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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of an Inspection

WELB Youth Provision in the Derry City Area

Inspected: January-February 2007

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1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

1.1 The Derry city area is one of four areas within the Western Education and Library Board's (WELB) Youth Service. The WELB Youth Service is led by an Assistant Senior Education Officer (ASEO) who has responsibility for the collaborative working between both the Southern Education and Library Board and the WELB Youth Services. There are two Deputy Heads of Youth Service for each of the two Education and Library Boards and the Youth Service management team in the Derry city area has been recently restructured.

1.2 At the time of the inspection there were three full-time controlled centres, three full-time voluntary centres, a senior youth worker and two area youth workers in the defined geographical area of Derry city. There is a Youth Information Centre (YIC) staffed by a full-time manager and two part-time staff and the WELB provide line management to the two full-time staff attached to the Northern Ireland Youth Service Information Project, who are based in the YIC. There are two new WELB workers, one for community relation's work and one for child protection, that support youth work staff in the Derry city area.

1.3 There are four school-based part-time youth centres in the Derry city area; three are linked to post-primary schools, staffed by youth tutors and one is attached to a primary school staffed by part-time youth work staff. An additional 43 units are registered with the Youth Service and include some special needs groups. The WELB Youth Service has a cohort of part-time staff who support and encourage young people in registered groups many of whom give of their time freely.

1.4 According to figures supplied by the WELB the total numbers of young people aged four to 25 years registered with the WELB at the time of inspection was 7,568.

1.5 The WELB Youth Service received an initial resource allocation from the Department of Education of £3.66m for 2006/07. According to figures supplied to the Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate), almost £700,000 is allocated by the WELB Youth Service to those registered groups in the city. Additional finance is generated through a variety of funding sources including the Youth Service Summer Intervention Programme and a community relation's budget.

1.6 The WELB Youth Service has a business plan that is included in the WELB corporate plan. Each full-time and part-time unit receiving significant grant aid complete an annual service level agreement that is evaluated by the area youth officer (AYO). The WELB provided a detailed statistical analysis of the area but there was no WELB area youth development plan for the city. A new area planning framework is currently being implemented that includes a process of setting targets and indicators, providing action planning, monitoring and review. As part of the new WELB quality assurance arrangements the ASEO makes moderation visits to each geographical area and samples elements of the work.

1.7 The AYO provides supervision and support to the controlled workers and meets with the management and workers of voluntary units on a regular basis. All full-time staff are invited to attend an area team meeting at least once per term and all registered units complete an annual registration form.

1.8 There are a number of youth forums representing various groups attached to the WELB and almost all full-time centres and some part-time units have members represented at management level. Young people from Derry city are involved in a new WELB wide stakeholders forum that includes representation from the voluntary and community sectors.

1.9 A wide range of training courses is offered to young people ranging from senior member development to recognised accredited courses including Open College Network (OCN) level 2 youth work. A significant part of the controlled full-time youth workers time is spent working on the Growing, Learning And Development (GLAD) programme. At the time of inspection there were 13 GLAD programmes in 5 post-primary schools and two evening-based programmes in youth centres. Each successful participant receives an Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) award.

1.10 The city has many areas of recognised deprivation and is characterised by a population divided by the River Foyle, the city side and the Waterside.

2. THE INSPECTION PROCESS

2.1 Pre-inspection meetings were held with the Deputy Head of Youth and the AYO who provided some pre-inspection materials. On the first day of the inspection a meeting was held with almost all full-time staff and a number of part-time youth workers-in-charge as well as three youth tutors. Discussions were also held with some city councillors and other professionals working with young people including teachers.

2.2 Members of the Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) spent over 50 hours observing youth work delivery and visited 21 different youth units. Discussions were held with Youth Service managers, all full-time youth workers and 26 part-time youth workers.

2.3 As part of the arrangements for inspecting child protection and pastoral care, a sample of the units visited completed a questionnaire relating to child protection. The WELB has in place procedures to deal with issues relating to child protection and all full-time staff are aware of the procedures. Some issues emerged from the questionnaires that have been brought to the attention of the individual unit leaders.

2.4 Members of the inspection team held structured discussions with 40 young people and informal discussions with 80 young people about the arrangements for child protection, the opportunities to develop skills, the range of activities provided and how well they felt they were cared for and supported. Almost all of the young people interviewed said they felt safe and a significant majority knew what to do if they had a concern in relation to child protection matters. Those young people involved in participation programmes and group-work were able to articulate the development of skills including, increased confidence, improved communication skills and almost all stated their enjoyment of attending Youth Service provision. A minority of young people discussed issues relating to citizenship and those involved in this work indicated to members of the Inspectorate a desire to work at conflict resolution with young people from different backgrounds.

2.5 A small number of parents were interviewed about the arrangements for child protection and the quality of the Youth Service; all stated they were happy with the child protection procedures in place but almost all were unaware of the purpose of youth work and the wide range of informal education activities on offer.

3. STRENGTHS OF THE PROVISION

3.1 The strengths of the provision include:

- the very good quality of relationships between the youth workers and young people that provide a sound basis for the young people's personal and social development;
- the recording and celebrating of young people's achievements through a variety of approaches at individual unit level, area level and across the WELB area;
- the dedication and commitment of the part-time youth workers and volunteers and the support in place for those staff;
- the dedication and commitment of the AYO and the positive impact he has made on staff and youth organisations in the short time he has been in post;
- the satisfaction reported by almost all of the units visited about the support provided by the administration officer based in the area youth office;
- the involvement of young people in various youth representative structures including youth forums, members' councils and advisory groups;
- the wide range of recreational activities on offer in a variety of settings including centre-based, outreach and community-based programmes. In best practice some innovative and creative programmes were observed including formal group work programmes for younger children and post-primary school-based youth work;
- the good examples of the delivery by full-time staff of the core principles of the 'model for effective practice' especially participation and personal development programmes and in a majority of settings the clear objectives of the youth centre programmes that matched the needs and abilities of the young people; and
- the acquisition of specific skills in confidence building and communication reported by a significant minority of young people engaged in specific youth work programmes.

4. AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

4.1 The areas for development include the need:

- for a clear overall area development plan that relates directly to the local area priorities as identified by the young people, youth workers and other stakeholders;

- to develop an agreed framework for self-evaluation and critical reflection that assists in the measurement of the outcomes for young people and to define the particular role that youth workers have played in those outcomes;
- to review the role and purpose of the YIC and provide strategic leadership for the Northern Ireland Youth Service Information Project to ensure greater usage of the initiative by youth groups;
- to increase the opportunities for young people to test values and beliefs and progress community relations work to level 3 conflict resolution work;
- for further professional development of all youth work staff and in particular the need to provide more information on specific behaviour disorders with young people they are working with;
- to ensure that part-time paid and voluntary staff are encouraged to attend further relevant youth work training; and
- to review and encourage greater use of existing information and communications technology facilities in youth centres and to upgrade facilities and equipment.

5. CONCLUSION

The findings of this inspection demonstrate that there are strengths in many aspects of the wide range of programmes delivered to young people in the Derry area. The quality of Youth Services provided, including the local management arrangements, is of a good standard. The areas for improvement need to be addressed if the service is to meet as fully as possible the needs of young people in the area.

The Inspectorate will monitor and report on the WELB Youth Service's progress in addressing these areas for improvement.

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