

YOUTH INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

North Belfast Area Project,
Belfast

Report of an inspection in
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The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
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and other commissioning Departments

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1. Context

The North Belfast Area Project (NBAP) which is based on the Woodvale Road in Belfast, covers a large geographical area across North Belfast including the Greater Shankill area. The project, which is managed by the Education Authority, is led by a senior youth worker, has a staff team of two area youth workers, seven outreach and detached workers and 16 volunteers. The area has been divided into five zones for the purposes of the outreach and detached work. The staff have identified 'hot spots' within the zones where they target vulnerable and at risk young people.

According to data supplied by the project there are over 550 young people who engaged with the project over the last two years. Most of the young people are from communities considered by the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure¹ and through local mapping exercises, to be areas of high deprivation, educational underachievement and with a history of violence and poor mental health.

A significant number of the professionally qualified youth work staff have been on temporary annual contracts for many years and the uncertainty over their future employment has been an on-going issue in relation to the further development of the project.

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	High Level of capacity for sustained improvement
Outcomes for learners	Outstanding
Quality of provision	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding

4. Outcomes for learners

The young people engage enthusiastically in the sessions and demonstrate high levels of enjoyment and motivation. They have a clear understanding of their learning, in particular, the skills and knowledge they gain and which contribute to their personal and social development. For example, from the age of 11, the young people are encouraged and empowered through their participation in the Starting Kids in Youth Work (SKY) programme², to ask questions and to seek answers to the issues which affect their lives and those of others. The young people involved in this programme are excellent role models for their peers and value highly the contribution which the project makes to their personal and social development. The young people are friendly, respectful of visitors, welcoming and their behaviour was consistently exemplary.

¹ Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2017 (NIMDM2017) is one of a number of measures used by the project to determine the levels of deprivation or disadvantage in their catchment area.

² Starting Kids in Youth Work (SKY) is a non-accredited programme aimed at young people aged between 11-14 years

A key strength in the outcomes for the young people, is their active participation in accredited and non-accredited programmes with over 60 young people completing successfully a Level 1 accredited qualification in trainee leadership and 30 young people who have progressed to Level 2 in youth leadership as part of the Youth Working in their Communities programme (YWIC)³ over the past two years. Completion and retention rates are consistently high, at above 80% for young people in almost all of the programmes.

Through appropriate support and encouragement from the youth workers, the young people progress to high levels of involvement in a wide range of volunteering opportunities, for example through the youth forum local youth centres and the annual youth conference event. The young people demonstrate a clear capacity to review their learning, to reset their personal targets, if appropriate, and to raise their career aspirations; this was particularly evident in some of the school based youth work observed.

In almost all of the sessions, the young people lead their own learning and demonstrate an understanding of how this contributes to the development of their skills and connects to their formal and non-formal learning experiences. The young people highlight the youth work in schools as an important part of their education; they contribute well to the discussions and can articulate what they have learned during the classes. Importantly, they recognise how the new skills they develop can assist them in making informed decisions about their learning pathways and in their future career aspirations.

From mature reflection on their experiences, both within their communities and through international visits to America, India and South Africa, they grow in confidence and learn to respect diversity. They are able to articulate their learning, feelings and attitudes in a confident, reflective, and visionary manner, for example debating their views on the current political situation at Stormont compared to the Scottish parliamentary model. The young people evaluate consistently how these shared learning experiences impact on their lives, through for example, the very good use of video blogs and group discussions.

5. Quality of provision

The curriculum for the young people is broad, balanced and matched appropriately to their needs. The curriculum resources developed and used by the project are of a very good quality. The staff are innovative and have worked together developing models of best practice such as the 'Gear Stick Model'⁴, which is well suited to young people who face a range of complex personal and social issues. A key strength of this project is the detached and outreach youth work. This sector leading practice is constantly evolving and the professional and highly experienced staff connect well this work to other aspects of the curriculum provision. The youth workers are well placed and keen to develop new models of practice, including the use of ICT applications to further support young people across this area.

³ Youth Working in their Communities (YWIC) is an Open College Network accredited two-year leadership development programme for young people aged 15- 17 years old.

⁴ The gear stick model is a programme designed for working with detached young people.

