

# YOUTH INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Girls' Brigade Northern Ireland

Report of an inspection in  
November 2017



The Education and Training Inspectorate  
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education  
Department for the Economy  
and other commissioning Departments

CUSTOMER  
SERVICE  
EXCELLENCE



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## 1. Context

The Girls' Brigade, Northern Ireland (GBNI) is a Christian youth organisation founded in Ireland in 1893. In 1964 it became a recognised international organisation following the amalgamation of the Girls' Brigade, the Girls' Guildry and the Girls' Life Brigade. The 15 person executive committee is entrusted with the vision, policy formation and management of the GBNI on behalf of the Brigade Council. The chairperson of the executive committee provides line management responsibilities for the full-time National Secretary. There are eight other full-time and seven part-time paid staff who are based in the GBNI headquarters in Antrim. The GBNI currently has a membership of 21,931 young people represented by 15 districts with a total of 289 companies. There are 3767 officers, sub-officers and associate leaders across the organisation who are all voluntary.

The organisation provides activities and programmes for five main age groups:

Explorers	-	age 3 to 7 years
Juniors-	-	age 8 to 10 years
Seniors	-	age 11 to13 years
Brigaders	-	age 14 to18 years
Associates	-	age 18+

## 2. Views of parents and staff

The young people who spoke with members of the inspection team stated that they enjoyed the activities and programmes provided for them and they value the good working relationships with the leaders. The inspection team spoke with a small number of parents who were positive about the work of the leaders and how the organisation develops well their children's communication and personal skills.

## 3. 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.

## 4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Address urgently the significant areas for improvement
Outcomes for learners	Good
Quality of provision	Good
Leadership and management	Requires significant improvement

## 5. Outcomes for learners

Across all of the companies visited the young people have a strong sense of belonging and pride in the organisation. They are friendly, welcoming and their behaviour was consistently exemplary. The attendance rates in most of the companies visited were consistently high.

The young people work well together through the many and varied activities that are provided by the organisation. For example through their badge work, they develop important social skills that increase confidence, develop better communication skills and provide opportunities to work together in teams.

The young people progress well through the different age groups where the activities are age-appropriate. Through their active participation the young people make life-long friends, discover new skills and are growing in faith and importantly having fun.

There are consistently high numbers of young people each year achieving recognised awards including the Queens Award and the Duke of Edinburgh Award. The young people involved in the GEMS<sup>1</sup> group display good levels of understanding of leadership and are beginning to take positive action to influence change within the organisation. The young people in GEMS take their leadership roles seriously and are committed to improving the voice of young people within the organisation. However, the organisation needs to develop further the progression routes into leadership roles within the organisation for the young people under 16 years of age.

There is an appropriate strong charitable focus across the organisation and the young people are actively involved in numerous fundraising events and activities; for example, they are currently aiming to raise £125,000 to enable the construction of school classrooms in West Uganda, Africa to help recognise the organisation's 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

## **6. Quality of provision**

The curriculum for the members is broad and includes a wide range of activities and discussion based resources. There is a strong focus on biblical teaching and learning by the leaders, which reflects closely the ethos and values of the organisation. Although the young people complete recognised programmes in these areas, they have no opportunities to achieve appropriate accredited training and this should be reviewed by the leadership team. Primarily, the curriculum is designed by the adult leaders, but the programme teams consider carefully to the feedback from young people through the use of evaluation forms. While the curriculum reflects contemporary themes and activities such as mental health and well-being, it is important that the programmes and training are better informed by the needs of the young people. For example, the recently introduced CRED<sup>2</sup> resource has been distributed widely to companies, but no training for leaders in the use of this resource has been implemented.

The leaders support the young people to develop a good range of skills which contribute well to their future education and training. While the resources are mostly good there is a need to focus more explicitly on the intended and evaluated learning outcomes. A comprehensive overall training programme is available and mandatory for officers, but it is not for associate officers. To support the leaders and officers in their roles and to improve further the quality of provision it is important that all of the leaders participate in appropriate training; in particular, strategies that support effectively young people with additional needs, and to promote inclusion and access for them all.

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<sup>1</sup> Girls Empowering Mighty Servants (GEMS) is a participative programme in the Girls' Brigade for young people aged 16 plus

<sup>2</sup> Community Relations, Equality and Diversity (CRED) is a Department of Education policy that contributes to improving relations between communities, in formal and non-formal education settings, with opportunities to build relationships with those of different backgrounds and traditions.

