



# Joint area review: enhanced youth inspection

Head of youth service guidance paper

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**Better  
education  
and care**

This paper provides detailed guidance for heads of youth service on the enhanced youth inspection process.

**Of particular interest to:**

Local authority youth services and other statutory, voluntary and community organisations working with young people.

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**Age group**  
All

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## Introduction

Ofsted's new framework for youth service inspections was launched in January 2004. It reports upon three key aspects: achievement, curriculum and resources, and management. The framework makes reference to, and links with, the five key outcomes for children and young people identified in the Children Act 2004. Youth inspections allow Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools to 'inform the Secretary of State of the national picture of the quality of youth services and advise on the effectiveness of the local authority in fulfilling its duty to provide a youth service'. It has been agreed that where a service has not been inspected under the new youth framework, an enhanced coverage of youth service provision will be accommodated within the joint area review (JAR). Where a service has been inspected in the current cycle, the report (and any subsequent re-inspection letters where appropriate) will contribute to the JAR evidence. Joint area reviews are scheduled to run until 2008.

This paper sets out the arrangements for enhancing the JAR to accommodate youth service coverage and could usefully be read in conjunction with the handbook entitled *Every Child Matters: The framework for the inspection of children's services* (July 2005) on Ofsted's website.

The youth inspection element will mirror as far as possible the principles agreed for the JAR. In particular it is understood that:

- the JAR is the primary inspection regime. The youth service inspection will be an integrated element of the JAR
- the approach will be proportionate and differentiated. Fieldwork will be limited
- inspectors will draw from the youth service self-assessment and data as far as possible
- all stages and timings will match those of the JAR.

For local authorities, the intention is to:

- reduce the burden of inspection by avoiding duplication of meetings, evidence requests and activities to gather evidence
- harmonise recommendations for improvement for local children's services, whilst making specific references to the youth service where appropriate
- provide a separate public report on the findings of the youth service inspection.

## Notification

2. The JAR indicative programme is on the Ofsted website. Local areas can anticipate a youth service 'enhancement' where the youth service has not been inspected from the period January 2004.
3. The Chief Executive, Director of Children's services or equivalent will be notified of the forthcoming JAR and of the youth service coverage.

## Action to be taken by the head of youth service

4. **Complete a self assessment:** youth services are asked to grade their performance in respect of the three key framework aspects of achievement, curriculum and resources and management. The self-assessment also provides an opportunity for services to provide an evaluative commentary on contributions to the five outcomes and grade their performance for each area. It is understood that youth work will contribute variably to the Every Child Matters outcomes and the self-assessment does not look for a neat balance of one against the other. As with JARs, youth services are asked to grade themselves using the following four-point scale and descriptors. More details are contained within the *Enhanced youth inspection self assessment (guidance)* (HMI 2662):

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/index.cfm?fuseaction=pubs.summary&id=3985>

Grade	Descriptor
<b>Grade 4: Outstanding. A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for users</b>	A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for young people is innovative and cost-effective and fully contributes to raising expectations and the achievement of wider outcomes for the community.
<b>Grade 3: Good. A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users</b>	A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for young people has some innovative practice and is increasingly cost-effective whilst making contributions to wider outcomes for the community.
<b>Grade 2: Adequate. A service that delivers only minimum requirements for users</b>	A service that delivers only minimum requirements for young people, but is not demonstrably cost-effective nor contributes significantly to wider outcomes for the community.
<b>Grade 1: Inadequate. A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for users.</b>	A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for young people, is not cost-effective and makes little or no contribution to wider outcomes for the community.

5. Local areas nevertheless will wish to ensure the youth service features as appropriate in the overall JAR and annual performance assessment (APA) self-assessment. The youth service self-assessment submission date will match that of the JAR.

6. **Liaise with the lead youth inspector:** in most instances a member of the JAR team, known as the lead youth inspector (LYI), will have delegated responsibility for managing the youth element. Liaison will begin after a local area has had formal notification of their JAR.

7. **Provide limited service-specific documentation:** the JAR self-assessment evidence will include higher level strategic and planning evidence to which the youth service may cross reference. The youth service self assessment should present evidence which is current and relevant, and which demonstrates impact. Documentary evidence submitted at this stage need not extend beyond:

- youth service annual plan or equivalent
- staff development and performance management details
- quality assurance evidence
- curriculum plan
- staffing structure.

Managers will be able to provide more detailed evidence at the analysis stage and should therefore restrict the amount of initial evidence submitted to one lever arch file or a CD. There will be no need to duplicate documentation made available for the JAR. Hyperlinking from specific youth service evidence to other key documents is a useful approach.

8. **Provide a provisional list of youth service activity:** for inspection planning purposes services should prepare a draft outline programme of youth work activity scheduled for fieldwork week one of the JAR. This should be ready for the LYI at the analysis stage of the inspection and should include all the youth service activity taking place in the local authority area during fieldwork week one of the JAR. Youth service managers are asked to highlight areas of work which are considered to be representative of good practice, and/or which links to the five outcomes. A neighbourhood study area will be determined for the purposes of JAR fieldwork. This will enable JAR inspectors to visit local community provision including early years, day care, health and services to young people. It is anticipated that a few, but not all, youth work observations will always occur in the neighbourhood study area. Given the 2004 inspection framework emphasis on 'how efficiently and effectively the LA secures the provision of a high-quality youth service' the enhanced inspection will focus strongly on youth work for which the LA is accountable. This does not preclude work in the voluntary sector.

