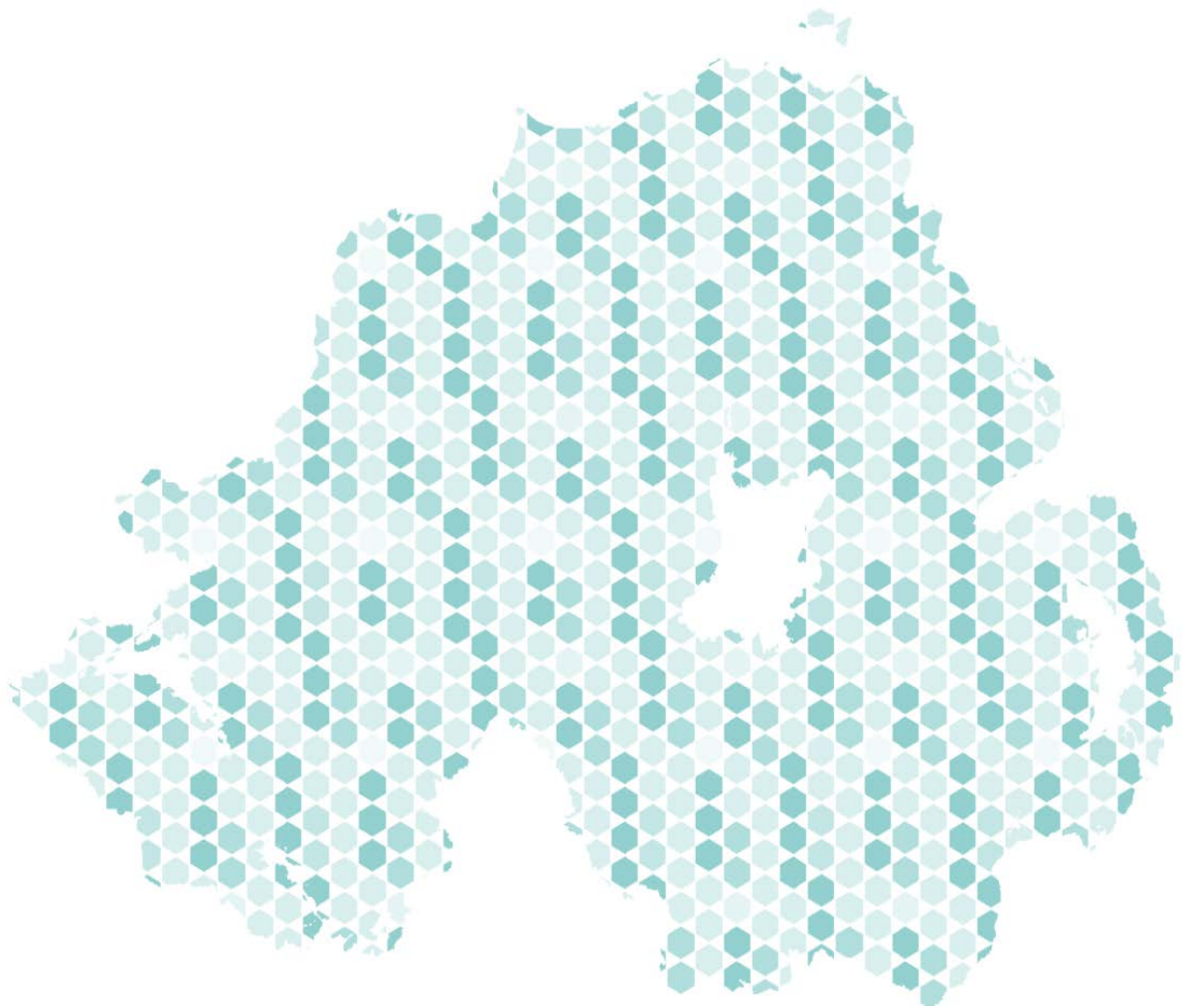


YOUTH INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Scout Foundation Northern
Ireland

