

YOUTH INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Ards Rural Project,
Newtownards

Report of an inspection
in September 2015



Providing Inspection Services for

Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure



Quantitative terms used by the ETI

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75%-90%
A majority	-	50%-74%
A significant minority	-	30%-49%
A minority	-	10%-29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

Performance levels

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) use the following performance levels when reporting on Achievement and standards, on Provision for learning and on Leadership and management:

Outstanding
Very good
Good
Important area(s) for improvement
Requires significant improvement
Requires urgent improvement

Overall effectiveness

The ETI use one of the following inspection outcomes when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the organisation:

The organisation has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will continue to monitor how the organisation sustains improvement.
The organisation demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will continue to monitor how the organisation sustains improvement.
The organisation needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the organisation's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement. There will be a follow-up inspection in 12-18 months.
The organisation needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the organisation's progress. There will be a follow-up inspection in 12-18 months.

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1. Focus of the inspection

The inspection focused on:

- the young people's achievements and standards;
- the quality of provision for learning; and
- the quality of the leadership and management, including the processes for self-evaluation leading to improvement.

2. Context

The Ards Rural Project is based in Ards Youth Resource Centre and works across the main villages in the Ards peninsula including, Kircubbin, Portavogie, Portaferry, Millisle and Donaghadee. The project has two full-time staff, a 20 hours-per-week youth worker and a team of part-time staff and volunteers. According to information supplied by the organisation, there has been a steady increase in membership enrolment over the last four years.

3. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
Achievements and standards	Good
Provision for learning	Good
Leadership and management	Good

4. Achievements and standards

The young people are confident, friendly and enjoy the programmes and activities that are provided for their enjoyment and learning. They are able to reflect well on the benefits of engaging in specific programmes, including demonstrating a good understanding of how the skills developed during the community relations work benefit them now and in the future as parents and adults. The young people involved in the various programmes have high expectations; the staff are aware of how these expectations need to be managed.

The young people benefitted from the TBUC¹ summer camp, where they met and formed friendships with young people from different cultures and engaged in new learning experiences. Through this programme, the young people, who are rurally isolated, engaged with other young people from different cultures, religions and backgrounds. The young people report that they are less sectarian as a result of the TBUC residential experience.

¹ Together: Building a United Community (TBUC) is funded by the Northern Ireland Executive's strategy for good relations.

The young people are developing their understanding of managing risky behaviours, such as road safety. Similarly, the young women who are engaged in a risk management programme are developing an understanding of how better to manage their personal safety and are building further on their confidence and self-esteem to help them deal with a range of challenging situations.

A significant cohort of young people are developing their capacity to avail of leadership roles through the broad range of accredited and non-accredited training programmes offered to them. However, the young people need to be involved in meaningful leadership roles, so that their views can be incorporated in the governance of the project more effectively.

The staff who work in the school based programmes are making a valued contribution to closing the performance gap between low and high achievers through the specific interventions provided by the 'Learning Together Programme'². At key stage 4 the programme is providing a small number of young people with relevant accreditation that is improving their chance of employability and helping them progress with greater confidence to the next stage of their learning.

5. Provision for learning

The quality of the sessions observed were mostly good. Across the project, the staff and the young people have very good relationships with one another and engage in purposeful conversations. In the best practice, there is highly effective informal group work and one-to-one work with the young people, the sessions were well prepared and there was a well-structured activity programme for junior members. In addition, the young people who attended the well-planned summer programme reunion event highlighted how much they enjoyed it.

In the less effective practice, the group work sessions were overly directed, with too little input from the young people. In a small minority of the sessions, there was a need for staff to give the young people more time to reflect on their learning, and the staff needed to record this more effectively in the end of session evaluation.

All of the staff team work enthusiastically with the young people across the various settings. The young people value highly and are regularly involved in the extended youth work provision. In particular, the midnight soccer³ initiative which operates once a month on a Saturday from 11pm to 1am is providing young people with a constructive and safe environment to meet. The volunteers add significant value to the youth work programmes and play an important role in sustaining the provision in the rural communities. Furthermore, the staff use residential experiences effectively to extend and develop the relationships among the young people.

