

# YOUTH INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Glencairn Youth Initiative,  
Belfast

Report of an Inspection  
in November 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. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Glencairn Youth Initiative ('Glencairn') had been operating since 1996 when it was recognised by the Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB) in 1999 as a statutory youth provider. The organisation is located in a former primary school building in the Glencairn housing estate in west Belfast. It shares the building with the Shankill Area Project, which has separate offices and training rooms. A group, including young people, local councillors and residents, met recently with the BELB to register their concern at the prospects of the closure of the building and to discuss alternative arrangements.

1.2 According to figures provided by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA), Glencairn is within the top ten percent of the most deprived wards in Northern Ireland. The organisation reports that 30% of the 16-24 year olds living in Glencairn are unemployed compared with 20% of 16-24 year olds across Northern Ireland. Fifty-five school leavers in 2008 who gained five GCSEs at grade C or above went on to higher education. Two hundred and eighteen school leavers in 2008 went on to further education. This represents approximately 15% of the age cohort progressing to further or higher education compared with the Northern Ireland average of 75%.

1.3 Prior to the inspection the BELB assigned the organisation from the west Belfast division to the north Belfast division. This transition required some adjustment in terms of establishing new working relationships including a change in area youth officer. He has worked well with the organisation to make the necessary adjustment and offers good support and encouragement for the work of the centre. The BELB has only recently replaced the original key result area document with a unit development plan. Adequate training and support is needed to implement this planning process.

1.4 The figures provided by the organisation indicate that almost 16% of young people aged 4-16 are registered as members of the centre. The organisation does not have a systematic record of those young people who maintain their membership over more than one year.

1.5 The current membership is dominated by the two younger age bands and, in particular, by male members under nine years of age. The younger age group originally attended the after-school provision until it was withdrawn by the BELB in 2007. The current provision for this younger age group is a good response, within the current resources, to the withdrawal of the after-school provision. The average nightly attendance of 78 young people, which represents 55% of the current membership, is a significant level of participation.

**Table 1: Current Membership**

Age group	4 – 9 years		10 -15years		16 –18years		19 +years		TOTAL
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
20010/11	35	19	35	33	18	2	0	1	141
% of total membership	24%	13%	24%	23%	13%	1.5%	0%	0.7%	

1.6 The organisation is staffed by one full-time work worker, one full-time apprentice youth worker on placement from the Integrated Services for Children and Young People (ISCYP),<sup>1</sup> four youth support workers, one trainee youth support worker, and four volunteers.

1.7 The inspection team held discussions with all of the staff, and met with the area youth officer and the youth officer with responsibility for safeguarding. A range of documentation was examined including annual reports, evidence folders and project evaluations. The team observed a representative sample of youth work practice and held discussions with 25 young people and 15 parents. A member of the team also met staff from the ISCYP.

## **2. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

2.1 The development plan of the Glencairn Youth Initiative Project is governed by the strategic plan of the BELB. Its key priorities are to support the young people to enjoy learning and achieving, to be healthy and live in safety, to participate and make a positive contribution to their community, and to promote economic and environmental well-being. These priorities are derived appropriately from an analysis of need within the community and in consultation with other agencies such as the Forum for Alcohol and Substance Abuse (FASA), the Shankill Area Project, the Integrated Services for Children and Young People Programme (ISCYP), and Health for Young People through Peer Education (HYPE). The Glencairn development plan also takes due cognisance of the wide age range within the membership. The medium and short term planning by the staff reflects clearly the priorities in the development plan and this planning is in turn informed by the systematic and regular review of the responses of the young people.

2.2 The development of the provision is underpinned by the values and standards set by the full-time youth worker; she sets high expectations for the young people and provides good support and challenge to help the young people to achieve their potential. She also ensures that the continuing professional development of the staff through, for example, attendance at specific training, including mentoring, suicide awareness and accredited training, equips them well to respond to the needs of the young people.

2.3 The organisation maintains very good links with other relevant youth providers and agencies within the wider community; these links are used effectively to build its capacity to respond better to the needs of the young people and to offer relevant learning opportunities. In particular the strategic link with the ISCYP provides relevant support for the young people and their families to develop their confidence and aspirations, and to look beyond their own community and broaden their horizons.

2.4 The organisation has developed effective systems and procedures to monitor and evaluate the quality of the outcomes for the young people. The staff are supported well to plan and review their work and to reflect on the relevance and appropriateness of the intended learning outcomes. Each member of staff maintains a well-organised evidence folder of work. It contains the aims and objectives and the intended learning outcomes for

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<sup>1</sup> The Integrated Services for Children and Young People (ISCYP) Programme is a major initiative of the West Belfast Partnership. Funded through the Integrated Development Fund from OFMDFM and disseminated via the Department of Education and the Belfast Education and Library Board, this initiative aims to bring together those who provide services which impact on the lives of Children and Young People and their families and will maximise this impact, improve connectivity and enhance integrated working through specific planned delivery of services and programmes.

each programme, an attendance record of the participants and their evaluations of each session. These folders demonstrate the staff's improvement over time to record their work; they also provide a useful record of the young people's achievements and progression. The organisation needs to review the effectiveness of all of the documentation to avoid duplication and to make best use of staff time.

