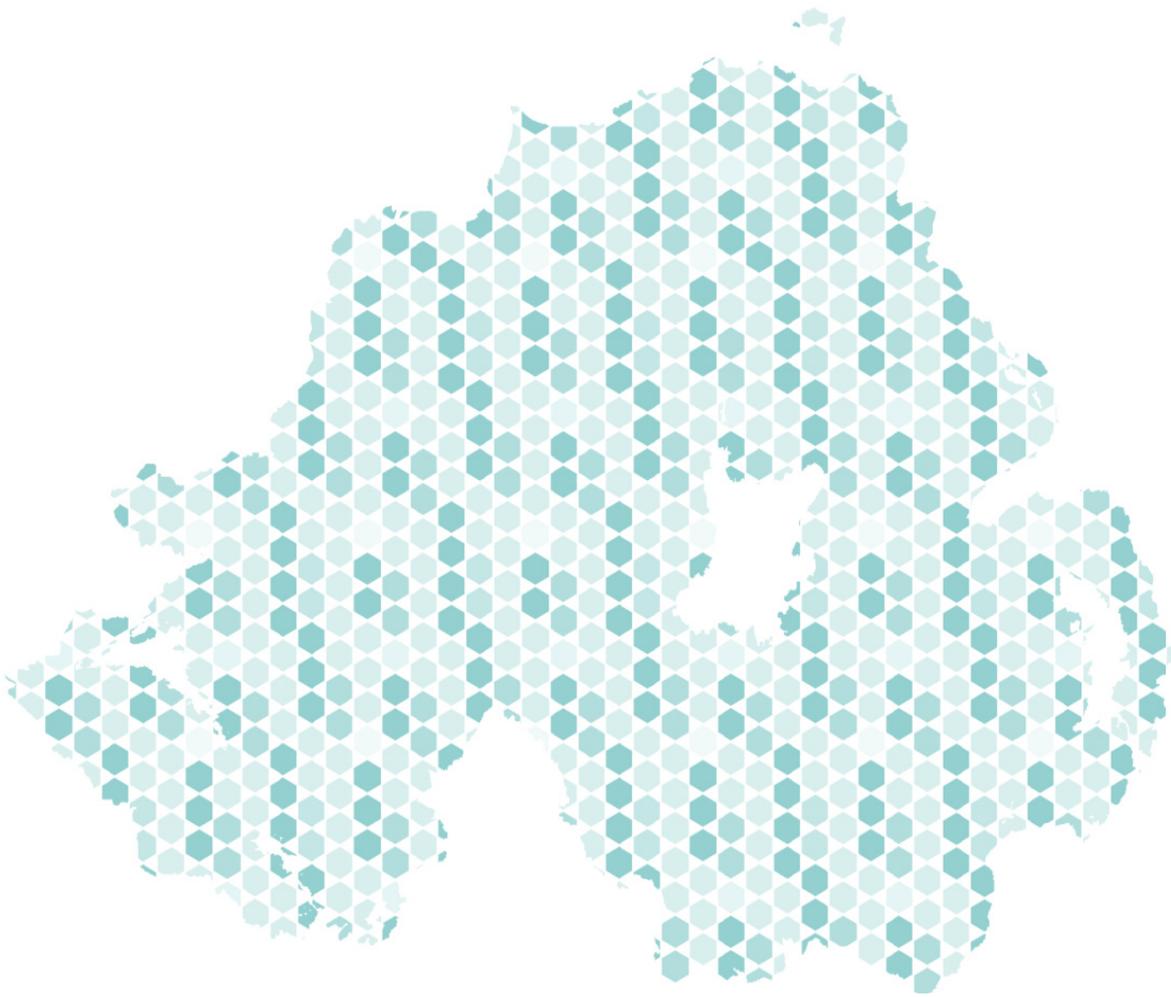


YOUTH INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Hammer Youth Centre,
Belfast

Report of an Inspection
in September 2011



Providing Inspection Services for
Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure



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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 The Hammer Youth Centre (the centre) is located on Agnes Street in the Shankill area of west Belfast. The building opened as a city-wide youth service resource centre in 1981; two years ago it became a full-time youth centre for young people in the Shankill area. The centre is managed by the Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB) and is open five evenings, including a weekend session, and two afternoons each week.

1.2 The programme of activities includes: a drop-in provision for young people aged 11-25 years; judo and football coaching; an after-school provision; and group discussions exploring a range of topics, including community relations.

1.3 According to figures provided by the centre, the area has a population of 1,141 young people between 4-25 years of age; 15% of this age group attended the youth centre during 2010-11. The total membership for this period was 17, of which 69% were males under 15 years of age. The average nightly attendance during 2010-11 was 37, which represents 21% of the overall membership.

2. FOCUS

The inspection focused on:

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

3. OVERALL FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

The quality of provision in this centre is satisfactory.

3.1 The inspection has identified areas for improvement, which need to be addressed if the needs of the young people are to be met more effectively.

4. KEY FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

4.1 ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

The quality of the young people's achievements and standards is satisfactory.

4.1.1 A minority of the registered members attend the centre regularly and participate in programmes and activities which promote their physical and mental well-being.

4.1.2 The young people develop relevant skills, knowledge and self-confidence through completing projects successfully, and achieve recognition through regular celebratory events. Eight young people have successfully completed a non-accredited course in leadership.

