

# YOUTH INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

South-Eastern Education and  
Library Board Youth Provision  
in the Ards Area

Report of an Inspection  
in April 2011



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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 Ards youth division is one of five geographical divisions within the South-Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB) youth service. The division covers the Ards Borough Council district area and includes the town of Newtownards, as well as small towns and villages on the Ards Peninsula. The area youth office is based in Ards Arena Youth Resource Centre (Ards Arena), which is one of two full-time youth centres in the division. The other full-time youth centre, Community Works, is a voluntary youth provision. The SEELB youth service supports 98 voluntary and uniformed organisations in the area.

**Table 1: Numbers of registered units**

	<b>Registered Units 2010/11</b>
Controlled full-time	1
Controlled part-time	1
Voluntary full-time	1
Voluntary part-time	31
Uniformed organisations	62
Other e.g. outreach/projects	4
<b>Total:</b>	<b>100</b>

1.2 Figures supplied by the organisation indicate that the area has a population of 20,869 young people aged 4-25 years; so far this year 7829 (38%) young people are attending the 100 registered units and organisations. For the year 2009/10, 8963 (43%) young people attended provision supported by the SEELB youth service.

**Table 2: Total membership**

Age group	4-9 years		10-15 years		16-18 years		19+ years		Numbers involved in outreach/detached	Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female		
<b>2007/08</b>	1865	1648	1990	1869	462	350	107	116	226	8633
<b>2008/09</b>	1474	1620	2205	2109	563	355	205	129	198	8858
<b>2009/10</b>	1480	1695	2275	1772	685	482	234	135	205	8963
<b>2010/11</b>	1789	1484	1624	1575	478	325	142	89	323	7829

1.3 The information above indicates that the membership of the young people in registered youth organisations in the area has increased over the past three years. The youth workers have worked hard to engage more young people in existing provision, and have increased successfully the attendance of young people in the post-16 age group.

1.4 The post of Area Youth Officer was vacated recently and the area is currently managed by a Senior Youth Officer (SYO). The area has had several changes in management and youth work staff over the last three years. A Senior Youth Worker (SYW) manages the provision in Ards Arena and two full-time members of staff were appointed recently to support the youth work across the area. Recently the youth work staff from the North Down and Down divisions have extended their responsibilities to support the Ards youth provision.

## **2. FOCUS**

2.1 The inspection focused on: the efficacy of leadership and management at education and library board, area and individual centre level; the quality of provision; and the achievements and standards of the young people in the area.

2.2 The appendices at the end of the report detail the evaluations of the three areas under focus as agreed with the education and library board: the quality assurance pilot in Ards Arena; the quality of the youth work delivered in local schools, with a particular focus on the work in Movilla High School; and the quality of the recent part-time staff development programme.

## **3. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

3.1 The quality of the overall leadership and management of the Ards area is very good. The SYO is a very experienced and highly effective manager, who has ensured a good quality of provision for the young people in a challenging climate of staffing changes. Three recent district visits by the Education and Training Inspectorate have found an improving picture over the last 18 months. The young people have a broader range of more relevant and better-planned learning experiences.

3.2 Through her excellent strategic vision, the SYO has identified appropriately as priority areas in which to promote improvement:

- youth unemployment;
- mental health issues; and
- low and under-achievement in education.

These priorities are connected consistently to the planning and the youth work practice. The senior managers work closely and effectively in partnerships with others to meet collectively the needs of young people. They have embedded very good links already with formal education and further links are being developed with employment and health organisations.

3.3 The self-evaluation pro-forma completed for the inspection identifies accurately the areas in which the SEELB youth service consider they deliver well and those areas which they want to improve. They have identified appropriately the need to develop further structures to encourage the participation of young people in decision-making. In addition, they have assessed accurately the need to reach more young people from minority and ethnic backgrounds and to engage more young people with special needs.

