

YOUTH INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Epicentre, Armagh City,
County Armagh

Report of an inspection in
April 2018



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

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1. Context

The Epicentre is a purpose built youth centre in Armagh City, refurbished in 2015 and managed by the Education Authority (EA). There is a recently appointed staff team, including a centre-based youth worker-in-charge who is employed on a three and a half day contract, a second centre-based youth worker and an area youth worker who provides outreach and detached provision across the local areas including Markethill and Tandragee. There are six part-time staff and nine volunteers. A senior youth worker/team leader has management responsibility for the staff team. The staff also work in three post-primary schools co-delivering the Learning Together Programme¹; Saint Joseph's College, Coalisland, Drumglass High School and Saint Patrick's College, Dungannon. At the time of the inspection, there was an average sessional attendance of 26 young people. A significant minority of the membership are newcomers.

2. Focus of the 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	Important areas for improvement
Outcomes for learners	Important areas for improvement
Quality of provision	Important areas for improvement
Leadership and management	Important areas for improvement

4. Outcomes for learners

At the time of the inspection, 222 young people were registered with the centre, however, attendance and achievement are important areas for improvement with only a minority of them attending on a regular basis and achieving recognised qualifications. It is a strength that the centre has appropriate plans to increase attendance and achievement by promoting more effectively programmes such as the Duke of Edinburgh and Millennium Volunteers. A further strength is the increasing number of young people attending appropriate youth leadership courses; for example, 19 young people are currently enrolled on the EA youth leadership course. In addition, through the school based Learning Together programme, 17 young people have achieved the Level 2 qualification which supports well their personal and social development.

The young people demonstrate very good working relationships with one another and the staff. They value the inclusive ethos of the club where young people from a range of cultural backgrounds and from across the community can meet and develop meaningful friendships. As a result, they display acceptance and are sensitive to the feelings of others. They participate in the activities in the centre which support them to develop their self-confidence

¹ The learning together programme offers an accredited level 2 qualification in personal success and well-being which is equivalent to a grade B at GCSE. It is co-delivered with the staff from the post-primary schools.

and self-esteem. In discussions with the young people, they reported that their engagement in the centre helps them to overcome social issues including, isolation, loneliness and examination stress. However, the young people's understanding of their learning is underdeveloped; further work is required for the young people to plan, reflect on and evaluate their achievements and outcomes in order to be more aware of the skills they are developing.

Whilst the formation of the senior members group is at an early stage, they have contributed effectively to the development of the club through a members' survey and through their input to the controlled delivery agreement. They are encouraged to and accept leadership and volunteer roles; for example through the 'buddies' programme, which supports members with additional learning needs and through volunteering in the summer scheme.

While the number of junior members attending the club is too low, those present participate in fun and engaging activities where they develop a range of valuable skills that supports them well in their school and home life, including, problem-solving, thinking skills, working with others, and communication skills.

5. Quality of provision

The recently established staff team is enthusiastic and keen to improve. The staff are in the initial stages of developing a curriculum to respond to the assessed needs of the young people. Outreach youth work has been recognised appropriately as a strategy for growing the future membership of the centre. The provision for junior members requires further development if the staff are to engage greater numbers of young people in this age section. Consideration should be given to the opening times for this age group and a relevant, age-appropriate curriculum and activities provided.

The staff support young people from a range of social and cultural backgrounds; they are caring and understanding of the young people's needs and the issues which they face. The young people enjoy an inclusive environment where they are welcomed and can relax socially, developing new friendships.

The quality of the youth work ranged from very good to having important areas for improvement; with a majority being good better. In the practice which required further improvement, the planning did not sufficiently guide the practice and the staff need to have a stronger focus on planning for the learning outcomes for the young people. The outreach youth work is in the early stages of development and many of the individual projects had not yet commenced at the time of the inspection. The team need to produce a clearer plan and rationale to inform the development of outreach work going forward.

In the sessions observed most of the youth workers facilitated well their group work sessions, but more attention is required to involve the young people in the planning, review and evaluation of their programmes. There is a need for the staff team to focus more sharply on discussing the learning process with the young people and to involve the young people more in the planning, review and evaluation of their programmes.

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 learning, youth work practice and outcomes for learners. The young people report that they value the inclusive ethos of the club and that their engagement in the activities in the centre helps them to overcome social isolation and loneliness.

6. Leadership and management

The current controlled delivery agreement is aligned well to the Priorities for Youth² strategy and the associated target monitor system, currently under development, reflects broadly the identified needs of the young people. While most of the short term targets and actions are appropriate and necessary, there is a need to ensure there is a longer term, coherent action plan that informs more accurately the future work of the centre that is agreed and understood by all of the staff and the young people.

The views of the young people are collated through informal conversations and focus groups, which includes the youth council, and an annual survey of needs. However, the young people are not engaged sufficiently in the management of the centre and further strategies to involve them need to be considered by the staff.

There are well developed links with the post-primary schools. In these schools the youth work staff have successfully delivered a range of programmes including the learning together programme which is appropriate for the target group of pupils. However, the links with local schools in the Armagh City area need to be re-established for the benefit of young people who attend the centre. The centre is also represented on local community and inter-agency partnerships which are adding value to the delivery of youth services in the wider Armagh area.

The staff work well collegially and are working hard to embed a cohesive team ethos. There are clear support and supervision procedures for each staff member which are benefitting them in their youth work practice. There is appropriate continuous professional development provided for staff, however, the nightly review meetings need to reflect more clearly on the young people's learning and to understand and use more effectively the centre's data to evaluate the participation, progression and retention of the young people.

7. Safeguarding

Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding young people reflect broadly the guidance from the Department of Education. However, the leaflets and information for young people and parents need to be in a format that reflects the newcomers' language and backgrounds. The young people report that they feel safe in the organisation and that they are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or welfare.

8. Overall effectiveness

The Epicentre needs to address important areas for improvement in the interest of all the learners.

The areas for improvement are:

- to develop further the young people's understanding of their learning to enable them to reflect on and evaluate their achievements and to plan for progression;
- to improve the attendance and achievement rates for the young people; and
- to ensure there is a coherent action plan that informs more accurately the future work of the centre that is agreed and understood by all of the staff and the young people.

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 in 12 to 18 months.

² Priorities for Youth is the overarching policy framework for the delivery of youth services in Northern Ireland.

APPENDIX A

Statistical data

Table 1: Total Membership (complete where applicable)

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	
2014/15													
2015/16	10	8	55	30	34	10	9	*	*	*			158
2016/17	18	9	117	100	51	19	*	*	*	*			323
Current	15	*	56	37	64	38	6	*	*	*			222

Source: data as held by the organisation.

* fewer than 5

N/A not available

Inspection methodology and evidence base

The ETI's Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework is available on the ETI website at [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 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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