Report of an inspection in
April 2016

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The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing Inspection Services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
Department for Communities

CUSTOMER
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE



Quantitative terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

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%

Performance levels

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) use the following performance levels when reporting on Achievement and standards, on Provision for learning and on Leadership and management:

Outstanding
Very good
Good
Important area(s) for improvement
Requires significant improvement
Requires urgent improvement

Overall effectiveness

The ETI use one of the following inspection outcomes when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the organisation:

The organisation has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the organisation sustains improvement.
The organisation demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the organisation sustains improvement.
The organisation needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the organisation's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.
The organisation needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the organisation's progress. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.

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1. Inspection method and evidence base

A team of four Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) inspectors observed approximately 180 young people in 19 sessions of youth work, and interviewed 49 of them in focus groups. The inspectors also held discussions with the chair, directors and staff of the Scout Foundation Northern Ireland (SFNI), members of the Provincial Management Support Team, the Provincial Youth Forum, scout leaders, community and statutory partners. In addition, the inspectors scrutinised the SFNI's development plan, self-evaluation reports, other relevant documentation and examined samples of the young people's work. The inspectors evaluated the organisation's arrangements for care, guidance and support and for the safeguarding of young people; a meeting was held with the designated officer for child protection together with the chief executive officer for Scouting Ireland.

The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation of youth organisations, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the ETI publication *Together Towards Improvement: a process for self-evaluation* at: <http://www.etini.gov.uk/together-towards-improvement-a-process-for-self-evaluation-youth-sector.pdf>

2. Focus of inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interest of all young people, the purpose of inspection is, through effective linking of internal and external approaches, to evaluate the:

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

3. Context

The SFNI was established in 1991 to support the activities of the then Catholic Boys Scouts of Ireland in Northern Ireland, since 2004 the organisation has worked in partnership with Scouting Ireland, the all Ireland scouting association. The SFNI is managed by a group of eight directors including representatives from Scouting Ireland that include the provincial commissioner and treasurer. The SFNI is supported by the Scouting Ireland Northern Province management support team which includes five county commissioners, programme and training co-ordinators and members from the provincial youth forum. The SFNI employ a part-time scout manager and a part-time administrator who are based in an office Lisburn and two full-time support staff who work across the province.

In the Scouting Ireland Northern Province there are 3201 youth members and 917 leaders.

There are five main sections and age groups:

- Beaver scouts aged 6-8 years;
- Cub scouts aged 9-11 years;
- Scouts aged 12-15 years;
- Venture scouts aged 15-17 years; and
- Rover scouts aged 19-23 years.

Since 2012, there has been a steady growth in membership: a 9% increase in new groups; a 6.3% increase in new sections and a 13.8% overall rise in the membership in Northern Ireland.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	High level of capacity for sustained improvement
Achievements and standards	very good
Provision for learning	very good
Leadership and management	very good

5. Achievements and standards

There is an ethos of ownership and togetherness that is evident across the organisation, exemplified by the active involvement of the young people in the design and implementation of their own programmes. The SFNI work towards delivering the scouting aim which is: “to develop young people socially, physically, intellectually, character, emotionally, spiritually”; these aspirations are integrated fully into the overall planned programme of experiences for the young people.

As the young people progress through the organisation, from beaver scouts to rover scouts, they develop a range of personal and social development skills which include self-confidence and self-belief. Through each stage of progression, they develop a strong sense of resilience through their active enjoyment and their participation in group activities. The young people are resourceful and creative when working together in teams. There is a sense of structure and discipline in most of the groups which is appropriately challenging and competitive within a clear and progressive adventure skills programme, including a special interest badge.

