

Wiltshire Youth Development Service

Wiltshire Children's Services Authority Area

Age group: All

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Introduction

1. Wiltshire's Youth Development Service is located in the Department for Children and Education within the Resources, Improvement and Young People Branch. The majority of the service is delivered directly by the council with some work delivered through partnership arrangements with voluntary or specialist organisations. The Youth Development Service is an integral element of the recently formed Services for Young People, the structure put in place to meet the authority's responsibility for establishing an integrated youth support service (IYSS). The local authority owns 17 Youth Development Centres and has the use of a further four through Private Finance Initiatives or lease arrangements and in one instance the use of army premises.

2. The service is managed by the Head of Youth Work. There is a management team of seven staff comprising three senior managers, a business support manager, quality development co-ordinator and voluntary sector co-ordinator with specific service-wide responsibilities. It operates through eight locality teams and comprises 23 full-time equivalent Youth Development Co-ordinators; there are also 50 fte assistant youth workers. There are around 42,300 young people aged 13-19 living in Wiltshire; 4% of residents are from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds. In 2008-09, the Youth Development Service budget was £3.59 million with an additional £777,994 of external funding. In 2006-07, expenditure by the service for each 13-19 year old was £68 which is lower than the norm. In 2007-08, the service reached 35% of young people.

3. This inspection was carried out under section 136 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, which provides that the Chief Inspector may inspect particular local authority functions. The joint area review (JAR) was enhanced to enable coverage of youth work.

Part A: Summary of the report

Main findings

4. The quality of youth provision in Wiltshire is adequate. Standards of young people's achievement are adequate as is the quality of practice. Young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well as do those involved in various strategic decision-making structures. The curriculum provides a balanced range of learning opportunities and is augmented through partnership working with statutory and voluntary organisations which contribute well to increasing the range of opportunities available. Premises are generally satisfactory and accessible. The youth development service has influenced the planning and delivery of other services for young people ensuring that more vulnerable young people receive appropriate support. A significant investment in mobile provision is helping engage more effectively young people in rural area. Opportunities provided for young people to be involved in decision-making at a strategic level are outstanding but this is not reflected in youth work locally where they are insufficiently involved in its planning and evaluation. Leadership and management are good; the local authority sufficiently secures provision for youth work. Strategic managers support youth work well and have established good

performance measures which are regularly reviewed. Service planning is good overall but the pace of change is being impeded by weaknesses in the assessment of need and the largely historical allocation of resources. Young people and staff are provided with safe and healthy environments. At a time of increased expectations on the service there is no strategy to manage competing priorities. This, compounded by a budget which is below average, is putting pressure on the service's ability to carry out the local authority's expectations in respect of its universal youth work provision.

Key aspect inspection grades

Key Aspect		Grade
1	Standards of young people's achievement	2
	Quality of youth work practice	2
2	Quality of curriculum and resources	2
3	Leadership and management	3

Inspectors make judgements based on the following scale

4: excellent / outstanding; 3: good; 2: adequate/satisfactory; 1: inadequate

Strengths

- Opportunities for young people to engage in decision-making are outstanding.
- Provision for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good.
- The good range of curriculum opportunities.
- Good partnership working contributes to improving opportunities for young people.
- Service planning is linked well to corporate priorities.

Areas for development

- Improve standards of achievement and quality of practice.
- Enable full-time workers to more effectively mentor and support front-line workers.
- Apply needs analysis more effectively in planning provision and in allocating resources.
- Put in place strategies to manage competing priorities in respect of short and long-term planning.

Part B: Commentary on the key aspects

Key Aspect 1: Standards of young people's achievements and the quality of youth work practice

5. Overall, the standard of young people's achievement is adequate. In the best examples, young people are keen to take-up the opportunities offered and are articulate in describing their learning and achievements. For example, those involved in Spark Radio gained self-confidence, learned valuable editorial and technical skills and made a positive contribution through their peer mentoring of other young people. At the Salisbury Bridging Project for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, young participants joined in enthusiastically, worked well together and learned new musical skills. In the group activity they learnt to listen and to present their ideas to a group. At the Wiltshire Assembly of Youth (WAY) participants were confident in expressing their views and made a good case for young people from the Travellers' community to be involved in future consultations. In the weaker youth work sessions, although young people described the activities they had undertaken, they were less able to articulate gains in terms of their personal development or learning. These weaknesses were invariably found in sessions which were poorly structured and not planned around young people's needs or interests.

