

YOUTH INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Cookstown Area Project,
County Tyrone

Report of an inspection in
May 2017



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments

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1. Context

The Cookstown Area Project, based in the Cookstown Youth Resource Centre, is managed by the Education Authority (EA) and delivers youth services in the outlying rural areas including Ardboe and Pomeroy. The project is staffed by a team leader, a senior youth worker and three area youth workers: the area youth officer with responsibility for Cookstown, Banbridge and Craigavon, oversees the work of the area project. According to data provided by the EA, there are currently 573 young people registered as members which demonstrate a significant increase since 2013-14. At the time of the inspection, the number of young people attending the sessions observed was just over 200, with average of 26 young people attending each session.

In discussions with a small number of parents no issues were raised and they emphasised how they valued the work of the staff and the range of support that their children received, in particular, for those with additional support needs.

2. Focus of inspection

The inspection focused on:

- the outcomes for the young people;
- the quality of the provision; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

3. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	High Level of Capacity
Outcomes for learners	Outstanding
Provision for learning	Very Good
Leadership and management	Outstanding

4. Outcomes for Learners

The numbers participating in the project has grown steadily over the last four years with young people currently registered in a wide range of accredited and non-accredited courses. Over the last three years, 119 young people achieved accredited qualifications, including 53 who achieved the OCNNI¹ Level 2 personal success and wellbeing qualification, delivered to year 11 and 12 pupils jointly in the two local post-primary schools. The qualification, which is equivalent to a grade B at GCSE² level, raises their self-confidence, and improves their opportunities to access further education, training and employment. In addition, 253 Key Stage 3 pupils completed education programmes that focused on the development of their self-esteem and resilience. The young people value highly the support from their youth workers and their opinions influence effectively the key priorities for development identified by the project.

¹ OCNNI - Open College Network Northern Ireland

² GCSE – General Certificate of Secondary Education

Many of the young people have challenging personal, mental health and social issues. They are able to articulate the positive outcomes of the programmes that are supporting them to understand and develop coping strategies to deal with depression and stress. The young people report that their participation in the programmes has also improved their confidence, self-esteem, and their commitment to the programmes. A majority of the young people progress from participation in the project to taking on leadership roles through volunteering both within the project and externally. They become buddies to younger members and progress to membership of the youth forum, the youth council and to the recently formed local advisory group.

There is clear evidence that the young people are developing well their wider skills and dispositions. In almost all of the sessions they were well-behaved, mannerly and there is a good sense of togetherness and trust with the young people displaying understanding and respect for the feelings of others. They engage well in the sessions and they have developed positive working relationships with one another and with the youth workers. The young people collaborate well in groups and there are good examples of peer learning taking place. They have an understanding of the issues within the community and have progressed to meeting socially outside the youth service setting.

5. Quality of provision

The curriculum offer is broad, balanced and reflects the needs and interests of the young people, with an appropriate range of general and targeted provision. The young people benefit from highly inclusive programmes which address cross community issues, through for example the Together: Building a United Community³ summer programme. The activities are varied and include drama, clay modelling, musical youth and art work to further develop their creative skills. The curriculum has been developed in light of the Area Plan and the young people have a role in the design of the programmes particularly in the recent production of Bugsy Malone, which brought a diverse group of young people together and developed collegiality among staff.

The staff support the young people well and have a good knowledge and understanding of them and their barriers to learning. They provide effective individualised support for the young people, with base-line assessments and additional specialised support where required. The organisation identifies and supports marginalised and vulnerable young people using appropriate intervention strategies. There is also an inclusive learning environment that the young people feel comfortable in.

In the best practice the planning is very clear and includes the learning outcomes. A more consistent approach to planning across the programmes is needed to support the evaluation and inform future planning. Young people have the opportunities to: engage in the decision-making process; take responsibility for their learning; and where appropriate facilitate activities. The quality of the youth work practice in almost all of the sessions observed ranged from good to outstanding. The youth workers have positive working relationships with the young people and there are high levels of engagement and participation in the sessions. In the best practice the evaluations focused clearly on the learning of the young people and the aspects they needed to develop further.

³ **Together: Building United Communities** is a government funded strategy committed to improving community relations and building a united and shared society.

Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the organisation's approach to the care and welfare of the young people impacts positively on their learning and outcomes. The staff have created a safe place for young people to talk openly in the clear knowledge that they will be accepted for who they are.

6. Leadership and management

There is a clear strategic vision for the future direction of the work of the project that is underpinned by a comprehensive needs based Area Plan. The key stakeholders, including almost 300 young people, have been involved in a robust needs analysis for the 2017-2020 Area Plan which contains realistic and achievable targets. The actions include key objectives from the Priorities for Youth⁴, the CRED⁵ policy, Shared Education and the relevant recommendations from the Child Sexual Exploitation report⁶.

There are well-developed partnerships which are adding value to the project. There has been significant progress in working collaboratively with other organisations such as the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership with the Northern Trust to meet the needs of the young people. The school based programmes are a particular strength in addressing underachievement in a collaborative and effective partnership.

Staff use the data effectively to help inform the future direction of the project and to analyse when and where to deploy staff, for example the opening of the Cookstown Town Centre project. The work of the staff is guided through individual controlled delivery agreements which contain tightly-focused one-year action plans that are guiding well the improvement work of the organisation. The youth work is monitored and evaluated, through the target monitor system, which cross-references specific targets and helps measure progress on a quarterly and annual basis. The regular individual support and supervision meetings are used effectively to identify, when appropriate, actions to achieve the intended improvements in learning, provision and management.

Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding young people reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. The young people report that they feel safe in the project and that they are aware what to do if they have any concerns about their safety.

7. Overall effectiveness

The Cookstown Area Project has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all of the learners.

⁴ **Priorities for Youth** – is the overarching policy framework for the delivery of youth services in Northern Ireland.

⁵ **CRED** – Community Relations Equality and Diversity in Education. <https://www.credni.org › Policy & Guidelines>

⁶ http://www.northerntrust.hscni.net/pdf/Child_sexual_exploitation_in_Northern_Ireland_Executive_summary.pdf

APPENDIX A

Membership

Age group	4-8		9-13		14-18		19-21*		22-25*		**Outreach/ Detached		Total
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
2013/14			6	7	123	144	19	18					317
2014/15			12	15	145	163	21	32			26	32	446
2015/16			48	47	162	178	26	36			42	38	577
Current			122	111	131	107	30	34	*		38	22	598

*fewer than 5

APPENDIX B

The ETI's Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework, which guides inspection and self-evaluation within youth settings is available on the ETI website [The Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework \(ISEF\): Youth](#)

Inspectors observed youth work sessions and also held focus group discussions with the young people. The inspectors held discussions with a small number of parents, staff and other stakeholders. In addition, the inspectors scrutinised the youth workers' planning and the organisation's self-evaluation reports. The inspectors evaluated the organisation's arrangements for safeguarding young people.

Quantitative terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

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 Achievements and outcomes, 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 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 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 formal follow-up inspection.
The organisation needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all learners. It requires external support to do so. The ETI will monitor and report on the organisation's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.

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