The youth workers have a good range of programmes and an appropriate curriculum in place, which match well the needs and interests of the young people attending the provision. There is a wide range of relevant issue-based youth work programmes, including specific projects with young women that have been designed and are managed sensitively by the youth workers. The drop-in provision for young people at the weekends provides effective diversionary programmes, which are appropriately relaxing and informal.

² The *Learning Together* Programme is a collaborative working partnership between individual schools and the Youth Service at key stages 2-4.

³ Midnight soccer is a youth initiative, part of the extended hour's programme where young people take part in a range of activities that include structured and unstructured programmes.

The newly reopened and refurbished part-time youth centre in Donaghadee provides a positive setting for an active group of junior members to meet. The young people demonstrate a sense of ownership and use the centre to meet friends in a safe and welcoming environment. The part-time staff would benefit from additional training and support on programme planning to build further on their existing good work with the young people who have challenging behaviours.

The quality of the arrangements for care guidance and support within the project is very good. The young people benefit greatly from the individual and group support provided by the staff. The staff advocate well on behalf of the young people and are keen to continuously improve the quality of their experiences to help them achieve to their full potential. Almost all of the young people value and respect the staff and their peers, they enjoy one another's company and recognise the significant progress they make while attending the project.

The young people informed the inspection team that they feel safe in the project and are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety and well-being. In the discussions with a small number of parents, they highlighted the very good support that the staff give their children, particularly those who have additional learning needs.

6. Leadership and management

The staff can articulate clearly the vision for the future direction and delivery of the project. The Education Authority have invested and committed significant resources to support the provision of youth work across the area. The targets and objectives that are included in the annual curriculum delivery agreement are ambitious and reflect well the Priorities for Youth⁴.

While there is good strategic leadership of the project, the staff have identified appropriately the need to use self-evaluation more effectively to inform future planning and to disseminate best practice. In particular, there is a need to ensure that the project continues to develop sharper processes for self-evaluation and quality improvement planning involving all of the staff, and that the prioritised actions are used to help measure outcomes and effect improvement. The use of qualitative evaluations and quantitative data should be more fully reflected in the quarterly and annual reports.

In the short time that the project has been established, productive relationships and links have been built with a range of rural community providers that are mutually beneficial. The staff team have a sound understanding of the needs of the local communities and are working alongside other organisations to provide additional resources for the young people. This work is building the capacity of local people, including the young people from their own communities, to develop and contribute effectively to youth work programmes. The project is inclusive of young people from a range of diverse backgrounds and is proactively developing mutual understanding.

The strong links between the project and schools are beneficial to the young people's education, for example, the principal and links teacher from one of the post-primary schools highlighted to the inspection team that the positive and productive engagement with the youth service is raising standards by improving the young people's attitude and disposition to learning. The youth service has further developed appropriately this link to include regular meetings between youth workers and teachers. At key stage 3, the programmes need to be strategically developed further between the teachers and youth work staff to ensure the quality of the withdrawal programme is assessed more effectively.

⁴ Priorities for Youth is the overarching policy framework for the delivery of the youth service.

On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the centre has satisfactory arrangements for safeguarding children and young people. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education, however, the Education Authority's safeguarding policy for the project needs to be updated to reflect current guidance.

7. Overall effectiveness

Ards Rural Project demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will continue to monitor how the organisation sustains improvement; in particular, the need to continue to develop sharper processes for self-evaluation involving all of the staff and incorporating more effectively the views of the young people.

APPENDIX

Table 1 - Total membership

Age group	4-9		10-15		16-18		19 +		Numbers involved in outreach/ detached	Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female		
2011/12	20	15	33	30	28	23			(54)	149
2013/14	25	18	38	32	47	45			(70)	205
2014/15	22	13	70	72	64	59			(108)	300
Current	15	11	94	96	53	56			(81)	325

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