The young people understand the level of achievement necessary to progress to the next stage. They have fun and are assisted by the scouting volunteers to identify and plan to overcome potential barriers to their learning by setting achievable targets. By working together with other members they achieve positive outcomes through problem-solving. The SFNI encourage the scouts or members to develop a culture of learning by doing, taking risks in a safe environment where the young people and the leaders work together to achieve useful life skills. At the time of the inspection, a total of 48 young people were engaged in the Chief Scout award which is the highest award in scouting and provides young people with achievable challenges through expedition and personal challenge work.

A fundamental element of scouting is the camps, through which local groups have regular opportunities to meet international scouts and to travel to other countries. In the past year, the SFNI have participated in 72 summer camps involving 1200 young people, including participation in European and international events. The pinnacle of the scout experience is to attend the World Jamboree which is organised every four years. The most recent event in Japan 2015 provided an excellent opportunity for 35 young people to meet peers from 160 other countries. Some of the participating young people took the opportunity to discuss their experiences with inspectors and described how they are applying the learning from these experiences in their own groups and in their lives.

The active participation of young people across all levels of the organisation is a key strength. For example, the young people from the Provincial Youth Forum informed inspectors of their involvement at a strategic management level, which includes taking responsibility for the administration of the scout youth grant scheme. These young people are articulate ambassadors for the organisation; they spoke about how they have developed as individuals, the importance of recognising their own strengths, and how they learn to use their initiative, to be enterprising and supportive of one another in overcoming challenges.

During the period 2011-2016, over 300 young people have participated in the CRED¹ programme and they report that through this they make new friendships, deepen their understanding of community relations issues, and find the activities enjoyable and worthwhile. The young people are empowered to explore their own identities and those of others, and to engage with relevant and challenging issues such as stereotyping, sectarianism and prejudice. The programme is closely linked to the Department of Education's Priorities for Youth strategy objectives, including increasing access and equity for all young people. There is a deliberate and conscious effort by the SFNI to close the educational gap through the work and links with schools and the raising the standards achieved by the young people.

6. Provision for learning

All of the sessions observed were good or very good, with a majority very good. In the best practice, there is very effective preparation for, and organisation of the activities. The activities were challenging, developmental, and appropriate to the ages and abilities of the young people. Most of the sessions observed follow the excellent Scouting Ireland One Programme resource, which brings a consistency to the organisation's work, while having the flexibility to reflect the individual group's ethos and character. For example, a key feature of the One Programme is how supportively the young people work together in small teams and learn new skills such as camp craft. Learning and enjoying the outdoors, particularly through camping, is given a high priority across all of the groups. The young people and leaders plan and organise well challenging outdoor adventure experiences, where they develop beneficial leadership and team-work skills.

The curriculum provision is matched well to the aim of scouting and addresses effectively the needs and interests of the young people. The programmes are purposeful, progressive and build on the formal learning of the young people. However, to facilitate even greater participation of the young people, the SFNI needs to capture more effectively case studies of the young people's experiences to demonstrate the significant impact that scouting makes in their lives and to assist the organisation further with future planning.

The CRED programme has further increased the leadership capacity of the organisation through the provision of an accredited course for leaders. In addition, this programme has enhanced networking opportunities and facilitated the sharing of best practice and learning across the uniformed organisations. The development of a CRED resource and associated badges for the young people provides a further structured, supportive framework to facilitate engagement with community relations issues at local group level.

¹ The Community Relations Equity and Diversity policy aims to contribute to improving relations between communities by educating children and young people to develop self-respect and a respect for others, promote equality and to work to eliminate discrimination, and by providing opportunities for children and young people to build relationships with those of different backgrounds and traditions through formal and non-formal education within the resources available.

The quality of the care and support is very good. The young people speak positively about their friendships and their support for one another. Similarly, the leaders and staff provide excellent pastoral care for one another in times of personal difficulty and crisis. During the inspection, the young people and leaders were consistently clear on their commitment to their duty to self and to others. The collegial approach of the adults in leadership roles within scouting demonstrates a clear observance to their core values and they are excellent role models for the young people with whom they work. In discussions with the young people, they spoke enthusiastically about their experiences and the wealth of opportunities which they have through scouting.

