

YOUTH INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

North Down YMCA, Bangor

Report of an Inspection in
January 2015



Providing Inspection Services for

Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure



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1. Focus of the inspection

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 processes for self-evaluation leading to improvement.

2. Context

North Down YMCA delivers a range of programmes under the core themes of Youth Development, Healthy Living and Community Engagement. It provides services mainly to the Harbour Ward in North Down, the third most deprived ward in North Down with a total youth population of 8 to 24 year olds of 666, and is governed by a Board of Directors, with the day-to-day running of the organisation delegated to the General Secretary. The General Secretary line manages the recently appointed full-time youth worker, who oversees the youth provision and manages the team of nine part-time youth workers and volunteers.

The South Eastern Education and Library Board fund the youth provision, which operates on five evenings and two afternoons each week; in addition it funds the extended provision for outreach and inclusive youth work.

At the time of the inspection, the membership was 60 young people aged between 4 and 22; the majority of the members are in the 4-9 age range. These figures do not include the number of young people who attend the outreach and detached initiatives. According to the centre's data, there has been a decrease of two thirds in the membership over the last two years.

3. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Satisfactory
Achievements and standards	Inadequate
Provision	Satisfactory
Leadership and management	Satisfactory

4. Achievements and Standards

- The young people who attend the centre regularly, demonstrate good levels of motivation and commitment. While they enjoy the activities which are largely recreational, they have too few opportunities to develop their group work and problem-solving skills. There is a need for the young people to engage in programmes which help them to develop new skills and interests, which are more closely matched to their needs.
- The number of young people who attend the centre has decreased dramatically over the last two years. Both evening and day-time attendance figures are too low across all of the programmes.

- While, there are a few individual examples of young people making progress within selected programmes, for example, the Millennium Volunteers, there is little evidence of achievements, or sufficient recording of progress for the majority of the young people. Although, a group of young people have enrolled recently in an Open College Network 'Preparing for Participation' course, there are too few young people achieving appropriate accreditation.
- Recently, a small number of young people have engaged in a 'Life-skills and Inclusion' programme and are exploring issues involving self-esteem and self confidence. It is important that other young people are encouraged to recognise the benefits of engaging in similar programmes.
- While young people engage readily and enthusiastically with the staff and others informally, there are too few opportunities for them to become involved in decision-making within the centre or in the wider community, or to reflect critically on their learning. The young people are keen to contribute ideas, but are not involved in the planning, design and evaluation of the programmes. Although the centre has accurately identified the need to re-establish the youth forum, at the time of the inspection no formal participative structures were in place.

5. Provision

- The quality of the practice observed ranged from very good to unsatisfactory, with two thirds of the practice evaluated as satisfactory or better. The staff need to plan and deliver more effectively for programmes to meet the diverse range of needs of the young people. While there is a small number of issue-based group work programmes, these do not sufficiently address the personal and social developmental needs of the majority of the young people. The staff need to develop further their facilitation skills to engage the young people in formal and informal group work.
- The North Down YMCA and the South Eastern Education and Library Board have made a significant investment in the provision of outreach and detached youth work within the area. The staff involved in this programme are committed and offer good support to very vulnerable young people, providing a detached youth, and outreach service on the streets at weekends. The arrangements for the registration of young people involved and evaluation of this work are limited. The staff involved require greater clarity about their roles and responsibilities, and the purpose of this work needs to be communicated more fully to the young people and partnership organisations.
- The staff, in particular the outreach staff, have established a wide range of partnerships to support their work, for example, with a town centre based shopping centre, which has resulted in the use of an empty retail unit as a drop-in facility for young people and has increased the profile of North Down YMCA in Bangor.

- The quality of the pastoral care is good. The centre provides a welcoming and inclusive environment, which ensures newcomers feel valued and are encouraged to attend and participate in activities with their peers. The staff have established very good working relationships with the young people and know most of them well. They have targeted accurately young people who have complex and challenging needs and are keen to develop further their work to help these young people overcome difficulties. The staff and young people are welcoming and inclusive of others from minority groups within the local community.
- The parents, who spoke to the inspection team, value the provision and report that they are satisfied with the activities and programmes provided by the centre, in particular, the seasonal events and out-of-centre visits. In discussions with the young people, almost all stated that they feel safe in the centre and a majority are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety and well-being.

6. Leadership and management

- The Board of Directors provide professional advice, on-going practical support and challenge to the organisation. They are experienced individuals, who have extensive knowledge of working across the voluntary and statutory youth sectors and are committed to provide a better quality service to the young people.
- Although the organisation has experienced changes of leadership and management in the last three years, the part-time staff and volunteers have remained enthusiastic about their work.
- The management and staff have a thorough understanding of the needs of the young people and the local community. However, there is a lack of curricular leadership to provide a sufficiently broad range of programmes for the young people.
- The management have identified accurately the key priorities requiring improvement and have established associated self-evaluation systems and procedures; there is a need for the organisation to implement these more effectively to bring about improvement. The current monitoring and quality improvement processes do not focus sufficiently on identifying and recording the impact of the provision on the outcomes for the young people.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the organisation has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding young people. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education, but the following areas need to be addressed: the child protection policy should be revised to provide more focused information relevant to the youth provision; the registration of members needs to be more robust; and there is a need to communicate more effectively with parents as to how they raise a concern or access policies.

7. Areas for improvement

There is a need for the:

- young people to be more involved in the planning and evaluation of their programmes, to ensure that provision accurately reflects their assessed and emerging needs;
- staff to plan and deliver developmental programmes which meet more effectively the diverse range of needs of the young people; and
- management to develop and implement monitoring and self-evaluation processes to focus on identifying the impact and effectiveness of the provision on the outcomes for the young people.

8. Conclusion

In most of the areas inspected, the quality of the overall provision for the young people in the North Down YMCA is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh the areas for improvement. 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 organisation's progress in addressing the areas for improvement over a 12-24 month period.

Total membership Table 1

Age group	4-9		10-15		16-18		19 +		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
2011/12	30	14	52	60	25	15	15	5	216
2012/13	11	12	55	44	27	24	17	*	193
2013/14	9	7	23	10	49	44	29	18	189
current	18	9	13	9	*	*	*	*	60

Where * denotes numbers fewer than 5

Health and safety

- Separate toilet facilities are not available for the young people and staff.
- The fire exit route to the rear of the premises does not provide easy access to the rear exit.
- The design of the handrail to the mobile units is an obstruction to the fire exit route at the rear of the building.
- The lighting at the rear exit gates is inadequate.
- The exit mechanism at the rear gates is ineffective.

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