



Effective youth services

Good practice

**Better
education
and care**

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Executive summary

1. In January 2004, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) began a four-year programme to inspect all local authority youth services. The main aim of the report is to provide case studies of the good practice seen during the first year of the programme to contribute to the further improvement of provision.
2. The revised framework for inspecting youth services is set out under three key aspects:
 - the standards of young people's achievements and the quality of youth work practice
 - the quality of curriculum and resources
 - strategic and operational leadership and management.
3. Services are placed in one of four categories: very good, good, adequate, inadequate. Of the 31 inspected in 2004, 6 were judged to be good or very good, 17 adequate, and 8 inadequate. Value for money was judged to be good or very good in 4, satisfactory in 19 and unsatisfactory in 8. The number of services judged to be inadequate and providing unsatisfactory value for money was high in proportion to the number of inspections carried out.
4. The framework stresses the responsibility of the local authority for setting a strong strategic direction for the service and providing the necessary financial, human and material resources. The report provides examples of services where the local authority provided exemplary support. In these cases, the morale of staff and young people was almost always good. In inadequate services, local authorities frequently failed to provide the necessary level of direction and support.
5. Young people achieved high standards when workers had a good blend of qualifications and experience, the work was planned well and balanced effectively between recreational and educational aims, and when young people were involved in planning and evaluating it. Inspectors judged work with a specific focus to be generally the most successful – project work and youth information and counselling, in particular.
6. All services draw up curriculum policies and the report identifies those which put these policies into practice effectively. In these services, the curriculum was designed in consultation with staff, partners and young people, and was broad and varied, understood well by managers and workers, and implemented consistently. It actively promoted the principles of equality, inclusion and diversity. Inadequate services frequently lacked the management capacity and expertise to ensure that what they intended through their curriculum policies was put into practice.

7. There was usually a link between the level of human and material resources allocated to a service and the quality of its work. Good services had sufficient managers and workers, a good balance between full- and part-time workers, and good-quality accommodation and resources. There were substantial variations between the quality and levels of staffing and resources in different services. Some services performed well, however, despite shortcomings in resources.
8. The report identifies features of good strategic and operational management that underpinned successful youth work, especially the quality of partnerships and multi-agency working, and links established with the statutory and voluntary sectors. The best-managed services defined and integrated their aims clearly within overall local and national priorities. Supervision and performance management arrangements were good, staff training plans were closely linked to service development plans, and managers deployed staff flexibly to meet changing circumstances.
9. Most services had quality assurance policies, but these were rarely understood well and implemented consistently. Relatively few services had developed management information and data-collection systems to provide them with the necessary information to judge their performance objectively and assess value for money. Many services had recently undergone substantial reorganisation. In poorly managed services, the processes of change exacerbated weaknesses that were already present.
10. The government's Transforming Youth Work national initiative includes targets aimed at extending the reach of youth services and increasing the emphasis on accreditation. Services had responded positively to the initiative, which has generally helped to focus their work and make it more responsive to local and national priorities. Services were also under increasing pressure to engage disaffected young people. Even the best services sometimes found it difficult to reconcile these two requirements.

Key findings

- ❑ Youth services have responded positively to the government's Transforming Youth Work national initiative. Targets to extend the reach of youth services and increase the emphasis on accreditation have generally helped to focus their work and make it more responsive to local and national priorities. However, even the best services sometimes found it difficult to reconcile the aim of extending their work and increasing the emphasis on accreditation with simultaneous pressure to engage disaffected young people.
- ❑ The number of services judged to be inadequate and giving unsatisfactory value for money was high in proportion to the number of inspections carried out. Of the 31 services inspected in the first year of the inspection programme, 6 were good or very good overall, 17 adequate, and 8 inadequate. Value for money was good in 4, satisfactory in 19 and unsatisfactory in 8.
- ❑ Strong commitment from the local authority was a key feature of the most effective services. It showed itself in a clear sense of identity for the service, strategic direction, sufficient funding to meet the service's aims and strong management structures. Inadequate services often lacked such leadership, as well as the insight to examine their work critically and identify the improvements needed.
- ❑ Young people's achievement was at least satisfactory in nearly nine in ten youth work sessions and good or very good in just over a half. It was highest in project-based work and youth information advice and counselling and lowest in detached and centre-based youth work.¹ Young people developed positive attitudes and values and increased their self-confidence. They learned to take part in society as individuals and responsible members of their community.
- ❑ Youth work practice was at least satisfactory in nearly nine in ten sessions and good or very good in well over half of all sessions. In the most effective practice, youth workers had established positive relationships with young people and contributed substantially to their personal development.
- ❑ Services which put their curriculum policies into practice effectively had designed them in consultation with staff, partners and young people. They were understood well by managers and workers, and implemented consistently. They actively promoted equality, inclusion and diversity. The quality of curriculum leadership and coordination was unsatisfactory in 39% of services. They frequently lacked both the capacity and expertise to put into practice the intentions expressed in policies.

¹ Detached work involves making contact with young people who cannot, or choose not to, use youth centres.

- ❑ Quality assurance was unsatisfactory in 39% of the services inspected. Most services had quality assurance policies, but these were rarely understood well or implemented consistently. Relatively few services had developed management information and data-collection systems to enable them to judge their performance objectively and assess value for money. Services found it difficult to measure their cost-effectiveness and take full account of best value. They found most difficulty in judging young people's achievement.
- ❑ In effective services, both strategic and operational management were good. Operational managers were involved consistently in strategic decision-making. They managed the work efficiently, ensured that young people played a role in aspects of operational and strategic management, and incorporated partnership working into the service's overall provision. They integrated their aims clearly within overall local and national priorities.
- ❑ Effective services had good supervision and performance management arrangements. Training plans for staff were closely linked to service development plans, and managers deployed staff flexibly to respond to changing circumstances.
- ❑ The number and quality of staff were key factors in successful youth services. Good services had sufficient well-qualified and appropriately trained staff and maintained a good balance between full- and part-time workers. Too many unqualified or inexperienced staff affected the quality of the work.
- ❑ There were substantial differences between the quality and levels of staffing and resources in different services, but some services performed well despite shortcomings in resources.
- ❑ The majority of services safeguarded young people well and provided them and youth workers with a safe working environment.