7. Leadership and management

The SFNI is managed very effectively by a dedicated group of volunteer directors who meet at least five times a year and receive regular reports and updates. The Provincial Management Support Team are highly organised and provide well-structured and evaluative written feedback on the events and achievements of the individual groups in their county. The strategic management of the organisation has a clear understanding of the importance of continuous improvement.

A three year development plan helps to guide the work of the organisation and was developed with the full consultation of members and staff. It is appropriate that the organisation has begun to evaluate the plan so that more specific and measurable outcomes can be achieved. In particular, the SFNI has recognised appropriately in their planning the need to collate the data from all of the awards schemes from each of the groups to measure the impact and outcomes for the young people more effectively.

The SFNI manager provides detailed information on the financial management, the progress on the development plan, training development and internal and external communication. The small headquarter management team work very effectively together, providing significant support and a high level of positive leadership throughout the organisation on a wide-range of issues.

The SFNI manager has developed significant strategic links with other uniformed organisations and with the youth sector in Northern Ireland. These partnerships are important to develop further this outward looking organisation. Almost all of the groups reported high levels of satisfaction with the support from the headquarter staff. In many of the groups visited, the links with parents are very strong, both as voluntary helpers and also through regular meetings where they are well informed about the programme and their children's progress. In discussions with parents, they emphasised the high levels of pastoral support given to their children and the personal and social benefits which they recognise their children achieve through scouting.

The management at a local group level is consistently of a high quality. The leaders are dedicated, committed and resourceful; they are enthusiastic and faithful to the values and purpose of scouting. They have a strong sense of pride in their groups and value belonging to the worldwide network of scouting. The leaders are encouraged and supported by the management team to be innovative and creative in the development of new programmes. The organisation has developed an excellent range of resources to support leaders, including the good practice guide which is updated regularly and helps to guide the work of leaders. The leaders are provided with a wide range of training experiences, which help them develop programmes for their groups and enhance the experiences for the young people. Most of them speak highly of the beneficial and interactive training programmes, which prepare them well for their work with young people. There is a significant investment of time by the voluntary leaders across all of the groups in their training. Since September 2015, it is strength of the organisation that 749 leaders have undertaken relevant training and 967 course participants are scheduled to complete training this year.

The two full-time support officers provide a valuable line of communication and support to the groups. They respond regularly to groups and their work is overseen by a community development officer from Scouting Ireland. As part of an enhanced quality assurance programme the support officers offer and deliver the recently developed Quality Scouting Experience (QSE)², which allows groups to complete an in-depth review of their group. Initial feedback on the QSE programme is very positive, the leadership have identified appropriately the need to plan, and evaluate the programme thoroughly to continue to improve the quality assurance by groups of their practice.

The SFNI has extensive and well-developed international links with other scout organisations and similarly with other uniformed organisations within Northern Ireland, that provide young people with progressive opportunities to develop their understanding of other cultures and to develop their own confidence, knowledge and experience.

On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection the organisation has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children and young people. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education, but the following areas needs to be addressed: there is a need for parents to be better informed about how they can raise a complaint; and the safeguarding refresher training for all leaders needs to be completed within the recommended timescale.

8. Overall effectiveness

The Scout Foundation Northern Ireland has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will continue to monitor how the organisation sustains improvement.

² The Quality Scouting Experience is a structured process for scout groups to think critically and creatively about how their group functions and ultimately develop a group development plan.

Table 1: Total Membership

Age group	Beaver Scouts 6-8		Cub Scouts 9-11		Scouts 11-15		Venture Scouts 15-17		Rovers 18+		Numbers involved in outreach/detached	Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female		
2012/13	484	361	537	445	403	324	97	91	10	9		2761
2013/14	502	349	526	439	419	333	90	76	10	10		2754
2014/15	506	400	534	441	394	356	111	90	29	24		2885
Current	557	382	562	437	414	337	106	104	58	32		2989

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