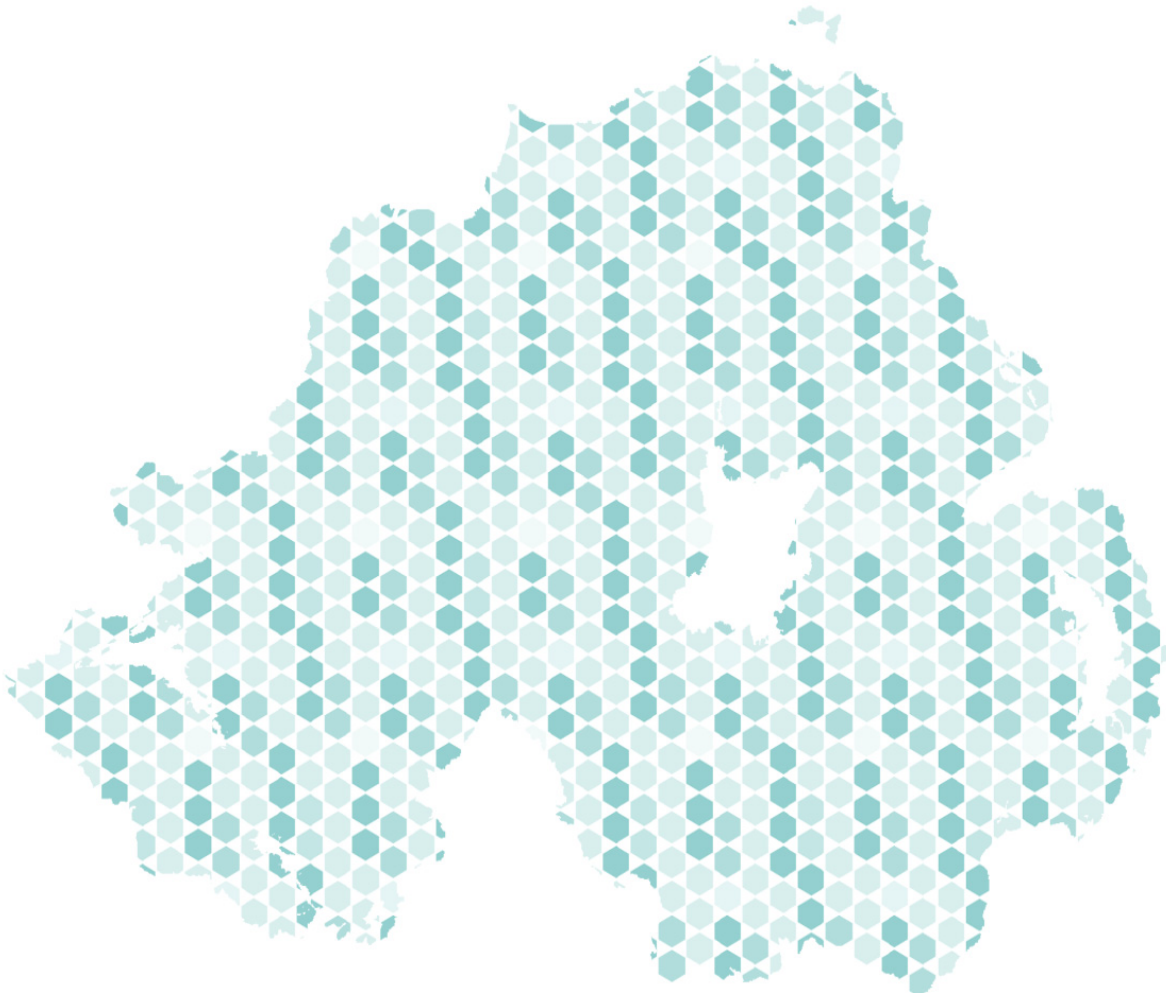


YOUTH INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Belfast Education and Library
Board Part-Time Youth Provision
in South Belfast

Report of an Inspection
in October 2011



Providing Inspection Services for
Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure



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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 The youth provision in south Belfast, funded by the Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB), includes: five controlled and three voluntary part-time youth centres, two voluntary full-time youth centres and the South Belfast Area project (SBAP). The inspection team visited each of the part-time youth centres, spoke to young people, staff and parents, and met with the youth officers from the BELB.