Recommendations

To improve the quality of the services they provide for young people, local authorities and youth services should:

- improve quality assurance arrangements, particularly through enhancing needs analysis, management information systems and budget monitoring, as well as the planning and evaluation of work by managers and workers
- focus on the educational outcomes of their work and improve the opportunities for young people to gain accreditation for work undertaken
- improve the leadership of the curriculum and ensure that curriculum policies are realised in practice
- increase the involvement of young people in service provision.

Commentary

Strengths and weaknesses of youth service provision in the first year of inspections

11. Good practice was observed in all the services inspected, including those judged to be inadequate overall, but even the most effective services had some shortcomings that required attention.
12. The strongest aspects of youth work were:
 - young people's achievement, particularly in their social and personal development
 - the motivation and commitment of youth workers
 - the experience and expertise of workers
 - the range of provision
 - partnership working
 - equality, inclusion, diversity and social cohesion.
13. The following aspects were those most often identified as weaknesses:
 - the planning, evaluation and educational focus of youth work
 - the opportunities for young people's achievement to be accredited
 - the involvement of young people, for example in planning and evaluating the work
 - sufficient numbers of both full- and part-time staff
 - curriculum implementation and leadership
 - quality assurance arrangements and judgements on value for money.
14. The most effective services were characterised by stable and consistent approaches that unified the provision. Common approaches were understood and implemented, and there was a strong sense of identity and direction. Key posts were filled by experienced staff, there was a good balance between full- and part-time workers, and the professional development of staff was organised effectively to meet the service's needs.
15. The inadequate services were often fragmented and individual examples of good work stood out as exceptions. Such services tended to be over-dependent on the skill and commitment of individuals and often lacked sufficient management capacity and expertise to ensure consistency. Services with vacancies in key posts were generally among those judged to be inadequate. Such vacancies often hindered the effective implementation of policies, especially for the curriculum and quality assurance. Inadequate services often had unrealistic expectations of part-time staff, some of whom worked for only a few hours a week.
16. A minority of local authorities contracted out their provision to external providers. In others, the youth service had been largely subsumed within the management structure of the Connexions partnership. In some cases

it was unclear who had responsibility for key areas of the work, for example, curriculum implementation and quality assurance. When responsibilities were unclear, the quality of the work was likely to suffer. Local authority reorganisation and subsequent upheaval sometimes affected the quality of provision.

17. The majority of services were judged to safeguard young people well and provide them and staff with a safe working environment. Services had generally developed good policies on equality, inclusion and diversity and included the promotion of social inclusion among their aims. Policies on the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) 2001, the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the DfES guidance *Safeguarding children in education* were in place.² Considerable differences existed, however, between services in their implementation and promotion of these policies through their curriculum. There was still much to do to ensure that good intentions expressed in policies were borne out in effective practice.
18. Value for money provided by a service is judged on the basis of a number of factors, including the quality of provision and the context in which the service works, together with statistical indicators. Most services had made some progress towards evaluating their effectiveness and their value for money, although they did not always find it easy to demonstrate their effectiveness across the diverse range of their work. They found it difficult to judge the achievement of young people.
19. On the surface, there were large differences between the financial resources devoted to services. Figures for the net budget per head for 2003–04 ranged from £186 to £34. There was, nonetheless, some correlation between the resources devoted to a service and its effectiveness. For example, evidence from the 2003–04 National Youth Agency (NYA) audit figures suggests that all services judged as inadequate by inspectors had staffing ratios below the median.³ Four of the 2003–04 indicators (net budget, youth work service budget, total staff budget and net budget per head) also showed that inadequate services were below the median.
20. However, there was not always a direct relationship between resources and quality of work. In six of the eight inadequate services, the figure for the net budget per head was below the median, but in one it was above. Conversely, two of the best-performing services had net budget per head figures below the median. This suggests that, although there is some evidence to support the view that inadequate services are under-resourced, services which are modestly resourced, but stable and well managed, make effective and efficient use of their resources.

² *Safeguarding children in education*, Department for Education and Skills, 2004.

³ NYA audit.

Case studies

21. The case studies and summaries that follow, organised under the three key aspects of the framework, have been selected to highlight aspects of good practice.

Standards of young people's achievements and the quality of youth work practice (key aspect 1)

22. Project work was generally the most successful aspect of youth work. It was frequently characterised by a disciplined focus on methodology and assessment, linked to conditions attached to funding, and often led to some form of accreditation. Specialised forms of youth work – issue-based work, special projects and work related to specific youth work or vocational qualifications such as the Youth Achievement Award – were usually of higher quality than more routine centre-based activities.
23. Centre-based work was usually more loosely defined. However, young people achieved well when workers were imaginative and ambitious and planned work that went beyond providing routine, recreational activities. Good centre-based provision continued to do what it has always done: to give young people a safe place where they can meet friends, relax, have fun and enjoy a range of stimulating and challenging recreational and other activities. For many young people living in difficult personal or domestic circumstances, youth centres represented the one place where they could meet safely and obtain the support they needed to cope with their lives.
24. Relationships between workers and young people were almost always positive. Good services were characterised by the thoroughness with which they identified and met young people's needs and their efforts to measure the progress they were making. The best services expected their workers to challenge young people as well as support them, to oblige them to face the consequences of inappropriate language and behaviour and take account of the sensitivities of others. In inadequate services, workers often tended to be passive observers rather than active leaders.
25. Skilled youth workers went beyond providing young people with a pleasant meeting place. They ensured that young people had the opportunity to discuss issues that concerned them, take part in creative, sporting and artistic activities, and become actively involved in running their centre and in planning and evaluating the work. Positive engagement between workers and young people was more likely to lead to higher levels of achievement than when young people were left too much to their own devices. Additionally, youth services that encouraged young people to

gain appropriate forms of accreditation helped them to become more confident individuals, stimulated their pride in achievement and ensured that the service contributed to the local authority's overall targets for education and community cohesion.