The youth workers evidence files demonstrate a sound knowledge of the reflective practice that they use effectively to improve subsequent planning. Consistently in their work, the staff enable the young people to progress through experiences which are challenging, empowering and non-judgemental. There are excellent opportunities for the young people to develop and progress their leadership skills, and to play an active role in their local community. The YWIC programme and the opportunities provided through the North Belfast youth forum offer clear progression pathway for young people aged 11-25 years to develop their leadership skills. The YWIC programme assists the young people to remove potential barriers to their learning and is one of a number of effective intervention strategies used by the youth workers to promote inclusion and enable young people to help meet their full potential.

The project has a long and well embedded history of international experiences for young people. The youth workers, young people and parents value the beneficial impact of these experiences on the individual young people. During the inspection, the youth workers facilitated effectively a cross-community programme, enabling the young people to learn new skills and also learn about differing cultures. In all of the programmes, the young people's views are sought, valued and acted upon; the focus on mental health support is particularly well matched to the needs of the young people and the current issues which they face.

In the most effective practice, the staff create the conditions for highly skilful formal and informal group work using strategies which fully engage the young people and develop high levels of mutual trust and respect. In the detached work programmes, the youth workers engage skilfully with the young people outside parks and on the streets, building relationships and offering a range of appropriate programmes to engage the young people.

The care and welfare impacts positively on learning, youth work practice and outcomes for learners. The staff understand well the young people's needs in the variety of situations in which they work, differentiating the tasks and resources as appropriate to the young people. A key feature of their work is that they identify and support marginalised and vulnerable young people using appropriate intervention strategies.

6. Leadership and management

The strategic leadership is focused appropriately on achieving high standards of youth work across the provision. The strategic plan is well thought through and based accurately on the needs of the young people who are included in the process of consultation to inform the strategic planning. The planning is flexible and there is a clear vision for the future direction of the work that is communicated effectively to both the staff and the young people. Through a comprehensive curriculum delivery agreement and the recently introduced target monitor system, the project is reviewing well its provision and is appropriately identifying the strengths and importantly, areas for further improvement.

The project has a cohesive and collegial team with leadership roles appropriately distributed, drawing on the strengths of individual staff members. There is open and honest communication within the staff team, and the youth workers are clear on their roles and responsibilities. There is an important ethos of challenge between management and staff during the support and supervision sessions and in the staff team meetings that is used effectively, to identify new and relevant areas of work and to be flexible enough to divert resources accordingly.

The EA is currently reviewing youth work practice in schools in North Belfast and the use of outreach and detached youth work. This review is timely, as the project staff and managers have a clear, well considered strategic vision for the future development of the school based youth work and the detached youth work programmes. The curricular leadership of the project is meeting effectively the needs of the young people and the communities in which they work. There are well developed and long standing strategic partnerships which benefit the young people, for example, the senior management of four local post-primary schools endorse the youth workers' contribution and delivery impact on the pupils, and are working actively with the project to develop further the youth service involvement.

Self-evaluation is used well with staff and managers to continuously review the provision, identifying strengths and areas for improvement. Senior EA managers have a sound understanding of the work of the project and are keen to work with the staff to continue promote and sustain improvement. Training for staff has been limited over the past two years, with a focus on the transition from five Education and Library Boards to one EA. Going forward, additional professional development is needed to build further on the expertise and the well-developed skills of the youth workers to develop and share more widely the innovative and exemplary practice in this project. The staff are innovative and reflective practitioners, it is important that the best practice demonstrated in this project continues to inform area and local planning across the EA.

7. 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 reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education.

8. Overall effectiveness

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

Health and safety/accommodation

1. There are water leaks in North Belfast Area Project building.
2. The outside emergency lighting at Mountcollyer Youth Centre was not working at the time of the inspection.

APPENDIX B

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			9	1	96	72	101	62	7	3	5632	3841	351
2015/16			7	5	170	200	61	17	2	0	3697	2171	462
2016/17			8	12	191	220	39	29	2	1	3648	2642	502
Current			15	49	80	123	6	8	0	0	1678	1592**	281* (553) ⁵

*Note: Clarification on recording membership had been agreed in November 2017 by Belfast Office management. Up and to this point registered members and young people attending programmes have been collected by NBAP via database and reported on as membership collectively. We have for these purposes extrapolated data from our system to only reflect registered members. Since this is a recent clarification and we have not had time to adapt the database. The numbers above may reflect a 5% double count in young people.

**Note: The figures for detached work only reflect the number of contacts with young people on the streets as opposed to individual young people. Young people from detached work are only registered for substantial programmes otherwise they are recorded as a contact.

⁵ Note: (553) reflects number of registered and attending programmes since April 2017

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, representatives of the steering group, 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.

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