

YOUTH INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

North Down CFC,
Newtownards

Report of an Inspection
in January 2010

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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 North Down CFC (formerly known as Communityworks Youth Services) is a full-time voluntary youth organisation, which provides programmes for young people between the ages of 6-25 years, based in a warehouse in Newtownards. The organisation consists of a trust and five unincorporated associations: North Down CFC (a church); Blisters (a media club); Massive (a club for primary school pupils); Saturday Nite Project (a youth event for the 12+ age group); Reverb (a church youth group) and The Warehouse Open Centre (the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme). The South-Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB) recognises the North Down CFC as a level two¹ full-time voluntary youth group and provides financial support to employ the full-time youth worker and three part-time staff. The North Down CFC also receive additional financial support from the SEELB for programme development, premises and related costs. As a condition of funding, the SEELB expect the North Down CFC to submit a curriculum delivery agreement and complete evaluation and quality assurance reports each year. The SEELB Area Youth Officer attends the management committee meetings and completes monitoring visits to evaluate the quality of the youth provision.

1.2 The staff team consists of one full-time youth worker, five part-time youth workers, including two youth work students who are on placement from the Belfast Bible College, and 30 voluntary staff. North Down CFC runs a town centre café and operates five evenings each week in the warehouse, including outreach provision on Friday evening. It attracts young people from outside the town, including Dundonald, Bangor and Holywood. A significant minority of the young people are affiliated to the church and have participated in the North Down CFC for the past five years.

1.3 According to the figures supplied by the organisation the current membership is 771 (see Table 1). The North Down CFC acknowledges that the overall membership figures recorded for 2006/07 and 2007/08 are inflated as the young people enrolled in more than one programme. A minority of the membership is over 16. Statistical data is not available for the attendance of core members or the length of membership. The organisation states that it has retained the majority of its members over the last three years. A group of 49 young people, who are designated as peer mentors, have been involved in a leadership role with the North Down CFC during this time. During the inspection, there was an average nightly attendance of 46 young people engaged in age-appropriate programmes

Table 1

Membership	Male 4-9 yrs	Female 4-9 yrs	Male 10-5 yrs	Female 10-15 yrs	Male 16-18 yrs	Female 16-18 yrs	Male 19-25 yrs	Female 19-25 yrs	TOTAL
2006/07	156	100	208	282	163	86	10	4	1,009
2007/08	44	63	212	258	130	67	128	38	940
2008/09	90	87	200	123	33	27	8	7	575
Current Membership 2009/10	58	68	260	216	85	52	22	10	771

¹ The SEELB have assessed the North Down CFC as a key priority unit and provide level two sponsorship endorsement support.

1.4 The evidence for this inspection is based on the observation of ten youth work sessions and discussions with the full-time youth worker, ten part-time staff and ten volunteers, three members of the management committee, 50 young people, three parents and the Senior Youth Officer (SEELB). The inspection team examined relevant documentation for the organisation, including the strategic aims and the curriculum delivery evaluation and quality assurance reports for the year 2008-2009.

2. QUALITY OF PASTORAL CARE AND CHILD PROTECTION ARRANGEMENTS

2.1 The quality of arrangements for pastoral care in the organisation is outstanding. The key features of the pastoral care include: the consistently excellent working relationships between the young people and youth workers during the sessions observed, and the effective support systems and specialist help in place for young people experiencing personal difficulties. The designated child protection worker provides, on an annual basis, a comprehensive training package for all of the staff and the management committee. Members of the inspection team held discussions with over 20 young people about their personal safety and the arrangements for child protection. Almost all stated that they felt safe during the activities. The majority of the young people spoke positively about the programmes offered by the organisation and stated that their opinions were sought regularly and valued.

2.2 The organisation has very good comprehensive arrangements in place for the safeguarding of children and young people. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education.

3. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

3.1 The management committee provides very good strategic leadership. The members are committed to providing high quality youth work and utilise well the skills and expertise of the staff and the wider community, including members of the church. Almost all of the management committee are actively engaged in the process of continuous self-improvement through regular formal and informal meetings with staff. A majority of the committee members take an active role in the delivery of several programme areas; they have a clear focus on sustaining challenging and purposeful youth work activities. They have established effective open communication with all of the staff and provide regular support, encouragement and challenge.

3.2 The management and the staff have established a culture of consultation with the young people and their parents. They use a good range of methods to assess the needs of the young people engaged in specific activities including focus groups, the use of questionnaires, surveys, evaluations and interviews. Parents and other stakeholders, including the Ards Borough Council, are also consulted and the organisation has taken cognisance of specific issues and needs. During the summer period, for example, the North Down CFC hosts a six-week summer intervention programme in response to a request by the Borough Council. The organisation continually receives positive feedback and evaluations from the young people and their parents in relation to the relevance and quality of the programmes. The organisation also recognises the value of analysing the young people's evaluations and has demonstrated the capacity to sustain continuous improvement and to continue to raise standards.

3.3 The full-time youth worker provides effective curricular leadership through her support for the staff team and volunteers, who meet on a regular basis and have clear roles and responsibilities. The very good interpersonal skills and the strong personal commitment to their work which the staff and volunteers demonstrate, are particularly positive features of

the organisation. The staff are good role models for younger members, many of whom aspire to similar roles as they move through the various stages of leadership and involvement. The majority of the staff continues to develop their youth work and other relevant skills through successfully completing accredited courses, including those available through the SEELB.

4. QUALITY OF PROVISION

4.1 The quality of the youth provision is outstanding and meets well the needs of the young people and the wider community. The organisation provides five specific programmes each of which targets particular age groups. These programmes also provide the opportunity for progression in acquiring relevant skills and subsequently in developing leadership qualities (see appendix). The staff and volunteers plan thoroughly for the programmes, which reflect well the central theme and core principles of the youth work curriculum. They make good use of a generic session plan which promotes consistency and sustains improvement. This document sets out clear objectives and planned outcomes for the young people participating in the programme each evening. At the end of each session of the Massive Kids Club, for example, each young person receives a colourful summary of the main theme of the session, suggestions for follow-up activities to reinforce their learning, and activities to share with their parents. An evaluation at the end of each programme is an integral part of the session plan; it records from the young people, feedback and comments, which are used effectively to influence subsequent programmes.

4.2 The consistently high quality of youth work practice is very well illustrated through the innovative, high energy thematic programmes that make very good use of digital technology to promote learning. An outstanding feature of the Massive Kids Club, the Blisters Media Club and the Saturday Nite project, is the creative use of digital technology as a medium to deliver effective youth work and to target the specific needs of young people. For example, the Blisters Media Club attracts young people who are interested in gaming², which can be a solitary activity. However, in this environment it is purposefully planned to encourage good communication skills and team-work among the young people. The staff and volunteers are particularly skilful in matching challenging and contemporary activities, alongside issue-based programmes, to develop relevant skills including team-work, communication, entrepreneurship and employability, as well as promoting good relationships between the young people and the adult staff.

4.3 A significant aspect of the provision is the invaluable contribution of the peer mentors, a significant minority of whom are in the 16-18 age group, and involved in each programme. This group of 49 young people, representing 6% of the current membership, is actively involved in making decisions about delivering, developing and evaluating the youth provision. The systems in place to recruit and support these young people are very good; the 'in-house' training provides a good balance between social and educational activities.

4.4 There are effective methods to record the achievements of the peer mentors and to develop their self-evaluation. Each peer mentor uses a customised booklet to record learning, and to identify individual strengths and weaknesses under relevant headings. Regular evaluations provide a useful record of learning and development. The young people involved in the peer mentoring programme described how well they had gained social skills, confidence and self-esteem; they feel that their contribution is recognised as significant within the organisation and their community.

² The organisation defines gaming as follows: a co-operative activity undertaken by young people to promote team-building skills, learning, communication, strategising and planning using multi-player computer games and information technology.

