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Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Follow-up Inspection

Belfast Education and Library Board's Youth Service in East Belfast

March 2008

FOLLOW-UP TO THE BELFAST EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD'S (BELB'S) YOUTH SERVICE INSPECTION IN EAST BELFAST

The inspection of the BELB's Youth Service in East Belfast in May 2006 highlighted strengths including: the quality of relationships at all levels; the good outcomes and opportunities for young people, including vulnerable young people, in specific programmes and the opportunities for them to progress to leadership roles; the links between formal and informal education through school-based youth work; the quality of provision provided by the full-time youth centres; and the support provided by the senior youth worker and the area youth officer to the staff team. With regard to the East Belfast Area Project (EBAP) the inspection found strengths in the quality of the delivery and implementation of the youth work curriculum, the excellent team effort and support structures and the support provided by the steering group.

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

- a fundamental review of the adequacy of the provision in East Belfast, including the establishment of clear priorities for the EBAP;
- an improvement in the effectiveness of the monitoring and evaluation of the quality of the provision in part-time units;
- further training for all staff to assist in the management of those young people who present with challenging behaviour; and
- a review of the arrangements for the personal safety of staff involved in outreach or detached work.

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

- the BELB has provided the staff with training in how to prevent and manage challenging behaviour;
- the BELB has reviewed the arrangements for the personal safety of staff working in outreach and detached settings and amended them appropriately; and
- the area youth officer has just recently requested all part-time units to submit monthly evaluation reports.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) carried out a follow-up inspection in March 2008. They talked with senior youth managers in the BELB, members of EBAP and attended a steering committee meeting, and visited a range of full- and part-time provision. The commitment and dedication of the full-time and part-time workers and volunteers within the area remains a major strength of the work.

Against a background of financial constraints and the inability to fill posts within the area, little has changed since the original inspection.

In recent weeks, the BELB Youth Service has produced an area plan for East Belfast, as for other areas within Belfast, which reflects the specific headings of the BELB overall corporate plan: improving standards, developing people, meeting needs, strengthening partnerships and optimising resources. The area plan provides a useful context and lays out objectives and key tasks. However there is a lack of clarity about the key result areas which are focused solely on management issues rather than on the outcomes for young people within the area. It does not allow the various organisations providing youth work within the area, including EBAP, to set appropriate targets, to review and prioritise their provision and to evaluate and measure how successfully they have supported the young people. There remains the need to monitor and review the adequacy and effectiveness of the provision for young people in the East Belfast area.

The follow-up inspection findings confirm that in East Belfast the BELB Youth Service has demonstrated some evidence of improvement. There remain areas which need to be addressed more rigorously. The Inspectorate recommends that the processes for self-evaluation which have been recently introduced are developed to focus strongly on self-evaluation as a means to review the adequacy of provision and to bring about improvement.

The organisation's progress in the continuing areas for improvement will be followed-up by the District Inspector.

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