26. Successful services encouraged young people to become independent and self-reliant individuals, capable of exercising discrimination and judgement; at the same time, they encouraged them to see themselves as members of communities, with the expectations and responsibilities that this entailed. They involved young people in the planning and running of all aspects of youth services, including strategic and operational management.
27. Services where achievement and practice in detached youth work were very good had developed effective systems to record evidence of young people's achievement and measure the progress that they had made. The best work was usually seen with young people with whom staff had worked for some time to establish continuity and build up trust. The fact that, during inspections, young people's achievement in detached work was judged to be relatively weak overall, whereas practice was judged more favourably, suggests that services sometimes have difficulty in providing evidence, in such contexts, to demonstrate what young people have achieved.
28. The following case studies illustrate examples of effective achievement and practice. They are drawn from observation forms completed by inspectors during inspection.⁴ Examples are given of centre-based work, detached work, youth information advice and counselling, and project work.

Centre-based work

Millhouse Youth Club, Barnsley

This was an open session in an attractive, purpose-built centre in a small village.

There was good access for all young people who were working towards accredited qualifications (including Millennium Volunteers, Open College Network and The Duke of Edinburgh's award). Some young people produced a play on the theme of race awareness, developing their literacy and performance skills. Others took part in healthy cooking or recreational activities. Young people were involved at all stages in the planning and evaluation of the activities and decision-making, and were becoming mature, confident individuals as a result. Good records were kept, including feedback sheets.

⁴ The observation form used by inspectors is available on Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/index.cfm?fuseaction=pubs.displayfile&id=3722&type=doc.

Attendance levels were consistently high, and young men and women took part equally in all aspects of the work.

The session was clearly planned and closely linked to the local authority's curriculum. Workers used a range of activities, including academic (literacy), practical (cooking), physical (games) and intellectual (discussion) pursuits. Staff set the young people clear boundaries for their conduct. The work was reviewed at the end of the session and the young people identified what they had learned. Staff kept comprehensive session records and there were good displays of young people's achievements, including photographic evidence. Staff were well supported and had good access to training. They felt strongly that they were part of a team.

Pakistani Youth Club, Nottingham City

The session, attended by a group of young men, combined sports, information and communication technology (ICT) and cookery activities with preparation for the celebration of Eid. The young men were able to identify the knowledge and skills that they had acquired. For example, one man commented that communication skills were important since 'if you want to be a lawyer you would need to be able to communicate with people'. Two of the young men represented young people on the centre's management committee. There was an active youth council in the club. Young people's work was accredited by a locally devised accreditation scheme and their achievements were prominently displayed in newsletters, photographs and newspaper cuttings. The young men contributed to evaluating the work, were confident and relaxed in their relationships with the workers, and respected the premises and equipment. They were encouraged to counter racism with reasoned assertiveness rather than aggression.

Workers were clear about the service's curriculum and used it well to help the young people to plan their programme. Sessions were well prepared, matched to young people's needs and thoroughly recorded and evaluated. Workers responded well to young people's requests for new and different activities. There were clear messages around the club offering advice and help. The two workers felt well supported by city-wide management teams.

Hillside Youth Centre, Portsmouth

The session, characterised by a purposeful, professional approach and attended by 24 young women, focused on health issues and preparations for a local carnival. Activities included art work, trampolining, pool and computer games, and guided discussions on issues such as physical development, sex and relationships. Standards of achievement were high and stemmed from the clearly expressed aim of workers to help young people acquire skills, for example in clay modelling, sport and debate. The carnival preparations allowed them to explore different cultural traditions and acquire dress-making skills. Some of the activities allowed the young women to achieve a qualification. They responded well to the wide choice of activity and were proud of their

achievements. They were highly positive about the centre, treated the resources and premises well, and enjoyed excellent relations with the workers.

Workers had structured the session well and matched the activities to the young women's needs and interests. The educational focus of the session was clear to participants and observers. The content of the sexual health and relationships session was aligned with the national curriculum. The session was evaluated in discussion with the young women and subsequently in a team debriefing, using the service's planning and evaluation materials. The centre was spacious, well equipped and accessible to all young people.

STEPS Club for Young People, Dorset

The session was attended by a mixed group of young people towards the top end of the 13–19 age range. It was 'buzzing with ideas and enthusiasm'. Good use was made of the Youth Achievement Award. As well as being an open session, it also took the form of a 'health MOT' evening where representatives from different health agencies ran sessions for the young people. These included safe drinking limits, step aerobics assessment of fitness, healthy eating and safe sex. Workers and young people described what they had learned from their participation. The achievements were clear and significant. One young woman with a poor school attendance record devised an icebreaker activity as part of her Youth Achievement Silver Award. She created the resources for the activity, which was subsequently used by the service as part of its staff training programme. Young people acquired a sense of independence and confidence through participating actively in the centre's management committee.

Workers provided a well-planned, interesting and demanding curriculum. They knew the young people well, were approachable, and offered them support and guidance in an atmosphere of mutual trust. External agencies were involved regularly in the centre's activities. Records showed that sessions were planned and evaluated regularly and provided evidence of the young people's progress. Young people had contributed to the design and decoration of this well-maintained centre.

Detached work

Trafford street-based team

A small team of three workers worked on the streets with a group of young men and women identified by the street-based team. The session was part of a series exploring drug-related issues. The detached work was provided in conjunction with the local drug advice service. The young people described how their self-confidence had increased through their involvement with the team. They talked knowledgeably about substance abuse, and had designed a leaflet to pass on this information to other young people. The young people had negotiated targets for these sessions as part of the Youth Achievement Award and were aware of the progress they had made.

The experienced and well-qualified workers had excellent relationships with the young people. The programme was located within overall service priorities of crime and disorder, citizenship and health, and was based on an analysis of the area and the young people living in it. The workers established boundaries for the young people, but were flexible in their approach, allowing themselves to be challenged when the occasion demanded. The work was well structured and session evaluations were used to plan future work. Workers gave the young people good advice and acted as advocates for them in relation to the local community. The project drew on the expertise and specialist skills of a range of agencies from the statutory and voluntary sector.

Gamlingay, Cambridgeshire

The purpose of the session was to focus on drugs issues and select a representative to speak at the next parish council meeting. The group felt that it had been marginalised by its local community. The young people demonstrated the progress they had made through showing and discussing critically a self-produced video. Workers created a positive, encouraging atmosphere. Although outnumbered, the two young women members attending played a full part in the discussions. The group attended regularly and were keen to portray a positive impression and be accepted by their local community.

