

YOUTH INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Mary's Youth Centre, Derry

Report of an inspection in
February 2016

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 Achievement and standards, 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 the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the organisation's progress. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.

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1. Inspection method and evidence base

A team of three inspectors observed a total of 210 young people in 17 youth work sessions. The inspectors interviewed 22 young people in focus groups. The inspectors also held discussions with the chair of the management committee, school staff, youth workers, community and statutory partners, parents and activity instructors. In addition, the inspectors scrutinised the youth workers' planning and the organisation's self-evaluation reports. The inspectors evaluated the organisation's arrangements for care, guidance and support and for safeguarding young people.

The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation of youth organisations, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the ETI publication *Together Towards Improvement: a process for self-evaluation* at: <http://www.etini.gov.uk/together-towards-improvement-a-process-for-self-evaluation-youth-sector.pdf>

2. Focus of inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interest of all young people, the purpose of inspection is, through effective linking of internal and external approaches, to evaluate the:

- young people's achievements and standards;
- quality of the provision for learning; and
- quality of the leadership and management, including the processes for self-evaluation leading to improvement.

3. Context

St Mary's Youth Centre is located in the Creggan area of Derry and is a full-time voluntary youth provision. The centre is managed by a local management committee and is funded primarily by the Education Authority. The centre staff also support two small community-based youth centres, which are within one mile of the centre. The management committee employs three full-time youth work staff, a team of 15 part-time paid youth workers and 35 volunteers. In addition, there are four activity coaches and five support staff.

The centre is open seven evenings each week and also has daytime and late night provision at weekends. According to data provided by the organisation, the current membership is 1260, with an average nightly attendance of 120 young people; since 2012, the membership has increased by 37%.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	High level of capacity for sustained improvement
Achievements and standards	Very good
Provision for learning	Very good
Leadership and management	Very good

5. Achievements and standards

The numbers of young people attending across all of the age groups is consistently high, with a core cohort of 400 young people attending on a regular basis. The young people are friendly, welcoming and enjoy participating in programmes which develop further their existing friendships. They also avail of opportunities to meet new peers and the older members willingly volunteer as young leaders in programmes for the junior members.

Within the centre, the young people have a well-established participation group, through which they debate robustly a range of social and political issues pertinent to them and their community. During the inspection, the young people had challenging discussions on topical issues including the future of the European Union. In addition, a small number of the senior members represent themselves and their peers in a range of youth committees at a city-wide level.

The young people have high expectations and aspirations for their future lifestyles and careers. In many of the informal discussions with the ETI, they referred to the encouragement from their youth workers to achieve their goals, to try new experiences and to plan new youth programmes which reflect and support their needs.

A high number of the young people, 355, achieve a range of accredited and non-accredited courses, with 87 achieving qualifications between January and December 2015. Through these courses, the young people develop a very good range of transferable skills which prepare them well as youth leaders, but also give them transferable skills that help them to progress through other education, training and careers pathways. For example, through the Millennium Volunteer Award¹ and ASDAN² courses the young people develop and record a wide range of new leadership skills.

Many of the young people face very challenging personal and social issues. Through their participation in both the recreational and group work programmes, they are developing resilience, coping strategies and the self confidence to voice their opinions and to seek support to meet their specific needs. The young people value highly the support from their youth workers and recognise the benefits of engaging in learning programmes on topics such as drug education, personal identity and sexuality. The outcomes of the group work on positive mental health was evident in the discussions held with young people, who were able to articulate the many issues around mental health, as well as the personal benefits of adopting more healthy lifestyles.

The young people involved in the sporting activities such as Gymnastics and Judo achieve highly in national and international competitions. They are confident and competent in their sporting achievements; in addition, they display excellent relationships and respect for one another and their coaches.

6. Provision for learning

The quality of the youth work sessions observed ranged from outstanding to a small number of sessions which had important areas for improvements; a majority of the youth work practice was of a very good or better standard.

¹ The Millennium Volunteer Award is a national programme that recognises volunteering by providing a certificate after the first 50, 100 and 200 hours of volunteering for participants aged 14 to 25 years.

² Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) is a curriculum development organisation and awarding body, offering programmes and qualifications in skills for learning, skills for employment and skills for life.

In the best practice, the staff plan well and take account of the different levels of abilities of the young people. They structure the group work sessions well and use effective questions to engage and extend the answers from the young people. The topics for discussions are well chosen, challenging and relevant to the young people's lives and their community.

In the small number of the less effective sessions, the staff are aware of the need to improve aspects of the programme structure for the junior and intermediate drop-in sessions, with more effective engagement by the staff with the young people.

The cohesive staff team work very well together; they have become more self-reflective in their work and in most of the practice observed, their recordings highlight accurately the outcomes for the young people. Many of the staff team work across the three centres and this collaboration brings a greater consistency to the delivery of the youth work practice in the area. The quality of the specialist coaching in the centre is consistently of a high standard. The coaches managed skilfully the behaviours and the development of skills of the young people across the wide age range.