4.5 The organisation celebrates well the achievements of the young people; they have received recognition through the SEELB youth award schemes and the Northern Ireland Youth Awards programme. The young people's achievements are also recorded through photographs and articles published in the local press, and through certificates to recognise their participation, such as those awarded, at the end of the Massive Academy³ project for the under-12 age group. For the older age group, the organisation has identified appropriately more formal accreditation routes such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme.

4.6 The organisation has established good links with relevant partners within the local community to enhance the provision for young people; these links include the Community Safety Partnership (CSP), the Police Service for Northern Ireland and the Scrabo Children's Centre and Social Services. The North Down CFC also provides community service placements for young people referred by the Juvenile Justice Agency and works with the CSP to provide short-term projects. These projects were successful and encouraged the young people to challenge anti-social behaviour and to become involved more positively in their local communities.

5. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

5.1 The levels of active participation and enjoyment across almost all of the age-appropriate programmes are consistently high. In the sessions observed the young people engaged fully in the activities and educational experiences on offer, including the use of drama and digital technology for educational and recreational purposes. The planned outcomes for these sessions included promoting a sense of personal responsibility among the young people through encouraging them to show concern and respect for others within their own community and other countries. A measure of success from these sessions is evident from the young people's participation in activities such as the Salvation Army's Christmas appeal. The organisation also has close links with a church in Calcutta and once or twice a year a group of ten young adults travels to Calcutta to complete a specific project in support of other young people. These projects included visiting the local primary school and providing a range of activity programmes including team games and promoting health education.

5.2 The wide range of practical experiences, such as managing the tuck shop, enables the young people to acquire new skills and interests, including the ability to participate confidently in group work and the development of good communication and social skills. These outcomes reflect well the core principles of preparation for participation and the acceptance and understanding of others. Other positive learning experiences include promoting physical well-being and the preparation for outdoor education activities to develop the young people's resourcefulness and resilience. A group of 17 young people are participating in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme which is being delivered by the organisation for the first time.

5.3 The activities are age-appropriate and relevant to the young people's needs. The Massive Kids Club, for example, provides primary school children with activities which encourage their full and active participation. The young people have a sense of enjoyment and achievement through participating in activities designed to develop team-work skills. They also have the opportunity to sample new activities and to improve on their personal

³ This is a specific summer programme for this age group.

best. At the upper end of the age spectrum, the town centre café provides young adults with an informal environment that the youth work staff use effectively to develop positive working relationships. Conversations and informal discussions observed demonstrated the young adults understanding of issues affecting their generation and how they might effect and influence change in their own lives.

5.4 In almost all of the sessions, the young people enjoy very good working relationships with one another. In the youth work sessions aimed at the post-12 age group, the inspection team observed young people demonstrating an understanding of independent, small group and collaborative working in response to appropriate targets set and negotiated with the youth workers.

6. SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

6.1 The strengths of the provision include:

- the very good quality of outcomes for the young people and their sustained high levels of active participation and enjoyment across all of the programmes;
- the innovative and creative programmes that make very good use of digital technology;
- the excellent planning that consistently reflects the central theme and core principles of the youth work curriculum;
- the outstanding quality of pastoral care and the additional support provided by the organisation to the young people;
- the commitment and dedication of the staff and the management committee to the process of continuous self-improvement in the interests of the young people; and
- the effective curricular leadership and management provided by the full-time youth worker.

7. CONCLUSION

In the areas inspected, the quality of the youth provision provided by this organisation is outstanding; the quality of pastoral care is also outstanding. The organisation has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

APPENDIX

The organisation delivers the majority of its provision through the following specific programmes:

- Massive Club (a club for primary school pupils aged between 6-12 years).
- Blisters (a media club for 10-16 age group).
- Saturday Nite Project (a youth event for the 12-17 age group).
- Reverb (a church youth group for the 13-17 age group).
- The Warehouse Open Centre (the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme for the 14-25 age group).

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