9. **After the analysis stage, make final arrangements for the fieldwork programme:** including details about the location and timings of the

activities selected for observations and making arrangements for a limited number of service specific meetings, for example with staff, the voluntary youth sector and with young people. There will be a need for close liaison between the LYI and the service in this respect. It is anticipated that general JAR meetings with elected members and senior officers will also provide evidence pertinent to the performance of the youth service.

## The stages of inspection

10. **Analysis stage:** this will enable inspectors to determine which aspects of the youth service are 'sound' and which may require fieldwork and to what extent. Greater integration will be achieved through information sharing between inspectors. A government office pre-inspection report will still be produced by the respective government office in advance of the analysis stage. The LYI will provide brief verbal feedback to the service at the end of analysis week concentrating primarily on issues to be covered at the next stage.

11. There is a presumption that all enhanced youth inspections will include observations of youth work sessions but in proportion to the outcomes of the analysis. The range will extend from a block of 8 to 10 youth work sessions to a block of 16 to 20 observations. The LYI will provide a briefing at the end of this period indicating where further evidence is needed.

12. **Fieldwork week one:** under normal circumstances this will accommodate the youth work observations, as set out above, including in the neighbourhood study area. Week one will include 3 to 4 days for observations and service specific meetings.

13. **Fieldwork week two:** this week will accommodate any 'combined' youth service/JAR related meetings, allow for any further follow-up of key lines of enquiry, enable the exchange of evidence and allow for JAR team meetings. An initial feedback on the findings of the enhanced youth inspection will be provided at the end of this week.

## Data

14. **Refer to the JAR toolkit:** the JAR and APA will rely heavily on data to inform judgements. It will, by definition, be for previous years. Similarly, this will be the case with youth services. Data submitted by services to National Youth Agency (NYA) as part of its audit is re-presented within the JAR toolkit. The data contains comparators, benchmarks and trends over time. The toolkit notes that youth service data is not validated and is drawn directly from local areas. Department for Education and Skills (DfES) measures including 'participation', accreditation and 'recorded outcomes' are insufficiently well-grounded in many services to include them yet. The data may be revised in due course. Heads of service should consider the data and its accompanying 'health warning' notes. They could usefully refer to data within the self-assessment.

Youth service managers need to be mindful of the increased emphasis on data and on ensuring that systems for collection are robust. The data presented will be:

- % of young people reached by publicly funded youth service (against the government benchmark of 25%)
- ratio of full-time equivalent youth workers to young people aged 13–19
- youth service budget as a % of the overall education budget
- youth service budget per young people aged 13–19
- youth service budget as % of the youth and community sub block
- net cost of each young person reached.

## Reporting arrangements

15. A separate youth inspection report will be written giving grades, strengths, weaknesses and recommendations for development. The published grades will follow the current convention:

### Key aspect inspection grades

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

16. The report will also provide a summative commentary on how well the youth service is contributing to young people achieving the five Every Child Matters outcomes. It will be published separately from, but at the same time as, the JAR report. Formal feedback to the youth service will be provided on the same day as that of the JAR.

## Re-inspection arrangements

17. Youth services judged to be inadequate will generally not be subject to Ofsted monitoring re-inspections. DfES with Ofsted will however, consider cases as they arise. The new APA is designed to cover services for all children and young people in a local area and will include reference to the youth service. It is anticipated that, where a service has been judged as not delivering minimum requirements (Grade 1), actions taken by the local authority to overcome inadequacies will be considered as part of the next APA. This arrangement will be materially different from the current approach.

18. Where appropriate, government offices will continue to monitor and support services through regional advisers, coordinating this with Children's

Services advisers. The DfES, through the NYA, will continue to provide a limited amount of consultancy support for services judged inadequate.

## **Status of the 2004 framework and guidance**

19. Youth services, as with other children's and young people's services, are undergoing significant change. This is also the case with inspection arrangements in general. The revised arrangements for the enhanced coverage are designed to straddle both the established framework and the emerging expectations on local areas. Judgements however emerging from the inspection will primarily reflect the established framework. The status of the two principal documents (the 'Framework' and the supporting 'Handbook') remains largely unaltered. The *Youth service inspection: a framework for inspection* (September 2004) sets out inspection criteria:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/index.cfm?fuseaction=pubs.displayfile&id=3723&type=doc>

and the supporting handbook, *Youth service inspections - Handbook for inspecting local education authority youth services* :

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/index.cfm?fuseaction=pubs.displayfile&id=3726&type=doc>

provides guidance on interpreting criteria. Some of the operational advice within this will alter in line with this briefing note and as circumstances change. The 2004 self assessment document will remain posted on the Ofsted website since youth services use it for training and planning purpose. It should not be submitted as part of the JAR. The *Enhanced youth inspection: self assessment (guidance)* (April 2006) is available on the Ofsted website:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/index.cfm?fuseaction=pubs.summary&id=3985>