

Report of a Pilot Inspection
Lakeland Youth Centre, Enniskillen

October 2023



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1. INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Lakeland Youth Centre (centre), situated in Enniskillen was newly renovated in 2017. The centre is managed by the Education Authority (EA); as part of the Fermanagh and Omagh youth team. The centre works with young people aged 9 to 18 years from a range of community backgrounds.

In the period 2022-2023, 505 young people engaged with the range of activities and projects offered in the centre. At the time of the inspection, 33 young people had almost completed an Open College Network (OCN) qualification at level 2 in Youth Work. There were 138 young people registered with the centre, 32 of whom are recently new members. One hundred and three of them attended sessions during the inspection visit.

The key areas identified by the staff in respect of the young people's needs include: the challenge of living in a rural community, particularly with limited transport; the provision of opportunities for young people to give back and take responsibility through volunteering; and the need for health and wellbeing programmes.

In addition to the Pathway to Professional Youth Work Programme (Pathways) youth worker, who is responsible for the generic youth work programmes offered at the centre, the EA Youth Service has based the following staff at the centre: a senior youth worker team leader; a centre-based senior youth worker; Facilitating Life And Resilience Education (FLARE) currently vacant since September 2023 and Resilience Education Assisting Change to Happen (REACH) programme youth workers; a Creative Arts and Digital Innovation (CADI) youth worker (post vacant), and two area-based youth workers.

The inspection focussed on the centre-based generic and developmental youth work programmes provided with and for the young people of the Enniskillen District Electoral Area. The centre is open to young people four evenings from 6.30 pm to 9.00 pm and two afternoons each week. Key programmes delivered within the centre include the junior, intermediate, and senior clubs, the Mini-mentors and the Horizons programme (the Horizons programme is a youth leadership programme that aims to reduce educational under-achievement and develop youth leadership within local communities). In addition, during the last year, the staff delivered 18 personal and social development programmes and two residentials.

The staff have developed a range of partnerships to support their work with young people including local primary and post-primary schools, Omagh and Fermanagh District Council and the Health Trust. At the time of the inspection visit, staff were working in two local schools supporting personal development provision to 45 key stage 3 and 4 young people.

B. VIEWS OF PARENTS, YOUNG PEOPLE AND STAFF

Inspectors spoke to a small number of parents/carers about their children's involvement within the centre. They spoke highly of the supportive relationships with the centre staff and their peers and how their children feel well cared for, comfortable and secure to speak to the youth workers about any problems. The parents/carers are aware of the centre's safeguarding and protection arrangements and feel that their children are in "a safe space". They also commented on how they value their children meeting and engaging with other children from a wide range of schools and backgrounds. Other benefits identified by the parents/carers were that their children are: planning and delivering programmes; engaged in international travel; developing an awareness of mental health, well-being, and self-care; gaining additional qualifications; and the support they receive in preparing their curriculum vitae and/or personal statements for university entrance.

The inspectors also held seven focus group discussions with 54 young people. In all the discussions, the young people highlighted the supportive relationships with their youth workers. The young people were engaging, stated that they enjoyed the activities, and communicated effectively with one another, the staff and inspectors. They spoke of how the staff encourage them to make friends and help them to build relationships with one another. They appreciate the opportunity to meet young people from a range of schools, cultures and communities. The young people articulated well the skills they develop through their involvement in planning, delivering, and improving programmes. For example, they talked about developing their confidence, communication, and organisational skills through leadership programmes. The senior members highlighted, in particular, their independence, presentation, public speaking, and leadership skills and a number of them are keen to either volunteer or work in the youth sector because of their experiences in the centre.

In discussions with inspectors, the youth workers stated that they are well supported by the centre's senior staff and they value the monthly supervision sessions with their line managers. There is an appropriate focus placed on meeting their emotional health and wellbeing needs and they also have access to a confidential counselling service. They suggested a stronger emphasis could be placed on providing a wider range of opportunities, for those staff who are often working in isolation, to share their experiences.

C. THE PROCESS OF INSPECTION

The ETI inspectors worked alongside Lakeland Youth Centre staff to consider how well the centre:

- has identified and articulates its vision;
- prioritises actions to achieve the vision;
- overcomes the main challenges it faces;

- monitors and reviews progression to identify, celebrate and embed success; and
- grows and develops an inclusive community of learning.

2. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

- The centre's vision is well embedded in the fun and enjoyable programmes, which are matched well to the needs of the young people.
- The young people understand and value the transferable skills they acquire, which they state prepares them well for their future education or employment opportunities.
- A significant number of young people are progressing into leadership roles, developing skills and delivering interesting and empowering programmes, which benefit them and their peers.
- The staff have a strong and appropriate focus on the young people's personal and social development, including their emotional health and wellbeing.
- The staff use their excellent interpersonal and facilitation skills to support the young people in formal and informal group work and individual conversations.
- The staff are reflective and use their detailed session recordings to inform appropriately their future planning and to monitor the individual progress of the young people.

