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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement*



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

Ballybeen Action Zone

Inspected: October 2006

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1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Ballybeen Action Zone (BAZ) project has been in operation for over 12 months and is based in converted flats in Orsay Walk in the Ballybeen estate, Dundonald. Ballybeen estate was established during the 1960's and is situated within the local government area of Castlereagh. According to information supplied by the project, the area covers three electoral wards; Carrowreagh, Enler and Graham's Bridge with a total population of over 9,000 and approximately 24% of young people are under the age of 16.

1.2 The BAZ project has developed from needs identified by officers and other staff from the South-Eastern Education and Library Board's (SEELB) Youth Service, the Department of Education (DE) and other agencies and organisations working with young people from within the Ballybeen area.

1.3 In September 2005 the SEELB received a grant of almost £389,000 from the Belfast Regeneration Office (BRO) through DE and the SEELB is contributing a total of almost £79,500 for the three-year project.

1.4 The area youth officer for Castlereagh has overall management responsibility for BAZ with the day-to-day management delegated to the Senior Youth Worker. There are three full-time youth workers in the BAZ project including a senior youth worker and two area youth workers. Eight part-time workers are engaged with the project and there is an administration officer employed 20 hours per week. There are 19 voluntary youth groups in the Ballybeen area registered with the SEELB and the BAZ youth work staff provides support to a minority of those groups. Seventeen of the registered youth groups receive financial support through the SEELB sponsorship scheme.

1.5 The main aim of the BAZ project (outlined in the DE Economic Appraisal) state that 'the BAZ project is aimed at empowering young people (8-25 year olds) to make positive alternative choices in the areas of drug and substance misuse and lessen their need for involvement in paramilitary type activity as well as other general anti-social/unsafe behaviour'. The objectives as stated in the project proposal include improving the life chances and address the social needs of approximately 100 young people per year in the Ballybeen area who are considered disadvantaged and at the risk of social exclusion.

1.6 The full-time youth workers work in the local post-primary school delivering two school-based Princes Trust xl programmes.

2. EVIDENCE BASE

2.1 A team of inspectors from the Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) conducted the inspection in October 2006. Pre-inspection meetings were held with the area youth officer and senior youth worker, prior to the inspection. A meeting was held with the majority of the full-time and part-time staff on the first day of the inspection and the BAZ project staff gave a presentation to the inspection team on the work of the project.

2.2 Members of the inspection team observed over 39 hours of direct youth work practice and attended 16 sessions of youth work practice. During the inspection over 120 young people were observed taking part in organised youth work sessions. Discussions took place with parents, members of the steering group and others who have an involvement with the project. Discussions were also held with over 30 young people in relation to the quality of services being provided by the BAZ project. A wide range of documentation was examined including monitoring reports and evaluations of specific projects.

2.3 As part of the inspection process the inspection team examined child protection procedures and found that staff employed by the SEELB were aware of child protection procedures. Interviews with young people and parents were held and all of the young people interviewed stated they felt safe when attending programmes delivered by BAZ staff. All of the parents interviewed were satisfied with the procedures for child protection as implemented by the staff of the BAZ project.

2.4 The inspection team held informal discussions with agency representatives and local community representatives and established a high degree of support for the work of the project.

2.5 Strengths of the provision include:

- the high levels of motivation and engagement and the sense of enjoyment felt by almost all of the young people involved in the BAZ project characterised by excellent working relationships between the youth workers and the young people;
- the positive attitude demonstrated by almost all of the young people and the valuable contributions made by a significant majority of the young people during the activities provided;
- the good development of social skills for the young people and the opportunities provided to progress to leadership;

An example of how young people were provided with opportunities to progress to leadership was demonstrated by a small group of young adults who were able to articulate how after achieving an Open College Network (OCN) certificate in peer education they would use the skills learnt to help others in the community.

- the good quality and variety of programmes on offer that reflect the central theme and core principles as outlined in ‘Youth Work: A Model For Effective Practice’ and the specific programme areas being developed;
- the very good quality of the school-based Princes Trust xl programmes;

An example of good practice was demonstrated by the co-working between the youth worker and teacher with a group of year 12 pupils in a local High School. Observations highlighted the good relationships between pupils and teaching staff as a result of the style of delivery and content of the xl course.

- the good quality of the working relationships between the staff in the BAZ office and the good quality of administration provided by the administration officer;
- the systems in place for the planning and development of individual programmes and the good account taken of the young people's abilities that help to maintain realistic expectations;
- the enthusiasm and dedication of the full-time youth workers and their ability to work effectively as a team;
- the caring environment provided by all of the project staff, volunteers and parents for the young people involved in the project;
- the very good external links made through the project represented by the various organisations and members of the local community represented on the advisory group; and
- the good support provided by the area youth officer and the senior youth worker to the paid and voluntary staff.

2.6 Areas for improvement include:

- the need to plan more effectively for intended learning outcomes which identify clearly what the young people will know, understand and be able to do;
- the need to ensure that the programme objectives reflect clearly the main strategic aims of the project;
- the need to demonstrate how the BAZ project will involve the young people of Ballybeen in the overall strategic planning and future direction of the project;
- the need to deploy the part-time staff more effectively taking into account the different skills and attributes they bring to the work with the young people; and
- the need to review urgently the suitability of the accommodation and premises used as the base for the project.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 The organisation has important strengths in many aspects of its youth service 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.

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

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