Excellent relationships had developed over two years between workers and young people. Workers had an instinctive feel for the issues faced by young people. They provided a stimulating forum for discussion within well-established boundaries, acted as advocates for the young people and smoothed the path to their participation in local decision-making. The group took an active part in planning and evaluating sessions.

Youth information advice and counselling

(Name of service withheld)

This was a one-to-one session with a young woman with learning difficulties. Workers had built up a trusting relationship with her over an extended period. She had been both supported and sensitively challenged to prepare for her eventual re-integration into other forms of learning and recreational activity. The young woman described how the workers had helped her to acquire the necessary skills to become more independent: these included basic and ICT skills. She particularly valued the workers' long-standing commitment to her. She also admitted that she was now more confident in her personal relationships.

The worker in this session had a pleasant manner and used open-ended questions effectively. She showed a highly developed awareness of the young woman's needs. She checked that the young woman understood what had been agreed and was careful to ensure that there was time for questions. Workers kept appropriate records of all interventions held at the centre.

Project work

High Rid Outdoor Activities Centre, Bolton

The centre provided an accredited basic sailing course for a mixed group, aged 13–15, from different ethnic backgrounds. All the young people had moderate learning difficulties, including one boy who was profoundly deaf. They had been assessed for competency in the water and mobility and had one-to-one or one-to-two support on the water from staff. The course included sessions on health and safety. All were working towards a national award, which took them session by session through a series of assessment criteria. They were highly enthusiastic and were able to describe their starting points, the progress they had made, and the skills they had acquired. They were well informed about the aims of the session and shared their knowledge and skills with each other.

The workers were skilled, qualified, outdoor instructors. They cared well for the young people, challenged them and made the learning fun. Achievements were recorded and evaluated in well-maintained session logs. Young people contributed to the evaluation. The centre and its companion 'dry-site' centre offered an impressive range of activities, including orienteering and climbing. The quality and range of resources were impressive. Staff were well managed, with good arrangements for supervision. Health and safety were high priorities.

Tides Project Centre, Dorset

This was an outstanding project, catering for young people from diverse cultural and faith backgrounds. All had some form of learning or behavioural difficulty. Activities were focused on assessed needs and supported by individual learning plans. For example, two girls who wanted to build a model hovercraft had been able to download plans from the internet and were halfway through the construction. Young people were aware of the progress they had made and the skills they had developed, which included ICT, music, gardening, cooking, motor vehicle skills and arts. One young man with a history of substance abuse had worked with the project for two years and was about to go on a volunteering placement abroad. ('It's been a lifeline for me.') There was substantial evidence of young people assessing their needs, planning their programmes, making and reviewing progress, applying their learning to practical situations, and developing self-confidence. Young people said: 'This a safe place'; 'I can come back when things go wrong and try again'; 'They understand what we want.'

The workers held specialist qualifications in most aspects of the work. They used reflective problem-solving techniques to help the young people analyse and resolve problems. They demonstrated a strong belief in their capacity to succeed. Evaluation, based on achievement, was thorough. Workers provided young people with induction packs and developed new learning materials when necessary. Good records were kept of all planning and work undertaken. The accommodation and resources were of high quality. Workers constantly sought

to improve their work and were keen to use links and volunteer activities with other countries to provide an international dimension.

Clapham Youth Centre, Lambeth

A group of young black men and women wanted to acquire DJ skills. Previous course participants attended to lend their support. Four young people from the peer inspection team also attended the session. Aims of the session included microphone skills, and theoretical and practical work with turntables. Course participants set out their own personal goals. The young people introduced themselves to the group, took part in small group work to refine their aims, and developed the technical skills required to DJ. They reflected on previous learning and set themselves targets for future learning. Previous course participants tutored younger group members and recounted how some of them had gained employment through the skills that they had acquired on the course. The young people's achievements were displayed in photographic exhibitions in the club and on posters outside the club. A young woman with learning difficulties was discreetly supported. The group was lively and respectful of the opinions of others.

The session was well constructed by the workers who used a range of methods to sustain the young people's interest. The well-paced combination of practical and theoretical work was underpinned by lively discussion. The specialist tutors worked well with the centre's part-time workers. The session was recorded and evaluated and young people were involved in negotiating and planning the course. The accommodation was in good condition and the DJ project equipment was up to date and of industry standard. The project was strongly supported by the local authority and funded by The Clapham Park Project New Deal for Communities programme.

29. These case studies exemplify a range of characteristics that are typical of good provision in key aspect 1:

Achievement

- the involvement of young people in planning, executing and evaluating the activities, with opportunities for accreditation where appropriate
- a sense of fun and enjoyment in the work
- the opportunity for young people to work independently, use their initiative, and acquire a sense of responsibility towards themselves and their community
- a wide range of activities, including recreational, artistic and creative, sporting and intellectual
- inclusive activities that encourage regular, high levels of participation.

Practice

- well-prepared sessions, planned within the framework of an overall service curriculum

- experienced, skilled workers who know their areas and the young people well
- good use of specialist staff and partnership working
- good relationships based on mutual respect, where boundaries are set and observed
- thoroughly evaluated sessions linked to good forward planning
- strong support and guidance from service managers
- sufficient and good-quality accommodation and resources.

Quality of curriculum and resources (key aspect 2)

Curriculum

30. Good services based their curricula on an analysis of a number of factors, including the composition, needs and interests of the local 13–19 age group and local and national priorities established for work with young people. Successful youth services set out a rationale for their curriculum, after wide-ranging consultation, and ensured that it harmonised with other local authority provision for young people. They actively promoted the principles of equality, inclusiveness and diversity, and monitored how well these principles were implemented. They observed their duties to safeguard young people. Most services had devised a set of curriculum policies; in good services, managers ensured that staff and young people were aware of the policies and monitored the provision to ensure that practice matched intentions. The most effective services used partnership working productively.
31. The following extracts from reports illustrate some of the features of services with good curriculum provision.