Areas for further consideration:

- The need to increase the registration and attendance rates of the intermediate and senior programmes.
- The greater collaboration across centre based youth services, both at regional and local level, to share effective practice and resources with a view to enhance the youth provision for the young people.
- To address the underutilisation of digital technology within the centre and the associated development of the young people's digital skills.
- The need for the EA to: provide further professional learning and training in adult safeguarding and protection for all staff, relevant to their role; develop further the safeguarding/protection policy and procedures, to include adult safeguarding and protection; and embed the role of the adult safeguarding champion across the EA youth service provision.

3. MAIN REPORT

A. SETTING THE VISION

The vision for the centre is: “All young people feeling welcomed, safe, included and encouraged, to have fun and achieve their full potential”. In discussions with the young people across the age groups and the staff, the youth centre’s vision is well embedded in the programmes delivered and is appropriate to the young people’s needs.

The care and compassion that the staff show reflects their vision and is recognised and valued by the young people. The full-time and part-time staff demonstrate excellent interpersonal skills with the young people and their interactions are consistently focussed on the young peoples’ personal and social development. The part-time staff are reflective practitioners and their post-session discussions have a strong focus on how well they are meeting the needs of individual young people.

The written priorities for development and the action planning for the centre needs to reflect more clearly the needs of the young people. The staff can articulate well what they want to achieve in relation to the outcomes planned for the young people, but this is not sufficiently reflected in the planning documentation. The staff have developed several aims and objectives from their vision statement which could be more closely aligned to their Curriculum Delivery Agreement. These include the work the staff plan to do to recruit more volunteers from the young people attending and the wider community; and the need to increase the intermediate and senior registration and attendances.

The centre’s leadership and management team recognise and value the work of the individual members of staff. In addition, they recognise that further work is required to develop collaboration among the other local and regional staff based at the centre to share effective practice and resources to enhance the services provided for the young people.

B. IMPLEMENTING AND IMPROVING TO ACHIEVE THE VISION

To achieve the vision, the staff have an effective curriculum in place to engage, in particular, the junior age range within the generic programme in an inclusive and welcoming environment. The young people enjoy the range of crafts and games that are available and make their own suggestions to shape the activities on offer. The youth workers know and engage well with the young people to involve, encourage, and support them in their personal and social development.

The individual needs of the young people are captured and recorded in detail during the registration process and are met well through the planned and targeted provision. The effective links with parents inform the staff and provide useful background information which guides the support given to the young people to help them overcome barriers to engaging in the programmes. The staff use their

knowledge and understanding of the young people to good effect to support and enable the young people to enhance their personal capabilities and develop greater self-awareness and resilience. The young people develop valuable social skills through the various pathways provided by the centre such as, the intermediate volunteers, Leading the Way, Mini-mentors and youth voice.

The staffs' review of sessions is highly effective in highlighting individuals' progression and engagement. Through these reviews, the progression of individual young people can be tracked across a variety of different programmes and demonstrate how they have been supported by staff to achieve to their potential. The young people have well-considered, clear pathways to progression, preparing them well for their future education and employment, through appropriate leadership programmes within the centre. These included, for example, the planning of the Healthy Hearts Fair Day where the young people showcased aspects of healthy life choices from a young person's perspective to year 8 pupils from local schools.

The staff have identified appropriately the need to address the underutilisation of digital technology within the centre and the young people's development of their digital skills. Currently there is no Wi-Fi access within the centre which further limits opportunities for the development of their digital skills.

The health, safety and wellbeing of young people is a central theme in the planning and delivery of the youth work sessions across the centre. The staff develop, maintain and sustain professional and respectful relationships with the young people, which enables them to understand and support appropriately their care and welfare needs.

There is a strong focus on keeping young people safe while in the centre, for example, the "door policy" was clear and monitored, with the young people being dropped off and collected by parents/carers, signing in and signing out, and no one was allowed to leave early without prior notice from a parent. The young people report that they feel safe and well cared for in the centre alongside feeling welcomed, valued and included.

C. BUILDING EQUITY

A key aspect of the provision is the voice of the young person. The ongoing development and impact of that voice is a strength to both the programmes delivered in the centre and those to the wider community. Programmes focusing on issues such as Healthy Hearts and Erasing Stigma, are examples of the positive outcomes of the active engagement and participation by young people at all stages. In addition, the staff's connections to wider services for young people, such as Intercultural Services and the Children's Diversionary Form, are strengthening further the building of equity and promoting inclusion.

