

London Borough of Lewisham Youth Service Report

London Borough of Lewisham Children's Services Authority Area

Age group: All

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Introduction

1. Youth work in Lewisham is located within the Youth and Adventure Play Service of the Directorate for Children and Young People. The borough's strategic management group oversees the implementation of the authority's strategy for the 11 to 19 age group. This work is led by the Head of Access and Support Services. Operational management of the service is through the Head of Youth and Adventure Play Service, supported by four curriculum service managers. Eight senior youth workers manage two area teams of mainly part-time youth workers in the north and south of the borough. Borough wide and special projects are led and run by separate teams. There are 20 full-time youth workers and 8 full-time adventure play leaders plus 160 part-time staff, equivalent to around 60 full-time equivalent (FTE) posts. The service is supported by a central administration team of 5 FTE staff. In 2006/07, authority figures show that 27% of the 21,000 young people aged 13 to 19 were reached by the service with 13% actively participating in activities. The local authority budget made available to the service for 2007/08 is £2.52 million.

2. The Joint Area Review (JAR) was enhanced to enable coverage of the youth service. Inspectors considered the self-assessment and met with officers, a cross-section of staff, partners and young people. They reviewed key service documentation and carried out direct observations of a small sample of youth work sessions across the borough.

Part A: Summary of the report

Main findings

Effectiveness and value for money

3. Lewisham provides a good youth service that offers good value for money. The achievement of young people who participate in youth work is good as is youth work practice. When compared against the national average, the local authority allocates a higher level of resources to youth work at £120 per head of 13-19 population. This demonstrates the high priority given to the service by elected members. The service has been reorganised in the last two years resulting in improved efficiency. The curriculum is based on a clear rationale reflecting national and local issues and offers young people a wide range of learning experiences. Targeted work is particularly effective in supporting the education and social development of some of the most hard to reach young people. Strategic leadership is strong, under-pinned by sound planning, policies and procedures. Operational managers are effective. However management information systems are limited. Partnerships with the private, voluntary and independent sector are good and increase the capacity and ability of the service to respond to local needs. Training is aligned to priorities. Staff are well supported by managers and well motivated. The youth service has a lead role in participation for young people at a

strategic level across the borough; however their systematic involvement in the planning of the youth service is underdeveloped.

Strengths

- Young people's achievement.
- The wide range of projects offered to meet young people's needs.
- Targeted programmes for the most hard to reach and vulnerable young people.
- Equipment and specialist resources to support young people's learning.
- Partnership working and staff flexibility to enhancing opportunities for young people.
- Managers clear strategic direction of the service.
- Staff training and development leading to improved quality of the service.

Areas for development

- The systematic involvement of young people in the evaluation of projects to influence the shape of provision and promote the council's ambition of a youth led service.
- The deployment of staff in weaker settings.
- Management information systems to ensure data is readily available to inform decisions.

Key aspect inspection grades

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

The table above shows overall grades about provision. Inspectors make judgements based on the following scale:

Grade 4: Excellent/outstanding: a service that delivers well above minimum requirements for users:

Grade 3: Good: a service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users:

Grade 2: Adequate: a service that delivers only minimum requirements for users:

Grade 1: Inadequate: a service that does not deliver minimum requirements for users.

Part B: The youth service's contribution to Every Child Matters outcomes

4. The contribution made by the youth service to the five outcomes is good overall. Staff have created the right environment for young people to feel safe in youth service projects. Young people are caring, considerate of others, happy, relaxed, and amenable to learning. Joint work between the youth service and Connexions is reaching large numbers of young people across Lewisham helping to support their education, employment and training decisions. Many harder to reach young people are actively engaged in alternative education programmes improving social skills leading to accredited outcomes. Sexual relationship education, advice and information provided in youth clubs and schools is leading to increased take up of sexual health services; teenage conceptions are reducing but remain higher than both the London and England averages. Detached youth work is increasingly effective in responding to youth crime and engagement with young people. There are some examples of young people's involvement in the evaluation of projects which helps shape the service but this practice is underdeveloped.

Part C: Commentary on the key aspects

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

5. The standard of young people's achievement is good. Relationships between young people, their peers and youth workers are particularly well developed. These relationships are used effectively to help young people explore attitudes and values in a supportive but challenging environment. Young people are learning to work effectively in teams. In projects such as Bellingham Gateway Dance young people provide support for others and understand the importance of co-operation. Specific programmes such as Platform 1 Girl's Group are very effective at promoting young people's confidence and encouraging them to take responsibility for their own learning. In the Not 2 Shook 2 Learn project young people are now able to lead sessions.

6. Young people take part in a wide range of youth clubs and more targeted programmes. They are highly motivated, and have fun with workers and each other as they learn and develop. Opportunities for young people to take part in accredited programmes are very good and they achieve well through these. Young people gain much through those projects that offer challenge. For example, First Steps NEET, the Open Award Centre and Sounds Inspired.