Oxfordshire

The curriculum offers young people a good range of learning opportunities, well matched to their needs and provided through centres, projects and street-based work. Performing arts and music-focused activities are used well in work with priority groups. The multi-arts programme enables experienced arts workers to offer a high standard of tuition in digital animation, photography, creative drama and poetry. Staff at the Riverside Outdoor Education Centre provide an impressive array of challenging activities, firmly rooted in a good understanding of the principles of youth work and offering young people the chance to acquire qualifications. The service's curriculum framework provides staff with clear direction; it is responsive to national and local priorities and understood by staff. Unit planning, underpinned by comprehensive needs analysis, is effective in implementing the service's key curriculum themes and targets. Cross-service initiatives such as the social inclusion team, youth counselling, mentoring, and the body zone sexual health projects provide effective support to area teams. The provision generally reflects the diverse needs of the population. Imaginative partnership work such as the 'Way Out'

project for lesbian, gay and bisexual young people enhances the range and quality of the overall provision. City centre detached workers in Oxford link well with vulnerable young people.

Trafford

The service's comprehensive curriculum framework is underpinned by a considered rationale and identifies clear priorities. Youth workers apply the framework well in planning and carrying out their work, ensuring that it is clearly focused on young people's needs. The provision includes examples of high-quality and innovative projects, often involving collaborative work with partner organisations. For example, in the Motive8 project, youth workers, Connexions personal advisers and staff from other statutory and voluntary services collaborate to provide personal and social educational support for young people who face significant barriers to learning. The service also works successfully with five schools in the borough to develop programmes for disaffected young people. Challenging and creative programmes are provided for young people which enable them to become peer educators. The curriculum is underpinned by an emphasis on promoting equality, inclusiveness and diversity. A range of work aimed at promoting good race relations and eliminating racial discrimination has been undertaken, including projects supporting black and Asian young people and a series of multicultural events based around Black History Month.

Oldham

Youth work programmes operate from a wide range of settings and provide a good selection of activities based on young people's interests and needs. Workers have undertaken community profiles highlighting issues relating to young people which have been used effectively to plan programmes. Levels of participation by young people have risen sharply. The service expects strong adherence to community cohesion policies and equality and diversity within the curriculum. It has been highly effective in establishing practice that confronts negative attitudes and values and supports the needs of young people from different ethnic backgrounds and cultures.

Resources

32. Good services had sufficient numbers of well-qualified, appropriately trained staff and maintained a good balance between full- and part-time staff. These were key factors in the ability of local authorities to run successful youth services. All services relied to a great extent on large numbers of part-time workers who often brought with them rich, stimulating and diverse experience.
33. Too many unqualified or inexperienced staff, however, inevitably affected the quality of the work. In one service, for example, over eight in ten full-time staff and over four in ten managers had no formal qualifications in youth work. Too often, part-time staff received lower levels of supervision

and support than full-time staff. Some sessions observed were over- or under-staffed, and services lacked the flexibility to redeploy staff to meet changing circumstances. Inadequate services tried too often to meet a wide range of challenging objectives with serious shortages of staff, sometimes at management level.

34. Evidence from the inspections suggested that there was likely to be a correlation between staffing and resources, and the quality of the work in any particular service. All the services judged to be inadequate had staffing ratios below the national median. In services judged to be good, the total staff budget was above the median in seven out of eight services.
35. There were wide variations in the quality of accommodation used for youth work in the services inspected. In services which were inadequate, too much accommodation was of low quality, poorly maintained and sometimes even unsafe. Access was difficult for young people with mobility difficulties. The contrast with the provision found in good services was striking. Resources for sport and outdoor activities were often good, but the quality of ICT equipment varied widely; there were even wider variations in its use.
36. The following illustrate the strengths in staffing, accommodation, equipment and resources. Although they are taken from different services within an authority, each is presented as a continuous example.

Barnsley

Staff are hardworking and highly committed to the youth service. Specialist staff make a valuable contribution to creative arts, dance and theatre work as well as conservation and environmental projects. The accommodation is mostly of good quality and is well maintained. Access to the service's activities and premises is generally good. Most centres have ICT facilities and access to the internet and are convenient sources of information, support, advice and guidance for young people. They also provide good specialist facilities for sport, drama and dance.

Torbay

Staff are committed to their work, and are enthusiastic and appropriately qualified. There is a high-quality in-service training programme and staff have good access to opportunities for professional development. Effective use is made of musical equipment in some projects to develop young people's skills and confidence. Helpful information and advice leaflets about health issues are available in local centres.

Oldham

All staff bring broad experience and knowledge to their work. Full- and part-time staff are contracted to work for the service wherever they may be

required, rather than to specific, localised posts. This flexible and responsive approach to deployment has ensured that experience and expertise are shared widely. A plan to deploy black and minority ethnic staff to centres in predominantly white areas, and vice versa, where racial tensions were running high, has been effective in challenging racist attitudes and in broadening the experience of staff and young people. The well-maintained premises are conveniently located, safe and warm. External funding has been used well to improve the range and quality of resources and equipment. Three double-decker mobile projects significantly enhance provision. They have been designed, in conjunction with young people, to a high specification, and are well used for school-based and outreach work. Good progress has been made in meeting the requirements of SENDA. All centres have been fitted with hearing loop systems and the content and presentation of all promotional materials are required to meet demanding borough council standards. Administrative and technical support are good.

Portsmouth

Resources are very good. The Charles Dickens Centre is well equipped, with modern facilities that include a dance studio, soundproofed rehearsal space and recording facilities. In this centre, and in the Cybercafe at Paulsgrove, the IT equipment is of high quality. All but one of the youth centres are accessible to those with restricted mobility. A well-organised staff training programme is clearly linked to staff appraisals and related to key priorities for service development and basic training needs, such as child protection and risk assessments. In addition, staff have access to a good range of training courses, which enables them to update their skills. Recruitment has been good and new staff benefit from a comprehensive induction programme.

East Riding of Yorkshire

The accommodation used by the service is safe and well maintained. Centres based in schools have recently been renovated with funds from Connexions Humber, the local authority and the single regeneration budget. The premises provide well-appointed centres for youth work in the evenings and at weekends, particularly in schools in rural locations. Multi-agency work in these centres is well advanced and headteachers draw attention to reduced exclusions and increased attendance rates at school.