1.2 Most of the part-time youth centres operate in BELB-owned premises. The BELB also makes good use of two of the community centres owned by the Belfast City Council to provide youth work programmes. The part-time youth centres operate at least three sessions each week and are managed by a locally qualified part-time leader-in-charge. They provide a good range of programmes including: educational and recreational activities; issue-based discussions with young people in the older age range; and, play activities for primary school pupils. In almost all centres, the part-time youth workers and volunteers have been recruited from the local community and have received relevant training from the BELB.

1.3 The part-time youth centres have a total membership of 2,000 young people, receive 13% of the youth service budget and make a significant contribution to the overall youth provision in south Belfast. Sixty-seven percent of the registered members in south Belfast attend the youth provision regularly.

1.4 The South Belfast Area Project provides curriculum support and training for all the part-time youth centres. The BELB Curriculum Support Unit (CSU) has been deployed recently to assist the part-time leaders-in-charge in developing the capacity to evaluate their work and to provide clear evidence of the young people's achievements and progression.

2. FOCUS

2.1 The inspection focused on:

- the young people's achievements and standards;
- the quality of the provision; and
- the quality of the leadership and management, including processes for self-evaluation leading to improvement.

3. OVERALL FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

The quality of the provision provided by the part-time youth centres is good.

3.1 The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the BELB has demonstrated the capacity to address.

4. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

The quality of the young people's achievements and standards is good.

4.1 The young people enjoy a good range of educational and age-appropriate programmes. The programmes are planned to be enjoyable and have clear learning outcomes which support the young people's personal and social development. The young people value and enjoy social outings, including visits to the theatre. Through their participation in these activities the young people broaden their horizons, mix with their peers and other adults, and demonstrate their confidence in new environments.

4.2 The part-time youth centres involve the young people in planning to celebrate seasonal events and other events of note. The young people benefit from developing their planning skills through making props and costumes, providing music and taking photographs. They take responsibility for specific aspects of the programmes and show great commitment to complete the tasks on time. They make good use of these events to explore their cultural identity, to communicate and work with others, to solve problems and to improve their organisational skills.

4.3 Forty-four young people are participating in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. The young people learn how to transfer their skills to new and challenging environments, to build their emotional resilience and to demonstrate a strong determination to succeed. During the inspection, the SBAP were promoting the Millennium Volunteers Programme¹ and recruited a total of 25 young people from across most of the centres. The BELB are using this programme city-wide to recognise and harness the good level of volunteering by the young people and their positive contribution to their communities.

4.4 The young people participate enthusiastically in programmes, which challenge their views and offer alternative perspectives. The Old Firm Alliance project², which sets out to develop stronger communities, works well in partnership with BELB youth groups. Most of the part-time youth centres work enthusiastically alongside the Old Firm Alliance staff, to promote community relations among the young people and to improve their health and well-being through sport. The youth workers use this programme well to initiate cross-community work across the city. The young people report that they benefit from exploring contentious issues with their peers.

4.5 During the inspection, one centre was offering accredited training; ten young people were completing youth work training in preparation for assuming leadership roles. These young people are motivated by the prospect of contributing to their local community and developing their employability skills and career prospects. According to figures provided by the BELB, very few young people in south Belfast completed accredited training programmes during 2010-11. The BELB needs to increase the number of young people participating in relevant accredited training programmes.

¹ The Millennium Volunteers Programme is a UK wide initiative designed to promote and recognise sustained volunteering among young people aged 16 -24.¹

² The Old Firm Alliance project: This project is a community-led programme focussing on building and developing stronger communities funded through the Office of First and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) and Community Relations Council.

