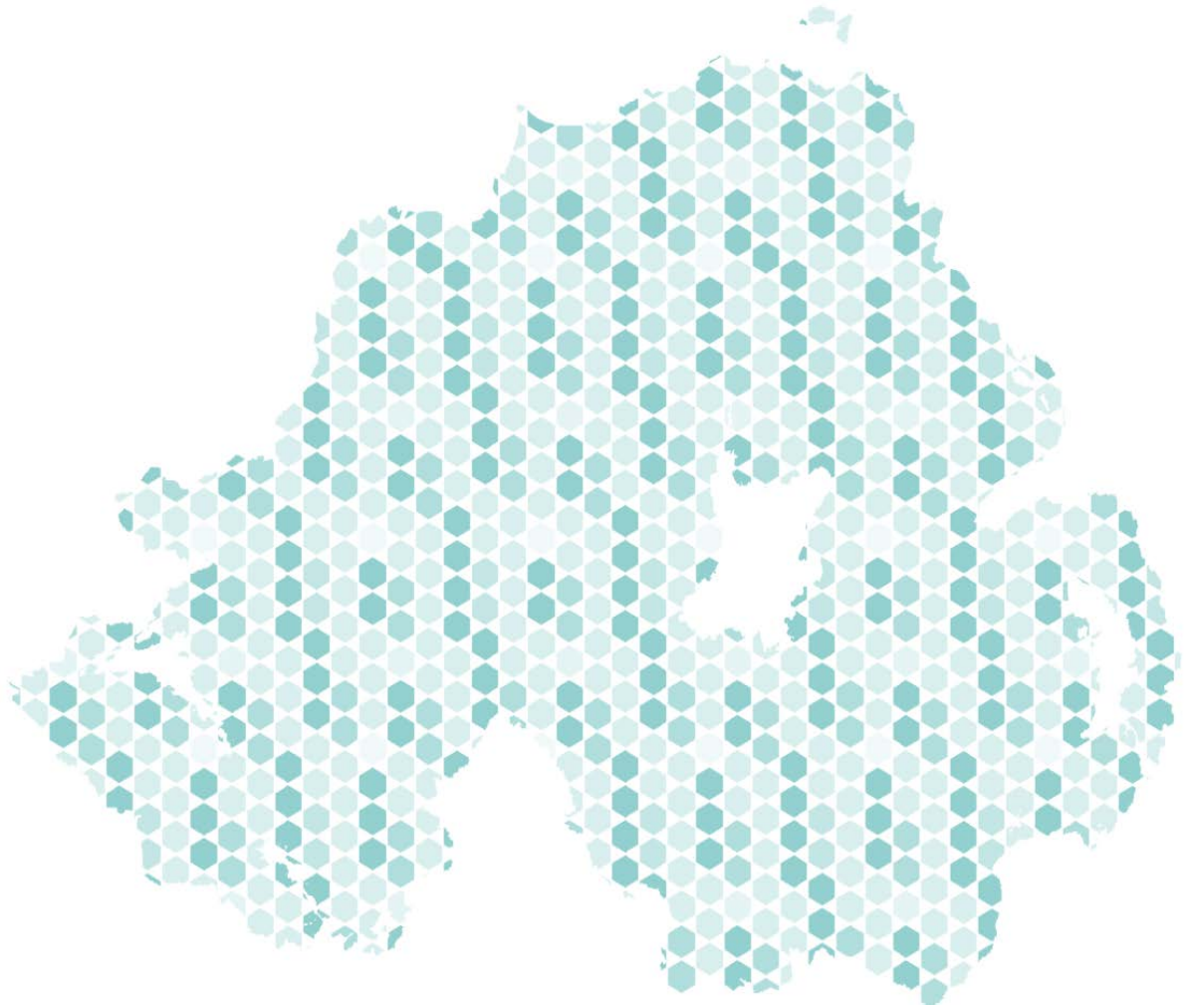


YOUTH INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Young Farmers' Clubs of Ulster

Report of an inspection in
February 2018



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
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1. Context

The Young Farmers' Clubs of Ulster is a regional youth organisation founded in 1929. It is an association of 53 clubs throughout Northern Ireland, with a growing membership in excess of 3000 young people aged 11 to 30 years. Each of the 53 clubs has its own member's committee responsible for all aspects of programme and financial management; in addition, there are special purposes and executive committees who support, advise and direct the strategic and operational management of the overall organisation.

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	Very good
Quality of provision	Very good
Leadership and management	Very good

4. Outcomes for learners

A key strength of the provision is the participation of the young people in activities where they are able to gain recognition for the skills they acquire from the programme. In the last year, 96 young people achieved 362 unit accreditations, including 57 young people who completed successfully the level 1 Introduction to Public Speaking and 60 who successfully completed the level 1 Dairy Stock Judging and Assessment units. A further 1262 young people completed non-accredited proficiency certificates for their participation in a range of farming, arts, sports and personal development activities, such as group debating and sheep shearing.

There are excellent opportunities for the young people to progress to leadership roles within the organisation. They are encouraged and supported to participate actively in the life of their clubs and to take on greater levels of responsibility. As they progress and develop the necessary skills to undertake their leadership roles, the young people confidently take on committee roles, where they have significant levels of responsibility for the management of their individual clubs and for the care and welfare of the members. The development of their leadership skills continues and increases throughout their membership in the clubs and also through their appointment to additional posts in the wider Young Farmers' organisational structure. Most of the young people, have connections with and prior knowledge of farming life. The young people state that they use the learning from their experiences effectively to pursue career aspirations in farming and other related pathways to further training or employment. The young people participate fully in the planning, evaluation and management of their own programmes and a key strength is their engagement in governance.