37. These case studies exemplify a range of characteristics that are typical of good provision in key aspect 2:

Curriculum

- a broad, inclusive curriculum, based on a thorough needs analysis and matched to young people's needs
- a good mixture of provision including recreational, creative arts, sports and outdoor activities
- a range of courses leading, where appropriate, to awards and qualifications

- the involvement of staff and young people in defining and planning the curriculum
- a curriculum framework that is well understood, with key staff in place to ensure that it is consistently implemented
- a close relationship between the curriculum and local and national priorities
- partnership working which enhances the curriculum
- consistent and active implementation of policies designed to promote equality, inclusion and diversity; good attention to SENDA, the Race Relations (Amendment) Act and other legislation concerning the safeguarding of young people.

Resources

- sufficient numbers of experienced and well-qualified workers and a good balance between numbers of full- and part-time workers
- flexible deployment of staff to meet changing circumstances
- good professional development programmes and supervision arrangements, including for part-time workers
- high-quality accommodation, accessible to all young people
- thorough attention to health and safety
- good specialist resources.

Strategic and operational leadership and management (key aspect 3)

38. In good services, strategic managers set the service clear aims, communicated these well and provided the resources for them to be realised; they understood the particular contribution which the youth service made in areas such as youth representation and democracy. Operational managers were involved consistently in strategic decisions and managed the work efficiently; young people participated in aspects of operational and strategic management; partnership working was incorporated into the service's overall provision; management information systems were efficient; and effective quality assurance processes ensured that the service's performance was consistently evaluated. They were able to assess their service's performance and identify areas for development. Inadequate services often lacked the insight and structures to look critically at themselves and identify where improvement was needed. In some services, however, inadequacy was at least partly the result of under-resourcing or poorly managed reorganisation.
39. The following case studies illustrate some of the characteristics of good strategic and operational management.

North Yorkshire

Strategic and operational management are good and morale in the service is high. Youth work is built upon a well-established pattern of community education. Elected members are well informed about the youth service and support it strongly. Strategic objectives in the Education Service Plan incorporate youth work objectives. The model of provision attracts wide consensus and the council makes available an adequate, and increasing, level of funding. The service is effective in setting up partnerships and engaging with voluntary and statutory organisations working with young people. Budget monitoring is effective. A child protection policy and policies for implementing the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and SENDA are in place. Young people contribute to decision-making. District plans are clearly formulated and closely monitored by local committees. They provide an effective focus for the work, link well to the overall service strategy and respond to local priorities. There is a particularly good response at local level to issues relating to inclusion.

Oldham

The council gives a strong lead on inclusion and diversity, and the youth service is acknowledged as a key strategic partner in building community cohesion. Staff deployment is designed to help break down barriers and build understanding and tolerance and all youth work plans and programmes are required to demonstrate the contribution they make to community cohesion. The new service has established its identity successfully and has a clear sense of direction, which is understood and supported by its staff. The service has secured additional funds that have been used to raise levels of participation and increase the capacity of the service. Involving young people in democratic processes is a priority, and young people's participation in management and planning within local areas, clubs and projects is well advanced. Partnership working with public-sector bodies and the voluntary sector is strongly promoted. Appropriate child protection and risk management procedures are taken to safeguard young people.

The service is excellently led. Workers are used to taking responsibility and feel valued and involved. The service operates within a clear policy framework. Planning is good at area and unit level, with clear lines of communication and community profiles acting as effective tools for needs assessment. Good information systems provide reliable data for managers to monitor and review work. Financial monitoring is effective. All staff with budget responsibilities have received comprehensive training.

Derbyshire

Elected members and senior managers provide strong strategic leadership and value the service's contribution to corporate priorities. The service's strategic objectives are closely linked to the education department plan. Consultation with young people, staff and partners ensures that these objectives are understood and implemented. The local authority is well informed about the

service's progress through clear lines of accountability. Good performance management has contributed to the service's attracting increased financial resources over the past two years. The service has made good progress in allocating resources to meet the needs of disadvantaged young people. Partnership working is effective and increases the range of provision and level of resources available to young people.

Operational management is good. The assessment of needs is effective and provides accurate information to help managers plan the provision. Resources are used efficiently to meet the needs of the service's priority groups. Good-quality assurance arrangements include a well-established process for observing practice that contributes to continuous service development. The service is well placed to make judgements on the value for money it provides.

Oxfordshire

The service's statement of purpose sets out a clear set of values and objectives and the service is highly valued by the county council. Significant income is secured from external funding sources. It operates efficiently and resources within centres are carefully managed. Social inclusion is promoted through targeted work with young people at risk of exclusion and the service works with increasing numbers of young people with learning and behavioural difficulties. Multi-agency work is well developed and the service profits from close working links with the Connexions partnership. The service has developed reliable management information systems and information is increasingly shared between different agencies. There are clear quality assurance procedures, including monitoring visits by senior staff to individual sessions and a system of area reviews. Managers are well informed about the strengths and weaknesses of the service.

Kingston-upon-Hull

Quality assurance measures contribute positively to improving practice and raising standards of achievement. About 40 observations of practice are made each quarter. These are monitored by a quality management team and moderated by a local authority senior adviser. Additional external moderation is provided through the regional quality assurance network. Management information is very good and provides excellent data analysis at strategic and operational levels. Data collection and protection rules are stringently applied.

40. These case studies exemplify a range of characteristics that are typical of good provision in key aspect 3:

Strategic management

- strong support from the local authority
- a clear understanding of service aims, linked to a thorough analysis of local needs

- a close relationship between the aims of the youth service and those of the local authority more generally (for example, citizenship; exclusion from education; community cohesion)
- good communication between strategic and operational managers and other staff
- effective staff recruitment and retention strategies
- the appropriate involvement of young people in aspects of management.

Operational management

- supervision and appraisal arrangements linked to effective training programmes
- effective strategies for translating policies into practice
- a consistent approach towards promoting equality, inclusion and diversity
- ensuring that legislation concerning child welfare and the safeguarding of young people is observed
- good management information systems, providing data to allow the service to evaluate its performance
- thorough quality assurance procedures, including arrangements for contracted work, promoting an atmosphere of critical self-awareness
- good partnership working and links with the voluntary youth sector and other agencies.

