

# East Sussex Youth Development Service Report – Youth Work in East Sussex

East Sussex Children's Services Authority Area

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**Age group:** All

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## Introduction

1. Youth work in East Sussex is delivered through the Youth Development Service (YDS) which forms part of integrated Youth Development and Support Services located within the Children's Services Department. The head of service role is carried out by the Head of Integrated Youth Development and Support Services (East) who is accountable to the Deputy Director Children and Families. The management team of the YDS includes two Area Managers, the Youth Matters Strategy Manager and the Quality and Performance Manager. The service currently employs 213 staff, equivalent to 90 full time posts. The budget for youth work is £2.3 million; a further £1.1 million is generated through external funding.
2. Youth work is delivered through 158 projects. These include youth clubs, outreach and detached youth work programmes, information, advice and guidance provision and project based work. Approximately 40% of provision is delivered through service level agreements (SLAs) with community colleges. There are 44,000 young people in the 13-19 age range. The service reports a reach of 25% in 2006-07.
3. The Joint Area Review (JAR) was enhanced to enable coverage of the youth service. Inspectors considered the service's self-assessment and met with officers and a cross section of staff and partners. They reviewed key service documentation and observed a sample of youth work sessions in the area.

## Part A: Summary of the report

### Main findings

#### Effectiveness and value for money

4. East Sussex County Council provides adequate youth work that delivers satisfactory value for money. Outcomes for young people are good overall, as is the quality of youth work practice. At clubs and projects the curriculum supports young people to make good progress and they gain much from their involvement in youth work programmes, particularly in their personal development. At its most effective, youth work plays a significant role in delivering the council's objectives for 13-19 year olds. The use of accredited learning schemes is a key strategy for the YDS; however the use of accreditation is underdeveloped. Regular in-service training for youth workers is not in place. Funding for youth work is low and a reliance on external funding to supplement the core budget places some important work at risk. Within the overall Children's Services budget youth work funding has been accorded a relatively low priority for resources by senior managers and elected members. The distribution of resources against need is inequitable across the county. Managers are working hard to both raise the profile of the work and make improvements in the service overall but the current management structure is not yet sufficiently embedded or coordinated to deliver improvements efficiently. Over time, quality assurance activities have led to improvements. Data is now

collected regularly but is not used routinely to support service development. Partnerships are strong and greatly enhance the capacity of the service to meet young people's needs effectively.

### Strengths

- Young people make good progress and achieve well.
- The quality of youth work practice is good.
- Young people benefit from good personal support.
- Partnerships enhance what is on offer to young people.
- There is a good focus on the health and well being of young people.

### Areas for development

- The resourcing of youth work.
- The use of management information is underdeveloped.
- There is inequity of provision across the county.
- There are too few in-service training opportunities for youth work staff.
- The use of accreditation is underdeveloped.

### 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	2
3	Strategic and operational leadership and management	2

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

5. The service makes a good contribution to *Every Child Matters* outcomes in a number of areas. Young people's mental health and well being is promoted effectively both through specialist provision and more generally in youth work projects. Young people are able to advocate for their own needs in their local communities with the help of youth workers. For example, in Hastings detached workers supported local skaters to gain access to funding to extend skateboarding facilities in the town. Through the Youth Opportunity Fund (YOF) young people from a diverse range of backgrounds play an active part in civic affairs. They manage the project and have allocated £1.2 million helping many other young people tackle issues for themselves and others in the community. The service effectively supports the UK youth parliament, youth cabinet elections and many young people act as volunteers in youth work projects. There is a good focus on tackling anti social behaviour, particularly through detached youth work.

## Part C: Commentary on the key aspects

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

6. The standard of young people's achievement and the quality of youth work practice are good overall although there are some inconsistencies that the local authority has recognised in their self assessment.

7. In the best sessions young people achieve very well and make very good progress, particularly in their personal development. Through their involvement in youth work projects they develop their interpersonal skills well and grow in confidence and self awareness. At its best youth work achieves good outcomes for young people. For example, at the Mercread Inclusion project young people successfully undertook GCSE courses whilst developing their personal and vocational interests. Some learnt how to manage themselves in situations of conflict. At Ringmer Drop-In they learnt photography skills including processing black and white photos and digital photography and at the Anything But group they learnt about HIV and risk taking behaviour.

8. Young people are supported very well in advocating for their needs, particularly within their own communities, this is a real strength of youth work in the area. For example, in Seddlescombe young people researched the views of others about youth provision and youth workers supported them in discussing the development of new facilities with parish councillors. Many young people take opportunities to volunteer in youth work projects; they enjoy volunteering and are well supported when taking on responsibility.

9. A key strategy of the YDS to improve outcomes for young people is the use of accredited schemes of learning and an appropriate range of awards is on offer. However, the use of accreditation to support young people's learning is inconsistent. Whilst good examples were seen of accreditation schemes being used to help tailor learning in many other instances it was applied superficially. Opportunities were missed in some settings where accreditation would help young people concentrate on and consolidate learning. The level of accredited outcomes is low overall.

10. In the less successful youth work sessions young people are not provided with sufficient stimulus, programmes do not reflect local needs and they lack a sense of purpose. This is very much in contrast to the best work seen.

