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*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 West Belfast Area

November 2011

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

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

The area inspection in November 2009 found the provision to be satisfactory. It highlighted: the good quality and range of the external links which the AYO and the youth workers had established with other agencies; the good examples of the young people acquiring new skills, experiencing new opportunities and challenging their own values and beliefs to achieve their full potential; the good quality of the outreach and centre-based youth work which supported and promoted the personal and social development of the young people; and, the consistently good relationships among the young people, and between the young people and the youth workers.

The inspection identified areas for improvement, including the need:

- to develop the capacity within the BELB to provide strategic management of the youth service, and how it complements other services for young people;
- to develop more effective methods of evaluation of the outcomes for young people and action-planning processes, to promote and sustain improvement; and
- to provide formal, structured opportunities for the young people participating in youth programmes in west Belfast to influence the planning and the strategic direction of the youth service.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) carried out a follow-up inspection in November 2011. The Inspectorate held discussions with the Assistant Senior Education Officer (ASEO), the Senior Youth Officer (SYO) and the AYO. The inspection team met with the team leader of the west Belfast Area Project and observed an area youth worker working with a group of eight enthusiastic young volunteers, who support the work of the west Belfast Area Project. Almost all of these young people are enrolled in the Millennium Volunteer Programme.¹ The BELB is using this programme city-wide to recognise and harness the good level of volunteering by the young people, and their positive contribution to the youth service and their communities.

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

- the ASEO has developed the capacity within the BELB youth service to provide more strategic management and how it complements other services for young people;
- the BELB has appointed two new staff, an SYO with responsibility for operational management and an AYO; and
- the SYO has developed effective systems to evaluate the outcomes for young people and action-planning processes to promote and sustain improvement.

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

Although new systems to plan and evaluate youth work practice have been introduced, progress to date in the areas for improvement has been slow and the development of self-evaluation is at an early stage of development.

An 'Open Space' consultation took place in March 2010 to initiate dialogue and participative work at area level. Thirty-six young people from the statutory youth sector attended the event and made recommendations for further youth provision. These recommendations have not been implemented and no further area-wide consultation has been completed.

The follow-up inspection has identified the need for improvement in the following key areas:

- the review and implementation of the west Belfast area action plan by the AYO, to ensure that it is coherent, reflects clearly the priorities for the area and is communicated clearly to all staff;
- the monitoring and evaluation of the youth work practice by the AYO to promote further improvement; and
- more structured opportunities for the young people in west Belfast, at an area level, to influence and inform the planning and the strategic direction of the youth service, with a positive response to their suggestions.

The quality of youth provision provided by the BELB in west Belfast remains satisfactory. The inspection has identified the need for improvement in the management and evaluation by the AYO, and more opportunities for the young people to influence the planning and strategic direction of the youth service if the needs of the young people are to be met more effectively.

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