3.4 Throughout the Ards area, in the sessions observed, the youth workers have a clear focus on a curriculum that is founded on the principles of the Model For Effective Practice. The SYO and SYW have worked hard to support full- and part-time youth workers to develop and improve their practice. The SYW is developing well the quality of the provision for the young people attending Ards Arena. He has focused on the development of the part-time staff, with the result that they are beginning to identify and record the young people's educational learning outcomes. Through their good use of self-evaluation processes, the staff have recognised accurately the need to develop better methodologies and models to measure and record the progress of the young people. However, there is a need for them to evaluate sessions more rigorously, and to include the young people in this process, to inform their future planning and to promote further improvement.

3.5 The senior managers and youth workers in the adjacent divisions have supported well the youth team in Ards, in particular with the induction and management of new staff, and with the training of part-time and volunteer staff. In a period of extensive change, all staff have been flexible in their roles and responsibilities. New staff value highly, and have used well, the job-shadowing opportunities to improve their practice and experience.

3.6 During the inspection three staff development sessions were observed, including one which was presented by the SEELB behaviour support unit. The analysis of the training needs for part-time staff had identified accurately the need for further support for staff in this area. The quality of the presentation was very good and highlighted well a range of appropriate and clear strategies to manage difficult behaviours among young people.

3.7 At the two meetings with representatives from registered youth organisations, a majority of those present stated that they value the limited financial support from the SEELB. However, they cited several difficulties with transport in rural areas, as a particular issue for youth provision. Many of the units expressed their appreciation for the professional support from the SEELB youth service. A majority of the smaller voluntary groups raised issues regarding communication; they stated that ongoing changes in staffing had contributed to the difficulties and that it was an improving situation.

3.8 There are very good working relationships between the Ards youth service and formal education, which are mutually beneficial for both the organisations and the young people involved. The youth service and the schools have identified appropriately their individual and joint priorities, which are helping to address issues affecting low and under-achievement in the education of pupils, and their social development. This effective partnership has encouraged an increase in the overall membership of Ards Arena and in the numbers of young trainee leaders working in the centre. There has also been a significant increase in the numbers of young people participating in accredited courses.

#### **4. QUALITY OF PROVISION**

4.1 The quality of youth provision observed ranged from satisfactory to good, with almost all of the practice being good or better. The youth workers provide good quality programmes, which are developing well the young people's skills, knowledge and understanding. In the best practice, the youth workers have an excellent rapport with the young people and are very supportive, especially with those more challenging young people. They use skilful questioning well to guide and challenge the young people during the group activities.

4.2 In a minority of the group work sessions observed, there was a need to consider alternative strategies for the management of the young people's behaviour. In the least effective practice, young people were very unsettled during sections of the group discussions and the learning points were not emphasised sufficiently. In a minority of the sessions observed, the evaluations did not include an adequate plenary for the young people to discuss what they had achieved.

4.3 The Ards youth team are developing new structures to increase the participation of young people through an area-based youth council. During the inspection young people attended an event to establish an area youth council. This event was well facilitated and has prepared the young people well to engage in a participative youth forum.

4.4 There are good leadership opportunities for young people in the area. For example, the SYW and part-time staff in Ards Arena support well those young people who are keen to volunteer as trainee leaders. The UB40 club, for unemployed young people, has been linked effectively to the wider youth programme in Ards Arena. Almost all of the young people involved in the UB40 club are volunteers in the youth centre and have undertaken successfully a range of accredited youth work courses.

4.5 The very good links with Movilla High School have developed good leadership skills for a group of the year 12 pupils who have been recruited as peer mentors. The SYW facilitates these young people very well and has effective working relationships with the Principal and the link teacher. The appropriate, well-planned activities demonstrate good pace and challenge, and encourage active participation from the young people. The year 12 peer mentors demonstrated a sound knowledge of their roles and responsibilities. They know well when to refer situations to their teachers and have a clear understanding of how to support their peers. The young people discuss, and use effectively, strategies to deal with difficult situations. In addition to their involvement in an accredited leadership course, the young people volunteer as trainee leaders in Ards Arena. The trainee leaders from Movilla High School were observed interacting well with other young people and showing good leadership skills when supervising activities.