11. Most youth work practice is characterised by a high level of trust and strong relationships between young people and youth workers. Youth workers provide good local leadership, have a good insight into issues affecting young people in their everyday lives and effectively respond to these. Local partnerships are often at the heart of the good practice seen. These features of practice are central to the good outcomes achieved by young people.

12. Most youth workers have a good understanding of the principles of youth work and translate these effectively into their daily practice despite the variability in the quality of sessional plans. Youth workers provide very good personal support and guidance for young people in the vast majority of settings. For example at the Hastings Want to Talk project they receive vital one-to-one help that they value extremely highly.

## Key Aspect 2: Quality of curriculum and resources

13. The quality of curriculum and resources is adequate. There is a good breadth of provision including mobile and detached work, youth clubs and specialist targeted projects. Much youth work is delivered through Community Colleges. However the distribution of resources is uneven with areas of higher need in the east of the county not always as well served as those in the west. Plans are being developed to address this inequity.

14. Within the resources available the YDS makes an important contribution to local priorities for young people; its curriculum is strong in several areas. There is a good focus on young people's health and well being. Promoting good sexual health, preventing teenage pregnancy and providing information, advice and guidance are priorities for the YDS and those projects visited were playing a valuable part in the network of services for young people. Work seen aimed at supporting young people to remain in education was successful and detached work responded well to concerns about anti social behaviour and low level crime.

15. The management of the curriculum is satisfactory. The local curriculum offer at clubs and projects mostly meets needs well and this is reflected in the good progress that most young people make. The curriculum development model is used inconsistently across youth work settings. In some it is used very effectively

to plan and develop work with individuals and groups, mapping their needs and their development. In some cases it is only superficially applied and in a minority it is not used at all.

16. At clubs and projects there is a good focus on inclusion and managers and delivery staff respond to local needs well, often through securing additional resources locally. They place a high priority on targeting services to meet local need and filling gaps in provision. For example, in Hastings detached youth work is designed to address negative attitudes towards overseas students amongst some local young people. In the west of the county a youth work post has been developed to better understand and respond to the needs of Black and Minority Ethnic communities. The service has made adequate progress in implementing measures under the special educational needs and disability act (SENDA). Work seen with young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities was of good quality and provision for this group has recently been increased.

17. The quality of premises vary greatly although staff make the most of what they have got and some very good youth work thrived in drab and unattractive buildings. The co-location of different projects generally improved access to services.

18. As a result of re-structuring there has been a lull in on-going in service training opportunities. However a training programme leading to National Vocational Qualifications is in place to enable youth workers to gain a qualification at level 2. Most full time staff are trained to national standards. Several staff have been well supported in completing the Foundation Degree at the University of Brighton.

### Key Aspect 3: Leadership and management

19. Leadership and management are adequate overall. However, in the context of the overall Children's Services Authority budget, youth work has been accorded a relatively low priority for resources by senior managers and elected members. Funding allocated for youth work by the local authority is comparatively low and has reduced annually over a number of years. A large amount of external funding supplements the core budget of the service and this is used well to support the inclusion agenda. However a large proportion of this funding is due to cease in March 2008 and this places much good work at risk.

20. Officers are working hard to raise the profile of youth work and the current strategy for youth work has helped set a broad and useful framework for service development prioritising the provision of information, advice and guidance, health, inclusion and positive activities. There are clear links between the strategy and operational plans.

21. There is a strong commitment from managers to make further improvements to the YDS and in outcomes for young people. However there is a lack of clarity about what specific steps will be taken to achieve the council's goals and this has



caused anxiety amongst staff. Officers have not sufficiently communicated the vision for service development to youth work staff.

22. Management roles supporting the Youth Development Service are dispersed within different strands of the integrated Youth Development and Support Service. They are not yet fully embedded or sufficiently coordinated to drive through further improvements needed. Whilst some service-wide management activities have been effectively implemented, for example developing and implementing new service level agreements with community colleges, others have not. Managers know the strengths of the service well and what activities need to be undertaken to improve further; much remains to be done.

23. The service reported it reached 25% of 13-19 year olds in 2006-07, however more recent and reliable data suggests a much lower figure. The YDS is now in a position to collect reliable management information about the performance of the service as a whole and of individual projects. It has good qualitative information from its quality assurance activities. A schedule of observations of practice is in place, and although young people have in the past been involved in quality assurance activities, they do not do so routinely. Data is now collected regularly from individual projects on participation and other key indicators. However the use of this information at a service-wide level is underdeveloped and plans to utilise this data further are modest. Measures to make judgements about the cost effectiveness of provision are not yet in place.

24. In the main youth work is undertaken within a safe environment for staff and young people. An appropriate set of policies provide a framework for service delivery and activities are suitably assessed for their risks to young people. Appropriate employment checks are undertaken on new staff and youth workers are aware of their responsibilities in protecting service users.

25. Increasingly youth work is undertaken in partnership with other providers. These partnerships are very effective in extending provision and responding to needs. They help make the most of youth work resources and expertise. Partners value the approach that youth workers have and the impact that youth work can make.