The range and breadth of both issue-based group work and the recreation activities are very well matched to the individual needs of the diverse range of young people. The curriculum is engaging, contemporary and reflects the assessed needs detailed in the centre's annual planning document. Furthermore, the centre provides a wide range of residential opportunities for both staff and the young people; for example, 650 young people engaged in residential activities in the last 20 month period.

The quality of the care, guidance and support of the young people is very good. The staff advocate strongly on behalf of the young people regarding a diverse range of issues. A strong feature of the centre is the quality of the working relationships between the staff and the young people, which are mutually respectful and provide the young people with the necessary personal and social skills to progress to the next stage of their education or employment. The staff know the young people and their families well and give sensitive and appropriate support to the young people at times of difficulty and crisis. The parents, who spoke to the inspection team, endorsed the very good quality of pastoral care provided by the staff.

7. Leadership and management

The management committee and the staff have a strong and realistic strategic vision for the centre, which reflects clearly the best interests of the young people. The committee is representative of the local area and has two young people involved in the governance of the provision. The committee are highly experienced and manage competently the staff and the programmes. They are well informed and challenge effectively the staff to continue to grow, progress and improve the experiences for the young people.

The Education Authority and the management team work closely together to meet the needs of young people in the Creggan area. Their joint strategic planning and collaboration is benefitting the young people and has a positive impact on the continuous improvement of youth services in the area. The support which the staff provide to the two small local youth centres is well conceived and co-ordinated. The management committee are appropriately considering how this provision will be managed separately from St Mary's Youth Centre, but are committed to continue to provide the staff to resource the external provision. The benefits of the staff supporting these additional centres include: the better co-ordination of the services available; a reduced duplication of resources; and the extended provision for the young people. The additional financial support secured under the programme of Extended Funding³ through the Education Authority is well used and providing good public value and benefits for the young people and the wider community.

³ The Department of Education's Extended Funding provides support to youth organisations within disadvantaged areas, through for example, additional and extended opening hours at the weekend and outreach/detached youth work.

The staff plan and evaluate regularly their programmes as a team and with the young people. Their recent engagement in a quality assurance process, facilitated by the Curriculum Development Unit⁴, has helped them to develop a deeper understanding of the outcomes which they are achieving with the young people. The process of annual planning, target-setting and evaluation is developing well and becoming progressively more coherent and connected. The recently introduced system for tracking the skills development of the young people in their formal training programmes, has been appropriately identified by the management as a method for monitoring the progression of all of the young people across all aspects of the provision.

The staff team is reflective, enthusiastic and aspire to provide the highest quality programmes for the young people in the area. They are highly skilled, very well deployed and led effectively by the management, who have a very strong level of commitment to the ongoing development of all of the staff and volunteers. There is a comprehensive range of continuing professional development opportunities for the staff and volunteers to access. A particularly strong feature is the progression pathway into community youth work programmes from the Open College Network level 1 qualifications, to level 4 and to degree qualifications for the young people, volunteers and staff.

The centre has well-established, productive, working relationships with a relevant range of statutory and community organisations. For example, the highly effective partnership with statutory and criminal justice agencies provides supportive interventions for young people 'at risk' of becoming involved with the Youth Justice system. According to the staff, management and the agencies, there is evidence that these interventions are having a positive impact on lowering the rates of young people offending. The collaborative working of the centre with other community-based organisations, including the Triax⁵ Neighbourhood Partnership Board, is highly effective in maximising the use of the available resources for the benefit of all the partners and the young people.

In addition, the staff have established very good links and partnerships with the formal education sector to provide educational programmes that develop the young people's road safety and leadership skills. There is an excellent range of mutually beneficial links with both voluntary and statutory agencies which enriches and supports the needs of the young people.

The management, staff and young people promote an inclusive ethos throughout all of the work of the centre. The needs of young people who require additional support with their learning and participation are given a high priority; where possible adjustments to the programmes and resources are made to enable all of the young people to enjoy the activities.

On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the youth centre has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children and young people. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education; however, there is a need to review the arrangements for the registration of members at each session. In discussions with the inspection team, the young people reported that they feel safe in the centre and are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety and well-being.

⁴ The Curriculum Development Unit was established by the Department of Education to enhance and support the curriculum development of youth work in Northern Ireland.

⁵ Triax is the Neighbourhood Partnership Board for the Bogside, Brandywell, Creggan, Fountain and Bishop Street areas of Derry, which brings together representatives of public, private and community and voluntary sector interests.

8. Overall effectiveness

The organisation has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will continue to monitor how the organisation sustains improvement.

APPENDIX

Table 1 - Total membership

Age group	4-9		10-15		16-18		19 +		Numbers involved in outreach/detached	Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female		
2012/13	87	101	132	111	102	99	88	72		792
2013/14	102	129	171	143	121	160	113	155		1094
2014/15	83	122	136	170	135	172	161	201	120	1180
Current	93	138	139	177	137	175	180	221		1260

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