In the most effective practice, the leaders facilitate their groups well in both discussions and activities and are developing the young people's knowledge, understanding and skills. They are well prepared, highly organised, sensitive to the young people's needs and enthusiastic in their delivery. The organisation engages well the young people in programmes which help them to maintain good physical and mental well-being. In the less effective practice, the group sessions were too adult-led, with limited time for discussions. Furthermore, there is a need to disseminate effective and innovative practice between the companies and across the organisation.

The leaders create a purposeful, positive well-organised environment for the young people. However, based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the organisation's approach to the care and welfare of the young people does not impact positively enough on learning and outcomes for the young people. For example, there is a need to monitor more closely the access to buildings and promote further inclusion using resources such as the CRED pack.

The highly organised GBNI shop staff provide a valuable service both online and as a first point of contact for many of the company officials.

## **7. Leadership and management**

Across the GBNI there is a strong dedication to living the vision and ethos of the organisation's motto "to seek, serve and follow Christ". The volunteers are at the centre of each company and they provide commitment and a highly valuable service to the GBNI.

The strategic planning for the organisation is not sufficiently coherent. The strategic plan is not clear enough and does not connect sufficiently with the current operational plan. There is not enough focus on strategic planning and based on the organisation's written records, in many of the executive committee meetings the focus has been primarily on operational matters.

It is important that GBNI continues to develop the voice of young people within the organisation and that they have appropriate opportunities to influence the governance of the organisation at all levels. The captains included in the inspection sample manage well their individual companies and the key curriculum areas that they have responsibility for. However, they need also to be more involved in the strategic planning of the overall organisation.

The working relationships between the executive committee and the GBNI headquarter staff is an important area for improvement to ensure that there is a structured formal system of communication between them; this should include a review of the roles and responsibilities of each of the staff members.

There is insufficient use of data and feedback from young people, staff and stakeholders to inform self-evaluation and quality improvement planning. Action planning is underdeveloped and is not effective enough in driving continuous improvement. There is a need to develop the capacity of staff in self-evaluation and quality improvement planning.

## **8. Safeguarding**

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.

Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding the children and young people are unsatisfactory.

The safeguarding areas which must be improved urgently include the need to:

- provide relevant and current safeguarding training for all adults in regulated positions, including the designated officer and the executive committee;
- review and implement fully safeguarding policies and procedures across the organisation;
- control more effectively the access to premises during the sessions; and
- inform all of the parents and the young people about how they can raise a concern or complaint.

## **9. Overall effectiveness**

The GBNI needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement in the interest of all the learners.

The ETI will monitor and report on the GBNI's progress in addressing the urgent need to:

- improve the safeguarding arrangements for the young people;
- improve the self-evaluation and quality improvement procedures across the organisation;
- agree and develop a coherent strategic plan that connects effectively with the operational plan; and
- improve the communication and working relationships between the staff and the executive committee, including a review of roles and responsibilities.

There will be a formal follow-up inspection in 18 to 24 months. The ETI will also return to the GBNI within six working weeks to monitor and report on progress in addressing the safeguarding issues<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> The Department of Education will seek assurance from the Education Authority (and/or employing authority) that they are working with the organisation in relation to the inspection report.

**Health and safety/accommodation**

The organisation needs to provide adequate door control in each of the company's during the girls' brigade sessions.

## APPENDIX B

### Statistical data

**Table 1: Total 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	
2014/15	-	9,064	-	5,568	-	2,823	-	304	-	3,297			21,056
2015/16	-	9,010	-	5,602	-	2,834	-	387	-	3,223			21,056
2016/17	-	8,802	-	5,648	-	2,655	-	352	-	3,240			20,697
Current		7776		5180		2215		289		427			15,887*

\* Approximately 30 companies are still to register attendance this year.



### 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 GBNI sessions and also held focus group discussions with the young people. The inspectors held discussions with a small number of parents, representatives of the executive committee, staff and other stakeholders. In addition, the inspectors scrutinised the organisation planning and the 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.

## **ADDENDUM TO THE REPORT ON THE INSPECTION OF GIRLS' BRIGADE NI, JANUARY 2018**

### **SAFEGUARDING**

In line with the child protection/safeguarding procedures of the Education and Training Inspectorate, the district inspector and the reporting inspector from the original inspection returned to Girls' Brigade NI on 24 January 2018 as a follow-up to the inspection which took place in November 2017. The purpose of the visit was to ensure that the safeguarding issues, evaluated as unsatisfactory in the inspection, had been addressed.

On the basis of the evidence available, the revised arrangements now reflect broadly the guidance issued by the Department of Education. There remains the need for Girls' Brigade NI to continue to disseminate further the information for parents on how to raise a safeguarding concern.

During the interim period, the Girls' Brigade NI had received support from Children in Northern Ireland (CiNI).

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