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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
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Department of Education
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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Follow-up Inspection

**North-Eastern Education and Library Board
Youth Service**

March 2009

FOLLOW-UP TO THE AREA INSPECTIONS IN THE NORTH-EASTERN EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD (NEELB) YOUTH SERVICE

The area inspections in Newtownabbey, Ballymena and Magherafelt in 2007-2008 highlighted strengths in the following key areas:

- the high level of interest and motivation demonstrated by the young people who engage in a limited number of group work sessions;
- the effective range of programmes in response to the assessed needs of the young people;
- the very effective work in the identification of progress and the development of young people in a minority of the settings;
- the high standards of care and support for the young people displayed by all the youth workers;
- the excellent provision for the integration of young people with disabilities in some of the youth settings; and
- the good collaboration with external bodies to enhance the provision for the young people through specific projects.

The inspections identified the need for improvement in the following key areas, most of which were common to all of the areas inspected:

- clearer lines of communication to ensure a greater degree of coherence in the youth provision;
- procedures to integrate the professional youth work team more effectively with the other parts of the service;
- appropriate measures to protect staff, especially those working with small groups of vulnerable young people in centres or in the community;
- more strategic and connected planning for provision within the area in the interests of young people;
- more effective use of the current staffing structures to deliver more adequate youth provision within the area; and
- further development of the self-evaluation process demonstrating the impact of the outcomes of youth work for young people.

In discussion with the senior management in the NEELB Youth Service, it was agreed that, as the areas for improvement were mainly connected to leadership and management issues, the follow-up inspections would be one exercise carried out concurrently in the three areas. The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) carried out a follow-up inspection in March 2009.

In the interval since the inspections a new Area Youth Officer has been appointed to the Carrickfergus, Larne and Newtownabbey division of the NEELB.

Good progress has been made in most of the areas for improvement identified during the original inspections. The organisation has demonstrated the capacity to address the few remaining minor areas for improvement.

The following are the most important improvements since the area inspections:

- the good strategic and connected planning that is enhancing the provision for the young people across the areas inspected;

- the good arrangements now in place to support staff working with vulnerable young people;
- the effective use of the staffing structures in most of the practice to deliver good quality youth provision;
- the good procedures which the management has introduced to integrate more effectively the professional youth work team with the other parts of the service to the benefit of the young people;
- the clear lines of communication to ensure a greater deal of coherence in the youth provision to meet the specific needs of young people in particular areas; and
- the satisfactory self-evaluation procedures used by the majority of the staff within the organisation to demonstrate the outcomes of their youth work practice.

To continue the improvement, there is the need:

- to ensure consistency in the role and deployment of the senior youth workers; and
- to develop further, with the teams, agreed methods for recording the achievements of the young people to inform better the self-evaluation process within the organisation.

Since the inspections, the senior management team evaluated the progress made in the areas for improvement identified in the original inspections. The Inspectorate recommends that the processes for self-evaluation are developed to focus more strongly on bringing about improvement in the youth practice and in the outcomes for the young people.

In the areas inspected, the quality of the leadership and management of the youth provision is now consistently good. The organisation has important strengths across most of its youth provision. The follow-up inspection has identified a couple of areas within leadership and management that still need to be improved. The organisation has demonstrated it has the capacity to address these.

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