The centre's purposeful engagement with a diverse range of young people from different religions, cultures and socio-economic backgrounds is welcomed by both the young people and their parents/carers. Building equity is also evidenced by how the staff gather information on the individual additional needs of young people to

ensure that they have a comprehensive understanding of the nature of the need, its impact on the young person, and the strategies and approaches which best support their inclusion. The staff help the young people to address pertinent inclusion issues such as sexism and homophobia, through challenging and encouraging the appropriate use of language and behaviours.

The staff state that they are well supported through engagement in appropriate and well-targeted continuous professional development, which enables them to develop the understanding and skills to support young people in relevant and current issues.

D. EMBEDDING SUCCESS

The staff provide the young people with ongoing feedback during their activities and the young people benefit from encouragement and affirmation on their progress.

The young people plan and deliver programmes in relation to their physical and mental health, such as, 'Healthy Hearts' project, which made an effective contribution to the leadership skills of intermediate members. Six intermediate and four senior young people, for example, have progressed from a number of leadership development programmes to volunteering alongside their leaders. Four senior young people who are currently enrolled on the OCN level 2 youth leadership course have taken the opportunity to volunteer in the youth centre's generic and developmental programmes. The young people reported that they enjoy delivering activities and that the programmes have built their confidence; they now want to "give back" to the youth centre community.

The young people who participate in the developmental programmes advance their life skills through well-planned activities, such as, joinery and problem-solving tasks. Their achievements are highlighted through awarding certificates and plaques, posting of photographs and attendance at celebratory award dinners.

'The Importance of Youth Citizenship' event, which took place at the centre in March 2023, established and reported on the views and opinions of young people and key stakeholders. The evening was facilitated primarily by young people and the findings have been integrated into a report. The young people spoke of how important it is to be giving back to their community, the development of their leadership skills and, how the youth programmes contribute to their personal and social development. The young people reported that more needed to be done to promote and advertise rural youth services to help reach local young people not participating, including, but not limited to, utilising social media platforms.

The number of members attending the youth centre is too low. The staff recognise the need for further consideration to be given on to how to recruit and retain more young people, particularly at the transition points of junior to intermediate and to senior groups.

E. GROWING A COMMUNITY OF LEARNING

The EA youth service completes a training needs analysis and delivers a range of professional learning programmes to support both full and part-time staff in their work with young people. The online accredited programmes offered recently to the young people engaged in the Horizons programme are broad-ranging and should be considered for other young people and staff.

While the young people are engaged in a range of leadership opportunities, there is a need for greater connection across the Horizons and leadership programmes to support the growth of the member sections of the generic youth work. This should also provide further progressive leadership opportunities for the young people involved in the developmental programmes. The staff recognised the need to engage more volunteers from their young people and the wider community.

The centre staff have effective working partnerships with local organisations, such as the Fermanagh and Omagh Council, PCSP and the local Trust, which they use effectively to benefit the young people in having their voice heard on issues which are important to them and their peers. The staff report that the Local Advisory Group, which involved a significant number of young people, has been temporarily “stood down”, removing this opportunity for the young people.

There is a need for all of the EA youth work teams based in the centre, both the local and regional staff, to work more collaboratively with one another to enhance the services to young people through the sharing of resources and effective practice. Similarly, the Pathways youth worker and senior youth worker recognise the potential benefits of them working more closely to observe and share their youth work skills, and to build collaboratively the centre membership and programmes.

F. CHILD PROTECTION

Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding young people do not take full account of the guidance issued by the Department of Education. There is a need for the EA Youth Service to:

- provide further professional learning and training in adult safeguarding and protection for all staff, relevant to their role;
- develop further the safeguarding and protection policy and procedures, to include adult safeguarding and protection; and
- embed the role of the adult safeguarding champion across the EA Youth Service provision.

4. GOING FORWARD

The staff team in Lakeland Youth Centre has demonstrated a clear commitment to their vision of “All young people feeling welcomed, safe, included and encouraged, to have fun and achieve their full potential with our support”.

The staff provide a welcoming, fun and safe place for young people, who benefit from working with the staff to create purposeful, inclusive and enjoyable programmes. The young people are engaged and supported through the excellent interpersonal and facilitation skills of the staff who build upon the young people’s previous progress to help them achieve to their potential. There is an effective curriculum in place to engage, in particular, the junior age range within the generic programme in an inclusive and welcoming environment. The young people’s development of their personal and social skills is preparing them appropriately for future learning, employment and life as a young adult. Through the leadership programmes young people are giving back to their local community as volunteers. Further collaborative working across the EA Youth Service staff based at the centre is required to enhance the resources, staff development and programmes for the young people.

The ETI will monitor the progress of Lakeland Youth Centre in addressing the areas for further consideration as laid out in this report.

The Education and Training Inspectorate

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