

# YOUTH INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Girls' Brigade Northern Ireland

Report of a Follow-up Inspection  
in April 2019



The Education and Training Inspectorate  
Promoting Improvement

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## **FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF THE GIRLS' BRIGADE NORTHERN IRELAND**

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out an inspection of the Girls' Brigade Northern Ireland (GBNI) in November 2017<sup>1</sup>, which concluded that the organisation needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all the learners. The following areas needed to be addressed urgently:

- improve the safeguarding arrangements for the young people;
- improve the self-evaluation and quality improvement procedures across the organisation;
- agree and develop a coherent strategic plan that connects effectively with the operational plan; and
- improve the communication and working relationships between the staff and the executive committee, including a review of roles and responsibilities.

A safeguarding six-week follow-up inspection took place in January 2018 which evaluated that the organisation's arrangements had improved and broadly reflected the safeguarding guidance issued by the Department of Education. However, an area for improvement remained to be addressed; to continue to disseminate further the information for parents on how to raise a safeguarding concern.

The ETI carried out an interim follow-up visit in September 2018, met with staff and representatives of the executive and conducted a follow-up inspection in April 2019. The organisation provided an updated post-inspection action plan during the follow-up inspection which was of a good quality and appropriately indicated how the organisation was addressing the areas for improvement identified in the original inspection report.

In the interval since the original inspection, the following actions and changes which affect the work of the organisation have taken place:

- an external consultant was appointed to carry out a comprehensive review of roles and responsibilities across the organisation including those of the employees and the executive;
- a new constitutional review group has recently been established;
- new strategic and operational plans have been developed by the organisation;
- staff training events have taken place informed by a comprehensive needs analysis of the organisation;
- a senior management team has been established;
- the consultation with members included a survey of junior members with plans to extend the consultation to other age groups;
- a new website was fully launched in October 2018;

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.etini.gov.uk/publications/youth-inspection-girls-brigade-northern-ireland>

- the organisation is celebrating 125 years through various events across Northern Ireland;
- new arrangements are in place for the support and supervision of staff including monthly operational meetings;
- the organisation has completed CRED<sup>2</sup> training with other uniformed organisations, and developed a cross-community resource booklet 'Standing Alone Together' and a mental health resource, 'Time to Talk';
- three members from the youth GEMS<sup>3</sup> group have been added to the executive committee meetings;
- GEMS @10 event marking the tenth anniversary of GEMS;
- staff team representatives attend executive meetings and engage with members about their particular area of work; and
- additional safeguarding training has been undertaken by staff, and information for parents on how to raise a safeguarding concern has been further developed.

### Key findings

- The planning for quality improvement has been revised appropriately including the development of a balanced scorecard approach, and more effective communications pathways established between the staff and the executive. A culture of self-evaluation has been developed and a better understanding by each of the teams of their role and purpose within the organisation. For example, the executive now receive regular reports and updates from each of the teams within the organisation. The executive now provide opportunities for all staff, on a rotational basis, to present to them in order to highlight their area of work. There are regular staff meetings and individual support and supervision sessions are provided for each of the staff by their respective line managers.
- The organisation has agreed with staff and members a more coherent operational plan that links appropriately to the strategic vision and ethos of the organisation. The planning process was effectively informed through comprehensive consultation with stakeholders including; staff, officers, members and the GEMS group. Going forward it will be necessary for the organisation to continue to develop the procedures for the monitoring and evaluation of the operational plan.
- As a result of the comprehensive review of the roles and responsibilities, staff report a greater openness and transparency in their work and they further reported there is a positive change in the culture of the organisation. There are now more effective working relationships across the organisation. In particular, there is more effective formal and informal communications between members of the executive and the staff. The organisation has developed a new website and is actively working to use social media more effectively to promote the work of the organisation.

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<sup>2</sup> Community Relations Equality and Diversity

<sup>3</sup> Girls Empowering Mighty Servants - GBNI's youth participation group

- Through the very good leadership from members of the executive, the organisation have responded effectively to the areas for improvement. It is important that the leadership within the executive continues to foster good working relationships across the organisation so that there is a continuity of approach beyond the current three-year cycle of leadership and management.
- The safeguarding now reflects the guidance issued by the Department of education. The organisation has revised documentation to inform parents of the procedures for referral if they have a concern. An annual review of all safeguarding systems and procedures, documentation is now in place.

### **Overall Effectiveness**

The Girls' Brigade Northern Ireland 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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