4.1.3 A small number of the young people involved in projects, such as the Youth Work in the Community programme, demonstrate a good ability to make decisions and understand complex issues affecting them and the wider community.

4.2 PROVISION FOR LEARNING

The quality of the provision for learning is satisfactory.

4.2.1 The quality of the youth work practice observed ranged from satisfactory to good, with a majority of the sessions evaluated as being satisfactory. In the best practice, with a small group of members, the young people were prepared well for the task; they remained focused and completed the planned activities successfully. The staff made good use of the activities to explore the young people's choice of career and aspirations. The young people demonstrated clear evidence of progression when they used information technology to source relevant information and complete a curriculum vitae.

4.2.2 The staff and volunteers make a valuable contribution to their community through their good support of the young people. The staff motivate and support the young people in aspiring to achieve their best.

4.2.3 The staff provide a programme that reflects well the youth service curriculum as outlined in 'Youth Work: A Model for Effective Practice'. The programmes are planned to be enjoyable with learning outcomes which support the young people's personal and social development. The programmes include: health and fitness programmes; music and drama productions; sexual health awareness and inter-generational events.

4.2.4 The staff plan and assess their projects carefully; they introduce group work sessions well and communicate clearly the purpose of the session to the young people. The staff need to use more effective questioning to allow the young people to develop their thinking skills better and to elicit more extended responses.

4.2.5 The staff listen and respond to the young people's ideas, which are used well to influence the programme. There is a need to provide more formalised structures for participation, which support the young people to contribute more effectively to the planning and implementation of programmes.

4.2.6 In response to the young people's enthusiasm for developing relationships with those from other cultures, the staff provide a good and extensive range of community relations programmes with other youth centres and organisations. The young people learn to work towards an understanding and acceptance of others and to challenge their own beliefs.

4.3 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the pastoral care is very good.

4.3.1 There is an inclusive ethos that is valued by the young people, parents and members of the local community.

4.3.2 In discussions with the young people, they reported that they feel safe in the centre, enjoy good working relationships with the staff and avail of a good range of activities and group work programmes.

4.3.3 There are agreed standards of behaviour, which are reflected in the respect the young people have for their environment, the staff and visitors. The staff need to develop further strategies to deal with challenging behaviour among the young people.

4.3.4 The staff encourage the young people to work with others to develop a greater understanding of issues affecting them and their community. The centre has developed highly effective links with an appropriate range of external agencies, including the Police Service for Northern Ireland (PSNI), the Forum for Alcohol and Substance Abuse (FASA) and British Telecom (BT). These links provide the young people with relevant information and support to develop their personal, social and employability skills. A small number of young people have gained employment in the youth centre and other local youth provision as a result of the support and opportunities provided by the centre.

4.4 SAFEGUARDING

The centre has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children and young people. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education, but the following area needs to be addressed: the BELB youth service needs to ensure that an appropriate internet policy is in place, which is communicated to all staff, parents and young people.

5. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of leadership and the management is satisfactory.

5.1 During the short time the centre has been open, the full-time youth worker has established an effective staff team. The staff team works well under the pastoral and supportive leadership of the full-time youth worker and, with his encouragement, are becoming more reflective of their practice.

5.2 The youth and community worker on placement from the Integrated Services for Children and Young People Programme¹, provides very good support for the young people and they benefit greatly from his effective planning and practice. This programme makes a significant contribution to the centre and the community. The young people have access to a good range of relevant support services, including mentoring and health and fitness programmes. Local people are supported to gain qualifications, including professional youth work qualifications and secure employment.

5.3 The quality of the self-evaluation by the full-time youth worker reflects accurately the strengths of the provision and the areas for further development. The areas identified for development include: an increase in attendance and a greater age and gender balance within the membership; increased training and accreditation opportunities for both staff and members; developing formal structures of participation for the young people; and establishing an advisory committee for the centre. The unit development plan is not sufficiently coherent; it lacks clear programme timescales and does not address fully the areas identified for development.

5.4 The BELB is developing monitoring and evaluation systems to improve the provision for young people; these systems need to reflect more detailed analysis and evaluative comments.

¹ 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 the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) and disseminated via the Department of Education and the BELB, 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.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 The quality of youth provision provided by the Hammer Youth Centre is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which need to be addressed if the needs of all the young people are to be met more effectively. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the centre's progress in addressing the areas for improvement over a 12-24 month period.

6.2 The main areas for improvement are the need for:

- a greater age and gender balance within the membership and attendance;
- a more coherent unit development plan, with increased training and accreditation opportunities for the staff and the young people; and
- an advisory committee which is representative of the local community and more formalised structures of participation for the young people.

APPENDIX 1**Total Membership 2009-2011**

Age group	4-9		10-15		16-18		19+		TOTAL
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
2009/10	32	15	59	15	15	2			138
2010/11	53	18	68	13	19	2			173

APPENDIX 2

Average Attendance Figures 2010-2011

Oct 2010	Nov 2010	Dec 2010	Jan 2011	Feb 2011	Mar 2011	Apr 2011	May 2011	Jun 2011	Jul 2011	Aug 2011	Sep 2011
35	49	43	41	51	52	34	30	32	29	26	28

The overall average attendance for 2010-11 was 37 members which represents 21% of the membership.

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