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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
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Providing Inspection Services for
Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of an Inspection

Corpus Christi Youth Centre
Belfast

Inspected: November 2006

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1. CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Corpus Christi Youth Centre is a full-time parish youth centre situated in Ballymurphy within the Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB) area. The centre provides opportunities for the young people of Ballymurphy, Whiterock and Springhill areas. According to figures supplied by Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) the centre is in one of the most disadvantaged areas in Northern Ireland. The centre was purpose built in 1973 and since then has experienced a number of difficulties in relation to the buildings. Prior to the current full-time youth worker being appointed the centre operated on a part-time basis for two years due to the difficulties in recruiting and retaining full-time youth workers. The current full-time youth worker has been in post for two years and prior to the inspection the centre had been closed for four months to allow repairs to be completed. At the time of the inspection the centre had been re-opened for seven weeks.

1.2 According to figures supplied by the centre, there is a membership of 396 young people between the ages of five and 19 with an average nightly attendance of approximately 65 young people. The centre operates six evenings each week and provides a range of social, recreational, educational and creative activities reflecting the core curriculum. In addition, the staff provide personal development programmes for young people. The boxing club and local bowling club use the centre's facilities.

1.3 There is one full-time youth worker, five part-time youth workers and 14 volunteers, with many of the staff giving long-term service to the centre. The youth work staff are well supported by an active and dedicated management committee. The cleaners make a significant contribution to the high standard of cleanliness and upkeep of the centre.

1.4 As part of the arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care members of the inspection team held discussions with several groups of young people, parents and members of the management committee. Each group indicated strong support for the work of the centre and for the commitment of the staff. The inspection findings endorse the supportive comments made by the parents and the young people.

1.5 There are significant strengths in the quality of the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection. The centre has procedures in place that implement fully the guidance outlined in the relevant Department of Education (DE) circulars. The management committee, staff, parents, children and young people are fully aware of the centres procedures and have had the opportunity to feed into a range of helpful policies which guide the work of the centre. These policies and the effective pastoral care systems underpin the good relationships and the effective delivery of youth work practice that takes place within and beyond the youth centre.

2. THE INSPECTION PROCESS

2.1 In November 2006, two members of the Education and Training Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) evaluated the work of the youth centre, including the arrangements for Child Protection and Pastoral Care. The inspection team held informal, as well as structured discussions with, young people attending the centre, youth workers, members of the management committee, the area youth officer (BELB) and a number of other youth providers and funders. Further evidence was gathered through direct observation of 30 hours

of a range of youth work including soccer coaching, specific group work programmes, and evening provision.

3. THE MAIN STRENGTHS OF THE PROVISION

3.1 The excellent quality of working relationships observed between the young people and the youth workers, which underpins the personal and social development of the young people. The majority of staff are from the community and understand the local circumstances and particular issues. The staff are committed to providing a safe and secure environment for the safety and welfare of the children and young people attending the centre. The young people are treated with respect and encouraged to achieve their potential, enhance the quality of their lives and make a significant contribution to their community.

3.2 The range of policies and procedures ensure the welfare and safety of the children, young people and staff within the centre and which promote non-aggressive behaviour. Curriculum opportunities have included training from Women's Aid in relation to addressing domestic violence.

3.3 The young people respond positively to the opportunities provided through the programme and report a sense of enjoyment and achievement. In the best practice observed young people were encouraged to participate in a range of educational and recreational activities acquiring skills and knowledge.

In one particular programme the children and young people received good quality football coaching both for their enjoyment and to enable them to compete with other football teams. This project was then developed to promote smoking cessation and culminated in a wall mural being painted by a group of ten young people in the youth centre during the inspection.

3.4 The recognition and celebration of the young people's personal and social development gained through particular projects is a significant feature of the centre. Local press and media are used well to inform the local community of the young people's success in completing specific projects. Photographs are displayed around the centre recording and celebrating key events within the local community. Accreditation is well used to acknowledge and record the young people's achievement, these include the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) Level 1 Citizenship, and Open College Network (OCN) Level 1 Conflict Resolution.

3.5 The curriculum is continuing to be developed in response to the needs of the young people and the issues facing them within their local community. The centre's strategic plan gives priority to working with the local community and building capacity to support and contribute to the youth work delivered through the centre. This is illustrated by the centre promoting active citizenship among the young people, encouraging Lifelong Learning, enhancing employability and developing good use of shared resources within the local community. A particular example of this is the good use of the multi-use games and activities facility.

3.6 The inclusive aspect of the programme provides for young people with Asperger's Syndrome and their families to attend the centre on a weekly basis.

This programme provides a good balance and range of activities for all the young people attending the evening session. The activities include art, drama and recreational activities. Parents also have the opportunity to meet other parents and during the inspection had access to Community Awareness and Asperger's Training that they found useful and supportive. Siblings of the young people with Asperger's Syndrome have access to training in relation to disability awareness and during the inspection were preparing to participate in 'Inclusive Games' organised through PHAB 'Inclusion Matters'. A member of staff from the West Belfast Detached Youth Project also supports this provision.

3.7 The young people are involved in planning the programme and take responsibility for their own development. This was well illustrated during the inspection by two particular projects, City Cemetery which looked at the social history of those buried in the cemetery and Beyond Borders a project linking young people from Corpus Christi, Ardoyne and Carlingford both receiving external funding. The young people who took responsibility for developing and completing the agreed targets managed both projects effectively and have earned themselves recognition within the local community and beyond for their commitment and creativity in designing and completing the projects.

3.8 Priority and effort is given to engaging with the local community and demonstrating how the youth centre can provide a safe and secure environment for all the young people who want to attend. The programme is supported by input from the West Belfast Detached Youth Project particularly in relation to working with identified groups of young people who otherwise do not access youth provision. The centre produces an annual report, which is distributed throughout the community as a means of communication and also in an effort to recruit adults from the local community to become involved in the centre.

3.9 The full-time youth worker is committed to developing good practice within the centre and this is shared with other youth workers. The full-time youth worker makes a significant contribution to Youthcom as a means of raising the profile of centre-based youth work engaging in professional debate.

3.10 Valuable external links have been established with other youth providers and these have increased the opportunities for the young people and enhanced the quality of youth work within the centre. These links have included work with Upper Springfield Development Trust, North and West Social Services Trust and Northern Ireland Children's Holidays.

3.11 The full-time youth worker and the management committee have been successful in securing additional funding that has allowed specific projects to develop. These projects have raised the profile of young people within the local community and enhanced their personal and social development. Specific funding has been secured from the Heritage Lottery Fund, The Art's Council and Belfast City Council.

3.12 The leadership and management skills of the full-time youth worker are a significant factor in the success of the centre

4. THE MAIN AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE PROVISION

4.1 There is a need for appropriate provision to deliver a suitable programme to the junior section including staffing levels.

4.2 There is a need for the staff team to set specific targets for project-based work in response to the identified needs of the young people.

4.3 There is a need for the continuous development of suitable quality assurance measures to ensure that there is clear evidence of the outcomes for the young people.

4.4 There is a need to urgently address the level of health and safety risk in the accommodation.

5. CONCLUSION

Corpus Christi Youth Centre has important strengths in delivering the core curriculum and ensuring effective pastoral provision for the young people. In the areas inspected the organisation has strengths in many aspects of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified a few areas for improvement in important areas which need to be addressed to meet effectively the needs of all the young people.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the organisation's progress in addressing these areas for improvement.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

1. The emergency exit doors in the sports hall are unsafe.
2. The poor condition and unsuitability of accommodation in adjoining premises for working with groups of young people.

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