Across the organisation, the young people demonstrate mature dispositions and attitudes, reflecting the culture and ethos of the organisation which is very much rooted in clubs run by the members for the members. The wide age range enables those younger members to benefit from the excellent role models and leadership of their older peers. The young people demonstrate collaborative working through effective team work which they use throughout their programmes, including a strong focus on charity work giving significant voluntary commitments. Through their participation in the organised courses and activities, the young people develop their confidence, personal, social and employability skills

5. Quality of provision

A key feature of the organisation is that, through the well-conceived structure of participation, the young people are actively involved in the design, development and evaluation of each club's programme. The clear process of communication between members and their club committees informs the planning and delivery of a well-planned, broad and balanced curriculum. Most of the contemporary, issue-based programmes are peer-led and help address relevant issues such as drugs and alcohol, positive mental well-being and farm safety. The members use the annual public speaking competition to debate a range of important issues and they state that they use the skills learnt to help with job interviews and to increase their communication skills. A highlight of the year is the highly popular drama festival, which engages significant numbers of the young people and their families. Through their participation in this festival, they are developing their self-confidence, creative skills and working collaboratively in atmosphere of fun and camaraderie.

The organisation engages the young people effectively in the promotion of good physical and mental health programmes. There are excellent examples of peer assessment and peer-learning, which are developing well the young people's understanding, knowledge and personal and social skills. For example, the 'Lifemaps'¹ initiative is an effective programme helping to build positive mental health with the young people.

The experiences of older members are used well to encourage and inspire the younger members to become active participants and take on leadership roles. For example, through the international exchange visits members gain a valuable insight into other farming practices and cultures. In addition, many of the young people progress to hosting exchanges with young farmers from other countries.

The quality of the youth work practice observed was of a good or better quality, with a majority evaluated as very good. In the most effective practice, the well-planned and relevant activities are closely matched to the member's needs and interests. The young people who facilitate the sessions for their peers are well prepared and provide the young people with innovative and challenging programmes, where they discuss and debate current issues such as the impact of Brexit. Each club uses effective strategies to monitor and review their annual programmes, through online surveys, written evaluations and the use of informal feedback from members. This information is used by the clubs to inform the planning the following year's programme and helps provide valuable feedback which is used in the strategic planning at management level.

¹ Lifemaps a partnership with Youth Action is a framework which demonstrates how youth work approaches can build positive mental health strategies for young people.

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 the learning and the outcomes. Across the organisation, there are high levels of mutual respect that contribute to the strong friendships evident in the young people's interactions with one another.

6. Leadership and management

A key strength of the Young Farmers' Clubs of Ulster is the active participation of its young people in the leadership, management and governance of the organisation at all levels. The views of the young people, on aspects of the provision, are sought, valued and acted upon. The young people, through their various committees at local, regional and national level, oversee and direct the effective curricular leadership and management of the programmes.

There are well-developed purposeful links and partnerships with appropriate stakeholders to support the work of the organisation. The organisation has highly effective partnerships with a relevant range of organisations, including the school-based Field to Fork programme and Ulster Wildlife. Additionally, at a local level, there are well established informal and formal links with the local farming community which are used well to benefit the young people. Succession planning is a key priority for the organisation and programmes such as the recently introduced land mobility programme are benefitting potential young farmers and the wider farming community.

Similarly, the well-conceived diversification programmes are encouraging fresh and innovative approaches to rural industries. During the year 2016/17, 11 groups consisting of 364 young people visited a wide range of diversification enterprises. The young people engaged in these programmes are motivated and inspired by creative business thinking to aspire and develop further their own entrepreneurial skills. The results of the organisation's evaluation indicate that the visits have been highly beneficial to the members' personal development, knowledge, and confidence; furthermore a high percentage of the young people (93%) indicated that the visits would benefit them in their future careers.

At all levels of the organisation, the young people are involved in the on-going evaluation of their programmes to inform the strategic direction of the organisation. Going forward, the leadership are keen to continue align more closely their strategic planning documents to the Department of Education's Priorities for Youth. As part of their strategic leadership, the young people review the organisation's objectives and targets through clear action planning and evaluation processes. The experience and expertise of the managing committees are used to support the effective operational and strategic development of the organisation. In these committees, the young people work closely with the headquarter staff to monitor continuously the quality of the overall provision and they consistently support and challenge the organisation's priorities for improvement. The managing committees are well informed about the outcomes for the young people and the effectiveness of the provision at both local and national level.

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. The young people report that they feel safe in the organisation and that they are aware what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or welfare. However, the management committee of the organisation needs to officially approve and sign off the recently revised policy documents in relation to the safeguarding of children and young people.

8. Overall effectiveness

The Young Farmers' Clubs of Ulster have a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners.

Statistical data

Age group	12-14	14-16	16-18	18-21	21-25	Total
2014/15	527	553	580	489	383	2532
2015/16	564	497	571	565	460	2657
2016/17	552	539	508	588	449	2636
Current	574	455	431	543	407	2410

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 representatives of the managing committees, staff and other stakeholders. In addition, the inspectors scrutinised the organisations planning and 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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