### **3. QUALITY OF PROVISION**

3.1 The organisation provides a good range of age-appropriate programmes and activities. It operates on five evenings each week with specific times for the different age groups, and sets aside two early evening sessions for the youngest members. The latter part of one evening is set aside for specific group work, including training for senior members to assume leadership roles. Additional activities take place at the week-end including residential visits and specific project work.

3.2 The very good quality programmes are based on the identified need to enable the young people to address low self-esteem and to challenge their tendency to stay within their own community. The programmes encourage them to look beyond their own community for employment opportunities, to improve their awareness of, and develop the skills to manage effectively, their sexual health and personal relationships, and to develop their communication skills. Specific programmes and opportunities such as the cross-community arts-based programme and the sports development programme, have been successful in raising the young people's confidence to use facilities outside their community and to develop new friendships with their peers.

3.3 The apprentice youth worker is deployed specifically to provide relevant personal and social programmes for the 11-19 age group. She makes a valuable contribution to the staff team through sharing with them her relevant film and media expertise. The full-time youth worker attends the ISCYP's monthly management meeting and supports the ongoing evaluation of this initiative.

3.4 A significant link with the Shankill Area Project offers progression and leadership opportunities for older members as they progress through Glencairn where they have already developed a good personal discipline, their capacity to assume leadership responsibility and a willingness to contribute to their local community. The organisation maintains good links with the Glencairn residents' group which also provides financial support for specific projects. For example, they funded the Open College Network (OCN) Life Skills 'Baby Me' programme in an effort to address under-age pregnancy, and to promote good parenting skills and relationships within the community.

3.5 The organisation has a well-deserved reputation for working creatively with other agencies, and attracting expertise and tuition from a range of high profile projects. It has participated in a range of mixed media and arts projects to address the issues facing young people and to promote equity, diversity and inter-dependence. For example, the primary focus of the 'Looking Back Looking Forward' project<sup>2</sup> was to facilitate the young people's personal development by introducing them to new concepts of learning through a creative volunteering initiative. The project also provided the opportunity for the young people to work with their peers from different communities. The participants developed team-work skills, completed research on recent political events, and delivered a public presentation. The young people recognise the relevance of the skills they acquired for other aspects of their lives, including managing their feelings and raising their expectations of living in a more equitable society.

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<sup>2</sup> Funded by the Big Lottery, organised and facilitated through the volunteering department of Hostelling International Northern Ireland.

3.6 The staff team demonstrates very good interpersonal skills and provides good role models for the young people. They promote an inclusive ethos through high quality programmes with a strong emphasis on inclusion and diversity. The programmes are devised to attract, in particular, those young people who feel socially excluded or who require support in developing a greater awareness of the consequences of their actions, and to modify their behaviour accordingly. The provision of effective mentoring support by the full-time staff has resulted in the young people's improved behaviour and increasingly mature attitudes, both within the centre and at school.

3.7 The staff plan thoroughly for the programmes, which reflect well the central theme and core principles of the youth work curriculum and the themes contained within 'A Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2006-2016'. The good range of age-appropriate programmes and activities provides the opportunity for progression in acquiring relevant skills and developing leadership qualities. The majority of the young people are involved in at least two programmes, while a small minority are involved in four or more programmes. Appendix 1 lists the programmes completed. Appendix 2 illustrates the extent of leadership and training opportunities provided for the young people and youth workers since September 2009. The full-time youth worker also provides appropriate opportunities through well-planned residential and educational visits to address the young people's educational and social deprivation.

3.8 The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the organisation is outstanding. The key features include the mutually respectful working relationships between the young people and the youth workers during the sessions observed, and the effective support systems in place for those young people experiencing specific difficulties in various aspects of their lives.

3.9 All of young people who talked with the inspection team stated that they felt safe and secure while in the centre and while participating in the activities. They demonstrated a strong sense of loyalty to Glencairn and expressed their appreciation of the care and support provided by all of the staff.

3.10 Each of the 15 parents who met with members of the inspection team expressed their appreciation and recognition of the organisation's commitment to maintaining a safe, secure and welcoming environment for their children to enjoy a good range of activities, and to develop new skills and interests.

3.11 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. Initiated by the full-time worker, the staff have established excellent links with parents, especially those of the younger members. These links have promoted strong local support for the work of the organisation and have contributed significantly to the excellent rates of regular attendance and retention of members.

