



*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement*

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



Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Follow-up Inspection

Belfast Education and Library Board Youth Provision in the North Belfast Area

May 2011

FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF BELFAST EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD YOUTH PROVISION IN THE NORTH BELFAST AREA

The North Belfast area is one of four divisions within the Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB) youth service, managed directly by an Area Youth Officer (AYO).

The area inspection in April 2008 found the provision to be inadequate. It highlighted strengths in the wide range of activity-based programmes within youth centres; the good collaboration with external agencies to enhance the provision for, and the experiences of, the young people; and the high standards of care and support for the young people displayed by the youth workers.

The inspection identified the need for improvement in the following key areas:

- a review of the area plan to demonstrate the outcomes for young people;
- more effective strategic leadership and management to develop self-evaluation and monitoring procedures; and
- the continuing professional development of staff to improve their capacity to fulfil new and emerging roles.

In May 2009 a follow-up inspection found that the areas for improvement identified in the original report remained to be addressed and that there had been inadequate progress.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) carried out a further follow-up inspection in May 2011. The Inspectorate held discussions with the acting Assistant Senior Education Officer (ASEO), the AYO and youth work staff. The Inspectorate visited a representative sample of provision within the area, including the inspection of two full-time youth centres, and found that the quality of provision has improved.

In the interval since the inspection, the following actions which affect the youth provision within the area have taken place:

- the ASEO has provided good strategic direction to improve the quality of provision within the area;
- an additional youth officer has been appointed to support the management and delivery of the youth service across the BELB;
- a new AYO has been appointed, and he implements the agreed action plan well to address the issues identified in the original inspection;
- the two area projects in north Belfast have been merged and provide greater coherence and consistency to the quality of provision; and
- the BELB has produced clear expectations of area projects, highlighting appropriate methodology to support the young people's personal and social development.

The acting ASEO acknowledges the need to sustain the current staffing levels and to appoint a senior youth officer with responsibility for support and development. Due to the restrictions of vacancy control it has not been possible to fill this post.

The following are the most important improvements since the inspection:

- the current strategic plan and the area plan make good use of appropriate themes in the document 'A Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2006-2016' to inform a youth work delivery plan, with a clear focus on improving youth work delivery through more effective monitoring and evaluation;
- the full-time youth workers, observed during recent inspections, used their unit plans well to demonstrate the outcomes for the young people;
- the AYO provides evaluative comments on the plans and offers good support and challenge regularly through monitoring visits and supervision to maximise the benefits for the young people;
- the BELB has committed significant resources to establishing a full-time youth centre in Ballysillan to make better provision for the young people within the area;
- the BELB makes good use of its in-house curriculum support and training unit to deliver relevant training to staff, volunteers and youth people and to provide effective curricular support for staff which builds their self-esteem, and improves their programme planning and evaluation.

The quality of youth provision provided by the BELB in North Belfast is now good. The North Belfast area has important strengths in most of its provision. The inspection has identified the need for staff at all levels to sustain on-going monitoring and evaluation procedures to demonstrate the outcomes for the young people. The BELB has demonstrated the capacity to support this improvement. The Inspectorate will monitor the organisation's progress on the area for improvement.

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