Notes

1. Ofsted conducts inspections of youth services for young people up to the age of 16 under section 38 of the Education Act 1997. Section 60 (1)(c) of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 extended the remit of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools to cover youth services for those aged 16 to 19.
2. In January 2004, Ofsted began a four-year inspection programme using a revised inspection framework. In stage one of the inspection, inspectors analyse documentary evidence provided by services: statistical information and the service's self-assessment. In stage two, inspectors observe a representative sample of the service's work and interview key staff and partner organisations. In a number of services, young people make a valuable contribution to the inspection through joint observations with inspectors. Inspectors observed around 700 youth work sessions across the 31 youth services inspected in 2004.
3. Services were generally selected to coincide with Ofsted's programme of LEA inspections.

Further information

Local authority youth service inspections: a framework for inspection (HMI 2307), Ofsted, 2004.

www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/index.cfm?fuseaction=pubs.displayfile&id=3723&type=pdf

Local authority youth service inspections: self-assessment report (HMI 2308), Ofsted, 2004.

www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/index.cfm?fuseaction=pubs.displayfile&id=3724&type=pdf

Local authority youth service inspections: handbook for inspecting local education authority youth services (HMI 2310), Ofsted, 2004.

www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/index.cfm?fuseaction=pubs.displayfile&id=3726&type=pdf

Transforming youth work: resourcing excellent youth services, DfES/Connexions, 2002.

www.connexions.gov.uk/partnerships/publications/uploads/cp/TransYouth.pdf

Annex A. Data

The data are based on only 31 inspections and caution should be exercised in any interpretation.

Figure 1. Overall effectiveness of services (percentage of youth services)

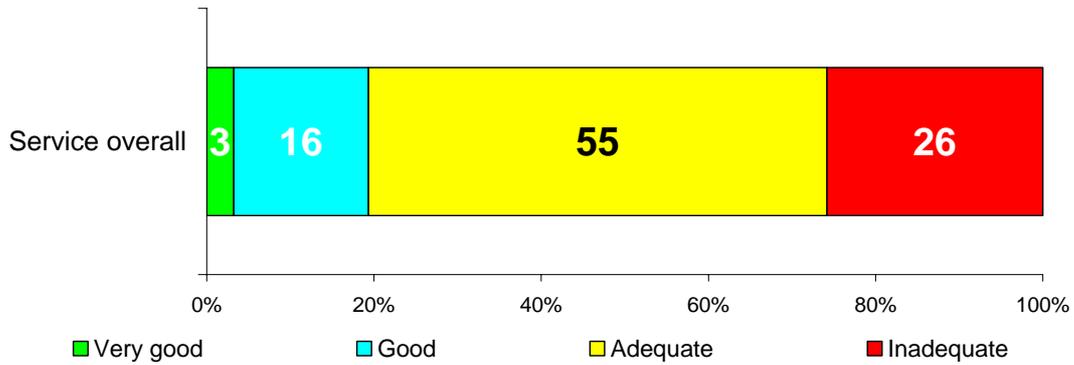


Figure 2. Value for money (percentage of youth services)

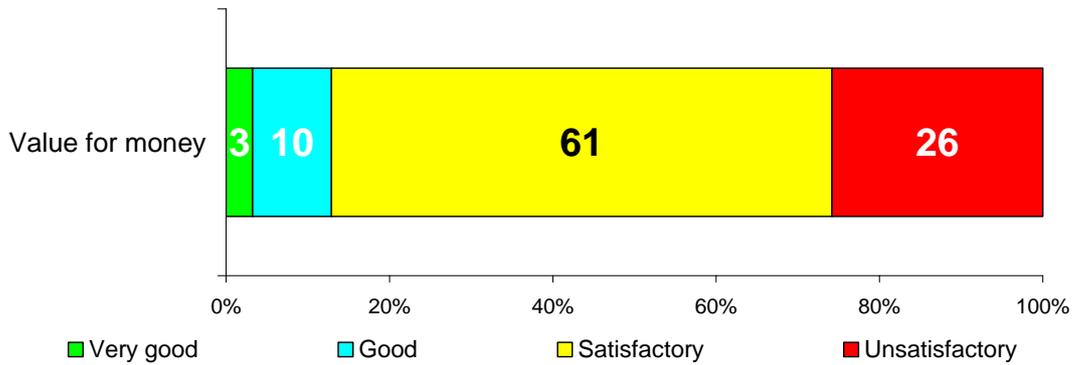


Table 1.

The data summarise the judgements made by inspectors against the 22 evaluation criteria in the inspection framework.