4.6 The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care across the Ards division is very good. A key feature is the mutually respectful working relationships between the young people and the youth workers. In a majority of the group work sessions observed, there were agreed good standards of behaviour and discipline. The young people reported that they felt safe and secure while participating in the activities and knew who to approach if they had concerns about their safety or well-being. They demonstrated a strong sense of loyalty to their specific youth groups and the local community. The young people expressed their appreciation of the care and support provided by all of the staff.

4.7 The SEELB youth service has very good comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children and young people in the statutory youth sector. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education.

## **5. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS**

5.1 The overall quality of achievements and standards is good. The organisation reports that, between September 2009 and March 2011, 88 young people and 89 adults commenced a range of personal and social skills programmes, including Open College Network (OCN) levels one and two accredited courses (Appendix 4). The success rate for those who have completed the courses is consistently 100%. The quality of work in OCN folders is of a high standard and there is clear evidence of the development of good interpersonal skills and relationships among the young people.

5.2 The young volunteers demonstrate consistently good commitment in their various leadership roles. For example, one young person who is leading an urban arts programme has involved other young people fully in the planning, delivery and management of this project. The young people are gaining useful skills in art and design and learning to work co-operatively to complete a task. The volunteer uses well his own technical skills in this area to inform and teach his peers, and the staff.

5.3 The young people avail of good opportunities, in a majority of the sessions, to respond to challenging and creative tasks. One example was a girls' night for young people from the Ballynahinch area and Comber area. In this innovative session, the young people were encouraged to share and debate their opinions on personal responsibility and risk, which the staff connected well to the handling and the ownership of reptiles. The young

people supported each other effectively, and learned how to persevere with the tasks, to develop thinking skills, and to work collaboratively. Positive attitudes and high motivation levels were evident among the staff and young people. The young people understood clearly the learning outcomes, through the youth workers' good explanations and the plenary discussion.

5.4 In the ICT sessions observed, the young people worked independently on appropriate tasks and were given very good individual support and guidance. The standard of work produced was good, and in one example, almost all of the young people produced a laminated two-page copy of useful and relevant information about their centre and their own needs.

5.5 In one of the centres visited, the members demonstrated good levels of community involvement and political awareness. They value and recognise the relevance of the educational programme facilitated by the part-time staff and stated that they are well prepared for a forthcoming visit to the European Parliament.

5.6 Throughout this area, the young people engage well in a range of contemporary youth programmes, and articulate a willingness to take on further responsibilities for designing and providing enjoyable and relevant programmes for their peers. The SEELB youth service has recognised appropriately, through their effective self-evaluative processes, the need to create more structured opportunities for young people within the service, as well as those currently not engaged, to become more involved in determining and meeting their own needs.

## **6. SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS**

6.1 The strengths of the area include:

- the highly effective strategic leadership and management of the Senior Youth Officer, who demonstrates a clear commitment to excellence and quality improvement at all levels;
- the very good and mutually beneficial working relationships, which the youth service has developed with formal education to the benefit of the young people;
- the good range of programmes and activities, which are matched well to the needs and interests of the young people;
- the consistently good quality of almost all of the youth work practice observed;
- the good levels of commitment and enjoyment demonstrated by the young people; and
- the effective and positive contribution of the young volunteer leaders to the youth centre and the wider community.

6.2 The main area for improvement is:

- to build upon and extend the methods used for assessing the needs of the young people, through involving them more in identifying those needs and in assessing how well they have been met.

## 7. CONCLUSION

7.1 In the areas inspected, the quality of youth provision in this area is good. The organisation has important strengths in most of its youth work provision. The inspection has identified an area for improvement which the organisation has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the organisation's progress on the area for improvement.

**QUALITY ASSURANCE PILOT IN ARDS ARENA YOUTH RESOURCE CENTRE**

In the area inspected, the quality of the quality assurance framework is good.

As part of the SEELB youth service's ongoing commitment to the development of standards and improving the quality youth work delivery, Ards Arena is one of four youth centres in the SEELB that volunteered to pilot a new quality assurance framework. The main aims of the pilot are to establish if current youth provision in Ards Arena is meeting the needs of communities in the area, and if the youth work staff have the skills to meet the changing and the emerging needs of the young people.