#### **4. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS**

4.1 The young people demonstrate consistently high levels of active participation and enjoyment across the range of programmes. They are involved directly in discussions to identify their needs and, with the good support of the staff team, contribute to the design and implementation of suitable programmes. A group of older members, for example, identified their interest in the role of a Disc Jockey (DJ) as a potential employment opportunity and a means to volunteer within the centre. They are currently completing a DJ skills course with financial support from the Shankill Partnership. The young people are well supported to

identify the improvement in their skills and abilities including their communication, leadership, critical thinking, problem-solving and decision making skills, and their ability to work both as a member of a team and independently.

4.2 The young people acquire new skills appropriate to their age and physical development. In the dancing programme and the Ju-Jitsu programmes, which are well matched to the specific ability of the children, they are encouraged to contribute to the evaluation of their achievements and those of others. The young people are also encouraged to recognise the usefulness of their learning and achievements in other areas of their lives. They value the opportunities to develop their self-confidence and resilience and these attributes, in turn, support their educational aspirations, and influence their future life choices and success.

4.3 The personal development programmes, including the cross-community programmes, encourage the young people to begin to understand and identify their own values and beliefs. They realise that while their opinions may be different to others, they are both equally valid. The health programmes encourage the young people to take responsibility to complete relevant research. A group of young people used their research findings effectively to explore how they could persuade their peers to stop smoking. They presented their findings with conviction and were able to identify their own learning.

4.4 The current 10-13 year olds are the main participants in the issue-based group work. They feel valued by the staff team and aspire to become senior members and volunteers. They understand the processes involved in youth work, identify and articulate their learning, and are a valuable resource for the continuation of the youth provision. Eight senior members have completed a wide range of relevant programmes and are well-equipped to fulfil a leadership role within the organisation. The organisation provides good support and relevant leadership training opportunities to retain a greater number of senior members to sustain adequate levels of leadership.

4.5 The organisation and the wider community celebrate the young people's achievements well. The full-time youth worker maintains meticulous records of projects and has an archive of newspaper cuttings, photographs, and public performances recorded on digital versatile discs, and publications of creative writing and poetry. The young people value the recognition of their efforts and commitment.

## **5. SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS**

5.1 The strengths of the provision include:

- the very good quality of strategic leadership and management provided by the full-time youth worker, including effective self-evaluation and monitoring for improvement;
- the effective use of links with other youth providers and agencies within the wider community;
- the inclusive ethos developed by the staff, their clear understanding of the needs of the young people, and the effective planning to meet those needs;
- the very good quality of the programmes delivered by the staff team, including a strong emphasis on promoting self-esteem and communication skills;



- the sustained high levels of active participation and enjoyment displayed by the young people across all of the programmes; and
- the very good range and quality of the outcomes for the young people, including progression to leadership roles within the organisation.

## 6. **CONCLUSION**

6.1 The quality of the youth provision provided by Glencairn Youth Initiative is very good; the organisation is meeting very effectively the pastoral and educational needs of the young people, in line with the curriculum for the youth sector. The organisation has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement

APPENDIX 1

PROGRAMMES COMPLETED SINCE SEPTEMBER 2009-10

Title of Project	Age Range	Male	Female	Total
Anti-bullying 'This is Me'	7-11	0	10	10
New Belfast Arts- Cross-community	9-12	6	14	20
Drugs Awareness	10-12	3	7	10
Shankill Youth Conference	14-16	2	2	4
Partisan Productions-Diversity Challenges	14-16	6	2	8
Health and Fitness	10-11	0	11	11
Nutritional Health Education	10-12	0	7	7
Sexual Awareness	10-14	4	0	4
This is Me	12-15	8	5	13
Reverse Gear	15+	4	8	12
Intergenerational project	10-11	2	6	8
Environmental Awareness	9-12	0	9	9
Peace Wall	13-16	7	5	12
Chick's Challenge	12-17	0	8	8
Belfast Arts Project	10-13	2	9	11
Respect Project	10-12	5	4	9
Senior Members	15-17	5	2	7
Young Men's	14-16	5	0	5
Health and Safety	10-11	2	3	5
Drug Awareness	10-12	3	4	7
Sexual Awareness	11-12	4	3	7
OCN Life Skills 'Baby Think It Over'	14-16	0	7	7
<b>Total</b>		<b>68</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>204</b>

APPENDIX 2

LEADERSHIP AND TRAINING COURSES COMPLETE SINCE SEPTEMBER 2009

Title of course including accreditation details	Number of young people enrolled	Number of adults enrolled	Percentage successfully completing the course
OCN Trainee leaders	3		0
OCN 2 introduction to Youth Work		1	100
OCN 2 Mentoring		3	100
OCN Life Skills	10	1	Ongoing
OCN NICHS	10		Ongoing
Shankill Youth Conference	4		100
Assist		1	100
Child Protection		1	100
Shankill Part-time Workers' Training		7	100
OCN 2 Introduction to Youth Work		2	Awaiting start date
OCN Community Relations		2	Awaiting start date
Unaccredited Young Leader's Course	6		Ongoing

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