5. PROVISION FOR LEARNING

The quality of the provision for learning is good.

5.1 The quality of the youth work practice observed ranged from satisfactory to good, with a majority of the eight sessions observed evaluated as good. In a majority of the programmes, the staff prepare well for learning outcomes, which are matched well to the needs, ages and abilities of the young people. The staff listen to, and record, the young people's ideas for programmes and activities. These programmes and activities include issue-based work, looking at relevant social issues, and task-orientated activities which allow the young people to apply their skills and knowledge.

5.2 Most of the centres do not have a local steering group to support and guide their work, or that allows the young people to contribute more formally to the management of the centres. In the case of one centre, which has a joint management committee with a full-time centre in the area, it works well. The BELB needs to provide more formal participative opportunities, at an area level, for the young people to inform and influence decision-making about the youth provision in south Belfast.

5.3 The AYO has been strategic in introducing unit development plans to support the part-time staff to plan and evaluate their work more effectively. The framework is appropriate for the part-time youth provision and is consistent with those used by the full-time staff in the BELB. The consistency in the use of terminology is beginning to create greater coherence across the youth provision.

5.4 Most of the part-time staff understand and value the new process of planning and are motivated to improve their ability to evaluate their work. The part-time staff welcome the initial support from the CSU and find it practical and well suited to their needs. The staff are beginning to evaluate the outcomes for the young people and to plan better for improvement in the youth provision. They require additional training and support to implement the evolving quality assurance measures as required by the BELB.

The quality of the pastoral care is good.

5.5 The part-time staff make good use of the BELB guidance to manage the risk of out-of-centre activities. Most of the part-time staff live in the local community; they know the young people and their families well and are aware of the social issues that may have a negative impact on the young people. The part-time staff work hard to support young people who have experienced traumatic events in their families and local communities.

5.6 The young people engaged willingly with the Inspectorate team and were keen to talk about the good range of programmes which they enjoy. During discussions with the inspection team, young people spoke highly of the good quality of the pastoral care. The young people reported that they feel safe in the centres and are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety and well-being.

5.7 In one centre, the arrangements for young people leaving the premises alone are inadequate.

Safeguarding

5.8 The BELB part-time youth provision in south Belfast has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children and young people. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by DE, but the following areas need to be addressed: the BELB youth service needs to ensure that the safeguarding policy and procedures are displayed clearly in all centres, and communicated regularly to all parents and young people, in an easily-read format which can be clearly understood.

6. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of the leadership and management is good.

6.1 The AYO provides good leadership and sets high standards for the part-time youth provision in the area. He has devised a realistic strategic plan for all of the youth provision in south Belfast from 2010 to 2012. This plan outlines clearly how the part-time youth centres, the full-time youth centres and the outreach and detached projects will work together to meet the needs of the young people in the most deprived areas of south Belfast.

6.2 The AYO provides comments on the reports submitted by the part-time leaders-in-charge. These comments need to be more evaluative and based on sufficient first-hand observation of practice to assist the staff to plan better for improvement.

6.3 The AYO knows the community well and maintains effective links with local politicians and relevant stakeholders to highlight consistently the needs of the young people, and to secure additional resources. He has a good understanding of the staff and is sensitive to those who have been working in challenging circumstances.

6.4 The part-time leaders-in-charge are experienced and manage effectively the staff and volunteers. They are hard-working and motivated to improve the quality of the provision for the young people.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1 The quality of youth provision provided by the BELB in the part-time youth centres in south Belfast is good. There are important strengths in most aspects of the youth provision. The inspection has identified a few areas for improvement which the BELB has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the progress on the areas for improvement.

7.2 Areas for Improvement

There is a need for the BELB to:

- increase the number of young people participating in relevant accredited training programmes; and
- provide more formal participative opportunities for the young people to inform and influence decision-making about the youth provision in south Belfast.

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