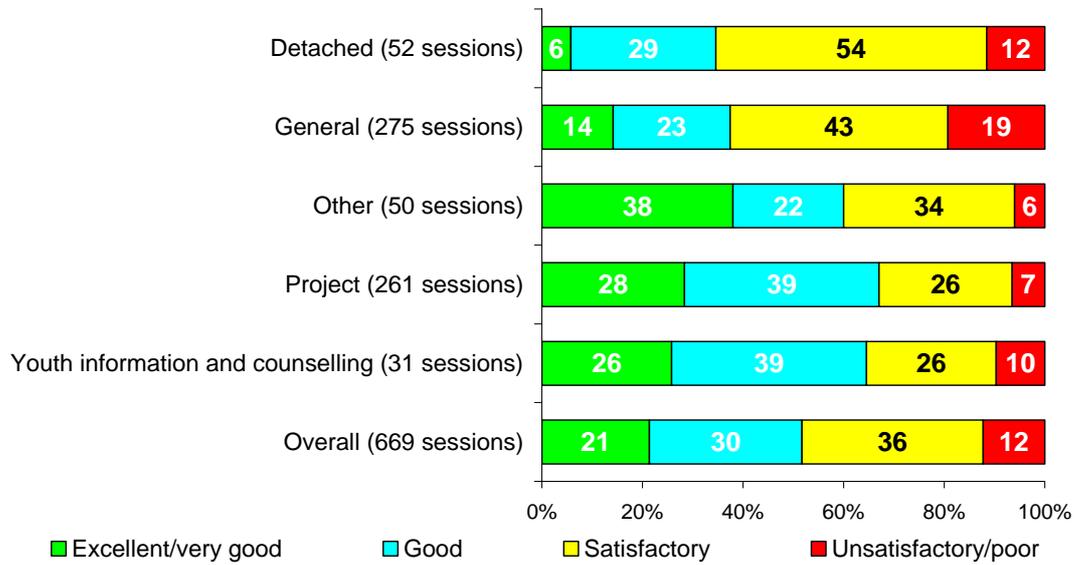
Aspects of youth services	Percentage of services			
	Very good	Good	Adequate	Inadequate
Standard of young people's achievement				
Young people's progress and success in responding to and achieving challenging targets set and negotiated for the acquisition of knowledge...	0 (0)	52 (16)	32 (10)	16 (5)
Young people's personal development, including their attitudes, values and self-confidence	3 (1)	65 (20)	29 (9)	3 (1)
Young people's ability to function socially and politically as both autonomous individuals and responsible members of the community	0 (0)	55 (17)	35 (11)	10 (3)
Quality of youth work practice				
The quality of youth work practice and the extent to which it meets the needs of all young people	3 (1)	45 (14)	35 (11)	16 (5)
The leadership exercised by youth workers in supporting, guiding and challenging young people	0 (0)	48 (15)	39 (12)	13 (4)
Quality of curriculum and resources				
How far the curriculum is based on a coherent rationale and meets the needs of young people	3 (1)	52 (16)	19 (6)	26 (8)
The extent to which the curriculum observes and promotes the principles of equality, inclusiveness and diversity	3 (1)	42 (13)	45 (14)	10 (3)
The extent to which action is taken to promote good race relations and eliminate racial discrimination	3 (1)	23 (7)	45 (14)	29 (9)
The sufficiency, qualifications, experience and appropriate deployment of youth workers and support staff	0 (0)	42 (13)	35 (11)	23 (7)
The adequacy, suitability and use of specialist equipment, resources and accommodation for young people including for young people with disabilities	0 (0)	55 (17)	32 (10)	13 (4)

The numbers in brackets are the number of services inspected.

Aspects of youth services	Percentage of services			
	Very good	Good	Adequate	Inadequate
Strategic leadership and management				
The effectiveness with which the local authority establishes a clear sense of strategic direction, ensures the provision of an appropriate curriculum...	0 (0)	52 (16)	29 (9)	19 (6)
The sufficiency of resources available to the youth service based on the Education Formula Spending (EFS), the efficiency and effectiveness...	0 (0)	45 (14)	42 (13)	13 (4)
The effectiveness of the local authority's approach towards inclusion and diversity through the work of the youth service, particularly with respect to...	3 (1)	35 (11)	45 (14)	16 (5)
The extent to which young people are actively involved in the specification, management, provision and quality assurance of the youth service	3 (1)	35 (11)	35 (11)	26 (8)
The range and impact on achievement of the partnership arrangements entered into by the local authority to support the work of the youth service	3 (1)	74 (23)	10 (3)	13 (4)
The contribution made by the youth service to the Connexions partnership and other services designed to support young people	0 (0)	77 (24)	16 (5)	6 (2)
Whether the local authority provides workers and young people with a healthy and safe working environment	0 (0)	68 (21)	29 (9)	3 (1)
Operational leadership and management				
The effectiveness in practice of the assessment of need, the identification of priority groups, and the strategies devised to promote...	0 (0)	35 (11)	42 (13)	23 (7)
The efficiency of the direct day-to-day management of the service and the quality of leadership, and the contribution made by both...	0 (0)	48 (15)	26 (8)	26 (8)
The quality of curriculum leadership and coordination	0 (0)	23 (7)	39 (12)	39 (12)
How well quality assurance arrangements and the collection and interpretation of local and national service performance indicators are used	0 (0)	19 (6)	42 (13)	39 (12)
How well the service measures its cost effectiveness and takes full account of best value	0 (0)	29 (9)	42 (13)	29 (9)

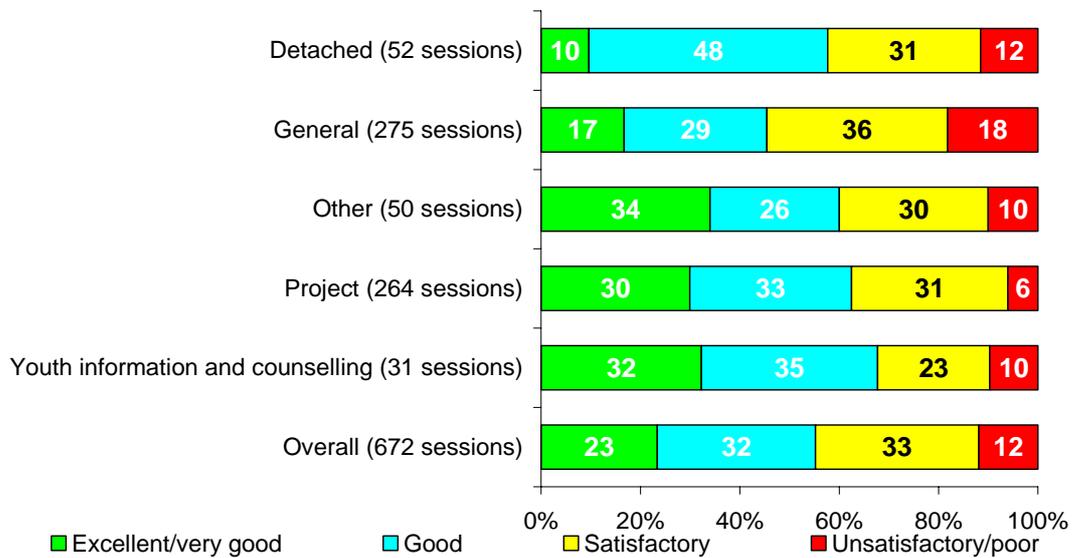
The numbers in brackets are the number of services inspected.

Figure 3. Achievement by type of session (percentage of sessions)



These figures have been rounded and may not add up to 100%.

Figure 4. Quality of practice by type of session (percentage of sessions)



These figures have been rounded and may not add up to 100%.