

YOUTH INSPECTION

Epicentre, Armagh

Report of a Follow-up Inspection in June 2022



Providing Inspection services for:
Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments



Follow-up to the inspection of Epicentre, Armagh

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a follow-up inspection of Epicentre in Armagh in February 2019, which concluded that the centre needed to address important areas for improvement identified in the interest of all of the learners.

The following areas needed to be addressed:

- the post-inspection action plan needs to be revised and improved to include targets that are more specific and measurable and included in a revised controlled delivery agreement to reflect the new staffing arrangements;
- the centre needs to continue to increase the attendance and achievement rates for young people; and
- there is a need to build on the good work already in place to better develop the young people's understanding of their learning to enable them to reflect on and evaluate more accurately their achievements and plan for progression.

The ETI conducted a second follow-up inspection in June 2022. The ETI were presented with an appropriate updated action plan during the follow-up inspection.

In the interval since the first follow-up inspection, the following key actions and changes which affect the work of the centre have taken place:

- the Education Authority appointed a new centre based youth worker, youth support worker in charge and a senior youth worker team leader;
- the staff team has increased to seven part-time paid staff and six volunteers;
- during the COVID-19 pandemic, the centre continued to provide services for young people, for example through: detached youth work; online programmes; and the Eat Well Live Well initiative;
- the centre based youth worker and senior members established the 'Not So Little Voices' participative forum involving eight of the young people;
- the membership of the centre has grown significantly from the original inspection when 222 young people were enrolled; the current membership is 502;
- additional funding has been secured to support the centres' programmes, for example, from T:BUC¹ and Neighbourhood Renewal²;
- the newcomer youth engagement group was established in September 2019;

¹ Together building a United Community

² Department for the Communities funding for Neighbourhoods in the most deprived 10% of wards across Northern Ireland.

- the centre based youth worker is delivering accredited and non-accredited programmes in a local post-primary school; and
- the young people worked with the staff to establish a youth café at the centre on Saturday afternoons once a month.

Key findings

- During the COVID-19 pandemic, the centre staff provided extensive support for the young people including home visits with food parcels, pastoral outreach and online pastoral support. The high quality 'Black Out' video production, created by the young people during lockdown, reflects honestly the issues which impact on their lives and signposts viewers to relevant support agencies.
- An ethos of learning is well embedded throughout the centre and is clearly visible in the interactive displays which illustrate the young people's ability to understand and evaluate their learning journey. In discussions with the young people, they reflect on, value and can articulate clearly their learning and progression. The young leaders are confidently and competently developing their leadership skills and have a clear understanding of how they can use these skills to benefit their future career planning.
- The young people are fully involved in planning and influencing decision making, including the contextualisation of the centre's Curriculum Delivery Agreement to reflect their specific needs. The young people stated that the staff care about them as individuals, listen to them and use their views to inform the programme content and to support them effectively.
- The centre staff facilitate a broad range of creative and inclusive programmes, which support the personal and social development of the young people. The staff reflect on their delivery and evaluate the sessions thoroughly, identifying strengths and areas for future development. For example, in the session reviews, the staff highlight the young people's ability to accept one another's views and celebrate accomplishments.
- The attendance and achievement of the young people has improved significantly; for example, 70 young people have achieved accreditation across a range of programmes since 2020. The staff team have participated in a range of relevant training programmes which has supported well their work with the young people this included, for example, the accredited level 1 'Play Work Principles' and the level 3 'Introduction to Play Work in a Youth Work Setting' courses.
- The centre leadership and management team have established beneficial and collaborative partnerships with key statutory agencies, including health and social services, which enhance the programme delivery and support the young people.

Overall effectiveness

The Epicentre now demonstrates, the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interests of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the organisation sustains improvement.

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