7. Overall the quality of youth work practice is good. In more effective sessions, workers have created the right environment for young people to flourish. Staff listen to young people and respond to their needs and requests by shaping projects locally to reflect their wishes. At Sounds Inspired, workers provide

differentiated learning experiences which closely match young people's needs. At Platform 1 Girls group youth workers support young people effectively to express their needs and concerns and to identify solutions for themselves. However in weaker sessions staff are not always deployed effectively, planning is not sufficiently thorough, some opportunities for engagement are missed or there is a lack of challenge for some young people.

Key Aspect 2: Quality of curriculum and resources

8. The quality of the curriculum and resources is good overall. The service provides young people with access to a wide range of targeted and universal projects. These offer educational and recreational activities including arts, drama, computing, music and sports as well as social activities. Adventure playgrounds, involvement in extended school provision, Positive Activity Youth Programmes (PAYP) and activities during school holidays offer good opportunities for young people to learn new skills, and plan and run activities for themselves.

9. The service is well resourced and provides good quality equipment and specialist resources such as rock climbing facilities, musical instruments, motor vehicles and workshops for young people. Programmes reflect national priorities and local needs and are well planned and delivered in conjunction with partner agencies. Specific targeted programmes are a particularly strong feature and meet young people's needs very well. Alternative education projects offer good opportunities for accreditation and valuable advice is available to young people across Lewisham on education, employment, training and sexual health and relationships. Teenage pregnancy and young parenthood programmes are beginning to make a difference.

10. The youth service operates in the context of an integrated strategy to provide drug education and advice at youth centres. These reach sizable numbers of young people. It is quick to respond to changing needs; for example, the threat of violence perceived by young people has led to the introduction of conflict resolution programmes. The youth service is prepared to tackle some of the most challenging areas of youth work. For example, the 'children looked after' key worker scheme provides support for young people displaying risky behaviour.

11. Management of the curriculum is good. There is effective use of evaluation to improve service delivery, for example in the Detached Team Hot Spots. Effective service level agreements are in place with partner agencies to deliver programmes young people need and want, the young Lewisham car maintenance project being a case in point.

12. Staff training is closely aligned to the delivery of programmes. Youth workers involved in specific targeted projects are well trained and confident in their work. For example, detached youth workers are making a significant impact on street crime. Partnership working and staff flexibility across projects is a strong feature. Staff enjoy good management support, through effective one to one meetings and appraisal system.

13. The local authority's approach towards equality, inclusion and diversity through the work of the youth service is good. The curriculum observes and promotes the principles of equality, inclusiveness and diversity supported by appropriate policies and procedures. Managers and staff are committed to these principles. The needs of some of the most vulnerable and hard to reach young people are met very well. There are specific projects for young people with additional special educational needs for example, those who are hearing impaired. Aspects of provision take account of gender and sexual orientation, and activities are provided for young people who have medical conditions that prevent them attending mainstream school. The authority has made reasonable adjustments to accommodation in meeting the requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001. However some premises remain inaccessible for wheel chair users and those with restricted mobility.

Key Aspect 3: Leadership and management

14. Strategic and operational management are good. Strategic leadership is strong; the direction of the service is clear. Staff demonstrate a strong identity with service aims and objectives; morale is high. Business planning is good and implementation plans are sufficiently detailed and precise to guide actions. Priorities are clearly aligned with national and local needs linked to a robust needs analysis. The management structure demonstrates clear lines of accountability. Managers know the service well and have accurately identified strengths and weaknesses in the self assessment. A recent review of the service has led to some important improvements including the provision of closely aligned and targeted programmes and efficiencies in staffing.

15. The introduction of a quality assurance framework is beginning to have an impact. Managers and staff across the service are committed to its operation; findings from quality assurance reviews are increasingly being used to influence and shape projects. All staff have received quality assurance training to good effect. However, data analysis is hindered due to the inefficiencies of the paper based systems.

16. The service is very well represented by the senior management and head of service in strategic forums. Partnership work with statutory agencies and the private, voluntary and independent sector is a key strength. For example, youth service staff provide advice and support in partnership with the Connexions service, schools and the Youth Offending Team. The service is successful in attracting external funding. These three factors have led to increased capacity, a good range and depth of the provision that meets local needs and impact in some important areas such as community safety.

17. Young people's participation is well developed at strategic level. Youth service initiatives have resulted in good participation in democratic processes. For example, 46% of young people in schools voted in the election of the young mayor; in 2006 the authority achieved beacon status for its work in this area. Young people are becoming increasingly involved in their community through

programmes such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. There are some good examples of young people helping to shape projects at a local level for example, in the evaluation of the summer activities programme. However, practice is not consistent and opportunities are missed for young people to influence the quality and the shape of projects.