

EDUCATION AND TRAINING
INSPECTORATE

YOUTH INSPECTION

Waveney Youth Centre, Ballymena,
County Antrim

Report of a Follow-up Inspection in April 2024



Providing Inspection services for:
Department of Education
Department for the Economy
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Follow-up to the inspection of Waveney Youth Centre, Ballymena

Introduction

A second follow-up inspection was carried out in April 2024 and provided Waveney Youth Centre with the opportunity to demonstrate its progress in addressing the areas for action from the time of the first follow-up inspection in May 2022 and the interim follow-up visit in March 2024.

Views of young people and staff

The young people spoke of how they enjoy participating in the programmes provided at the centre. They were particularly appreciative of the range of trips and residential experiences. A small number of the young people talked less enthusiastically about the completion of “book work” associated with some of these programmes, but emphasised how much they enjoy the recreational activities.

In discussions with staff, they spoke of their work over the last year to build and develop further the provision for the senior members (14-18 years); in particular, they highlighted how their local knowledge and understanding of the young people’s needs and interests has informed the provision.

Key actions and changes

Following the original inspection in November 2018, the youth organisation submitted an action plan to the Department of Education; this was subsequently adjusted appropriately in light of the feedback given by the Education and Training Inspectorate. The action plan was amended further in line with the first follow-up inspection findings.

The youth centre has received external support, provided by the Education Authority (EA) Youth Service, in relation to staff professional development, additional staffing and programme resources.

During this period, the key actions and changes which have affected the work of the youth centre include:

- the increased junior membership (nine to 13 years), from 92 to 187 young people;
- the appointment and location of a new Children Looked After Youth Worker at Waveney Youth Centre;
- the work of the centre-based youth worker in a local post-primary school, supporting groups of young people in Years 9,10 and 11 through the Learning Together Programme;

- the training for all the staff on the Quality Assurance Framework for Youth Work;
- the establishment by the full-time youth worker of a pop-up youth centre in a local business and recreation centre, which has facilitated the engagement of an additional 46 young people; and
- the provision of the Youth Volunteer Academy and the Risk-Taking Awareness Programme for senior members, in partnership with the Emergency Services.

As a consequence of the external support and the key changes and actions taken by the youth centre, there have been improvements in the quality of the youth provision as reported in the key findings below.

Key findings

- The additional financial and staffing resources from the EA Youth Service have resulted in the provision of new youth centre equipment and enhanced the range of programmes provided for senior members, including for example, the residential programmes.
- The programmes provided by the staff team are helping the young people develop useful life skills and enabling them to build new friendships with their peers from differing backgrounds.
- The continuing professional development provided by the EA Youth Service is supporting well the staff and enhancing their skills in working with the young people.
- The Local Voice process is facilitating the young people's involvement in decision-making within the centre, for example resulting in the development of the sensory room and the acquisition of specific sporting equipment.
- The system for recording the registration and attendance of young people has improved and is monitored regularly by the centre staff and management.
- Furthermore, the junior membership and attendance numbers have increased significantly.

Area for further consideration:

- The leadership and management of the centre should continue to plan strategically to retain more of the junior members and progress them to become senior members of the youth centre.

Child and Adult Protection

At the time of the inspection, the evidence provided by Waveney Youth Centre demonstrates that the arrangements for child protection align to the current statutory guidance. The staff would benefit from professional learning and training by the EA in developing the adult safeguarding arrangements in the youth centre.


Going Forward

The ETI will continue to monitor, through district inspector visits, the progress of Waveney Youth Centre in addressing the area for further consideration as set out in this report. No further follow-up inspection is required.

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