6. Participation by young people at strategic level in the decision-making process is outstanding. There is a continuum of opportunities from initial involvement at unit or project level to strategic county decision-making at the WAY. Young people's involvement at local level is through the Community and Young People's Issues Groups (CAYPIGs). Youth Development Co-ordinators support young people's involvement in these groups well. At district and at strategic level, young people develop negotiation skills and a good understanding of how decisions are reached. For example, those involved in one CAYPIG successfully negotiated areas in the neighbourhood where young people could meet and socialise in safety and from where they would not be moved on by the police. WAY members have worked together to write standards for the Teenage Pregnancy charter. Such outstanding examples however are not reflected at unit level where young people's participation in planning, implementing and evaluating youth work is weaker.

7. The quality of youth work practice is adequate overall with examples of good and responsive approaches. Relationships between staff and young people are consistently good and in the better practice youth workers plan effectively to meet the needs of local young people. They generally structure sessions which reflect the curriculum framework. There are, however, weaknesses in some important aspects of practice, for example the skill of managing group work and of enabling young people's involvement in negotiating programmes. Factors preventing improvement in practice include the high proportion of part-time unqualified youth workers and the lack of capacity of experienced full-time workers to provide practical day-to-day support and mentoring to less experienced workers.

Key Aspect 2: Quality of curriculum and resources

8. The quality of the curriculum and resources is adequate. The curriculum provides a good balance of learning opportunities including arts, media, sport, physical activity and programmes that tackle issues such as teenage pregnancy, substance misuse, personal safety and anti-social behaviour. Resources are however allocated on historic lines and longstanding patterns of delivery are insufficiently reviewed and challenged. The curriculum document provides a good framework but its application is inconsistent. Premises are generally accessible and some have been significantly improved through refurbishment; work is in hand with partner agencies to further extend the use of buildings. There are four mini-buses including an excellent mobile facility known as an URBIE and a mobile radio station. These however could be more extensively used. The service has also leased eight multi-person vehicles which are effective in enabling it to engage with young people in more rural areas.

9. Partnership working has enhanced the curriculum with Wiltshire Youth Arts Project and Wiltshire Alternative Youth Sports Programme increasing the opportunities for young people to take part in dance projects, music programmes and specialist sports programmes. The service is licensed for outdoor activities and this has supported the delivery of the Duke of Edinburgh Award expeditions' programme.

10. Although locality plans have been subject to Equality Impact Assessments the principles of equality and diversity are not well embedded in the service. Nonetheless, scope exists to learn from some of the better examples including the Bridging Projects, work with Polish young people and with vulnerable young people who are not in education, employment or training.

11. In-house training, access to training on specialist subjects such as youth arts and supervision are contributing to the implementation of the broad curriculum available to young people.

Key Aspect 3: Leadership and management

12. Leadership and management are good. The council has established clear expectations for the service in relation to corporate priorities. The service plan is linked to the Children and Young People's Plan with specific targets that contribute to the reduction in the proportion of young people who are not in education, employment or training, teenage pregnancy and substance misuse strategies. All youth workers are aware of service priorities and how their work contributes to achieving them. There are no measures to manage increasing and competing demands which are putting pressure on the service's ability to carry out the local authorities' expectations in respect of its universal provision. In spite of that, service managers continue to work effectively with partners, youth workers and stakeholders to ensure that it is contributing to the development of integrated youth support provision. Increasingly, youth workers are strategically deployed to engage with, and act as advocates for, vulnerable young people in need of multi-agency support. The council secures youth work adequately and has made good arrangements to ensure its visibility within the integrated arrangements.

13. Most youth work is provided directly by the local authority but there is a developing role in the delivery of provision by the voluntary and community sector. Whilst reach and participation are high, the budget is below that of similar authorities. This level of resourcing is constraining the services ability to consistently operate across the broadening agenda for young people in Wiltshire.

14. Service managers have been effective in developing partnership working to extend the range of youth work and opportunities for young people. For example, the engagement with the teenage pregnancy co-ordinator to secure training for youth workers. Where there is joint working, suitable partnership or service level agreements clarifying lines of accountability are in place. There are adequate arrangements for the strategic engagement with voluntary sector organisations through the Wiltshire Youth Services Council. Capacity training has been provided for the voluntary sector and the organisations taking part reported positively on its impact.

15. Young people and staff are provided with safe and healthy environments. Safeguarding training has been provided and full-time staff are trained in and apply the Common Assessment Framework. Part-time staff are trained to level one in safeguarding. Underpinning policies are in place and there is an induction programme for new staff which clarifies policy requirements.

16. The service's ability to make judgements about its quality and performance is good although management information is not routinely drawn upon by middle managers to inform local planning. The performance management of individual workers is regularly reviewed with remedial action taken if required for example through coaching and supervision. The arrangements in place to involve young people in the planning and quality assurance of youth work are adequate.