**The strengths of the quality assurance pilot include:**

- the good strategic planning by the SEELB management in the development of quality assurance in Ards Arena;
- the good collaborative work of the staff team, which has resulted in the successful achievement of a majority of the identified targets;
- the Senior Youth Worker's effective management and support for the part-time staff team;
- the good skills developed by the part-time youth workers and their increased understanding of learning outcomes for the young people with whom they work;
- the significant increase in attendance of young people aged 14-19 from across the Newtownards area; and
- the positive attitudes of the young people to each other and their enthusiasm to participate more fully in the management of the centre.

**The area for improvement is:**

- to provide a robust evaluation of each stage of the quality assurance pilot, to include all of those involved in the process so far, particularly the young people, to assess the impact and to inform future improvements.

**YOUTH WORK SUPPORT IN LOCAL SCHOOLS, WITH A PARTICULAR FOCUS ON WORK IN MOVILLA HIGH SCHOOL**

In the area inspected, the quality of provision for youth work in schools in this area is very good.

The SEELB youth service has established very good youth work programmes in schools. The “New Beginnings” programme for primary schools is effective and linked appropriately to the needs of young people in relation to the transition between primary and post-primary education. In Movilla High School two very good youth programmes are in operation: Peer Mentoring Training and Leadership in Youth Work. Both programmes provide opportunities for pupils to develop further their personal and social skills and to attain accreditation.

**The strengths of the provision include:**

- the effective strategic planning and leadership of the Senior Youth Officer in the ongoing provision for, and development of, youth work in schools;
- the enthusiastic, hard working youth workers and their commitment and support for the young people within the programmes;
- the good quality of the planning and ongoing evaluation to inform future learning, content and programme delivery;
- the very good retention rates and outcomes for the young people in Movilla High School, and their levels of motivation and engagement in their learning;
- the effective partnership and close working links established between Ards Arena and Movilla High School, to enhance the social and learning experiences of young people; and
- the positive working relationships established among the youth workers, young people and their schools.

**PART-TIME STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME**

In the area inspected, the quality of the part-time staff development programme is good.

The SEELB has prioritised the development and support of part-time staff in the Ards area. Senior managers have introduced a programme of staff development, piloted last year in the Down area, to ensure that the youth provision meets as effectively as possible the needs of the young people.

**The strengths of the part-time staff development programme include:**

- the effective dissemination of the good practice from the Down area;
- the increased capacity of the part-time staff team to respond to the needs of the young people in the Ards area;
- the very good quality of delivery of the staff training programme by the Senior Youth Workers;
- the good outcomes for the part-time staff, including the development of relevant skills and knowledge to improve their practice; and
- the motivation and good understanding of the part-time staff of the importance of staff development to support the young people.

**The area for improvement is:**

- to provide a more rigorous method of assessing the part-time staff's training needs.

**LEADERSHIP TRAINING****Adult Training: September 2009-March 2011**

<b>Title of course including accreditation</b>	<b>Number of adults</b>	<b>Percentage successfully completing the course</b>
OCN Level 2	5	100
OCN Level 3	5	100
OCN Level 2	13	100
OCN Level 3	12	Ongoing
Specialist Music Studio Technology Training	8	100
Child Protection Awareness Training Workshop	11	100
Emergency First Aid Training	20	100
Aware Defeat Depression - Workshop	15	100

**Young People: September 2009-March 2011**

<b>Title of course including accreditation</b>	<b>Number of young people</b>	<b>Percentage successfully completing the course</b>
Ards Arena Food Safety Training	6	100
OCN Level 1 Leadership in Youth Work	9	100
OCN Level 1 Leadership In Youth Work	12	Ongoing
OCN Level 1 Leadership in Youth Work	13	Ongoing
Peer Mentoring	12	Ongoing
Peer Mentoring	12	Ongoing
Bronze Duke Of Edinburgh	8	Ongoing
Silver Duke Of Edinburgh	6	Ongoing
50 hours Millennium Volunteers Award	10	Ongoing
OCN Level 1 Healthy Heads Programme	12	Ongoing

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