



Rotherham Youth Service Report

Rotherham Children's Services Authority Area

**Better
education
and care**

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Introduction

1. Rotherham Young People's Services deliver youth work through a range of projects and programmes in youth centres, schools, advice and information centres and through outdoor education and detached youth work. The service is led by the Young People's Services Manager supported by an adviser and seven Youth Officers. Young People's Services are located within Inclusion, Voice and Influence in the Children and Young People's Directorate of the local authority. An equivalent of 130 full-time staff comprises 68 full-time and 235 part-time staff. The budget made available in 2005/06 by the local authority was £2.5 million, 1.4% of the education budget. Around £1.3 million was derived from contracts, partnership work and grants. In 2005/06 the service reached 29% of young people aged 13 to 19.

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

Part A: Summary of the report

Main findings

Effectiveness and value for money

3. Rotherham Young People's Services provide a good and improving youth service that offers good value for money. The broad and diverse curriculum is based firmly on an assessment of young people's needs. There are good achievements by young people and much good youth work practice, although learning is not always planned in sufficient detail or reviewed effectively. Equality and diversity are promoted very well. Strong strategic leadership and management are improving standards and quality throughout the service through comprehensive and well-planned performance management activities. Young people are involved very effectively in thorough and rigorous quality monitoring procedures. Very good partnerships with statutory bodies benefit young people. There is good joint working with the voluntary sector, but the arrangements are not yet sufficiently strategic.

Strengths

- Young people achieve well.
- Much youth work practice is good.
- The broad and diverse curriculum meets the needs of a variety of young people.
- There is very good promotion of equality and diversity.
- Very effective performance management is improving the service.
- Young people's involvement in quality monitoring is very good.

- Partnerships with public sector organisations are effective.

Areas for development

- Learning is not always planned in sufficient detail or reviewed effectively.
- Partnerships with the voluntary sector are not sufficiently strategic.
- There is insufficient flexibility in the deployment of staff.

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	4
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 Young People's Services make a good contribution to the outcomes identified in *Every Child Matters*. Curriculum planning at all levels is based on the five themes. A particular strength is the work on behalf of the authority in the Voice and Influence initiative that aims to involve young people fully in decision making. For example, some 5,500 children and young people took part in a visioning exercise that informed the priorities in the Children and Young People's Services plan. The service works well in partnership with social services, the police and other agencies to support young women at risk of sexual exploitation to change their lives through the "Risky Business" project. "Youth Start" provides a well used, year round information, advice and counselling service in collaboration with health services. Young people have many opportunities for learning and personal development through local activities and an extensive international programme. Connexions personal advisers managed by the Young People's Services help young people who are vulnerable or disadvantaged to cope with challenges and provide advice and guidance about their futures. "Youth Enterprise" supports young people well in starting their own businesses.

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. In the small sample of work observed, the standard was never less than satisfactory and, in the majority, it was good. In the best sessions, young people acquire knowledge, skills and understanding through a broad range of engaging activities underpinned by good relationships with youth workers and their peers. For example, in one session, young people from a wide range of backgrounds were gaining skills and accreditation in multi-media work. They were preparing a high quality presentation that represented the views of young people and challenged negative stereo-types. In such work, young people develop their ability to work well in teams and build their organisational skills, as well as gaining in confidence and self esteem. In a few sessions, opportunities for personal development were missed or not fully explored.

6. Youth workers clearly understand the educational purpose of youth work and are supported well in making very good use of the carefully planned structure of accreditation. The service did not meet its target for accredited achievements last year, but is taking effective actions to improve the situation.

7. Young people achieve well and gain accreditation across a broad range of activities and experiences that extend their horizons and encourage personal development. These include extensive international work including visits last year to Morocco and Tanzania, arts projects such as the "Cast-Offs Theatre Group" who perform at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, "Positive Activities for Young People" and outdoor education. Young people demonstrate very good personal development through participation in decision making and their contribution to the community. They achieve well through their involvement in the Youth Cabinet, annual youth conferences, monitoring of the service and voluntary activities such as the visit by looked after young people to an orphanage in Romania. Peer education encompasses topics chosen by young people such as anti-fascism and Fairtrade that enable them to develop their understanding of moral, social and political issues. Following training and accreditation young people acquire the skills to offer advice and support to their peers in school through the "Buddies Scheme" at Maltby and the "Youth Start Peer Listening Project" at Dinnington.

8. Youth work practice is good. In the best sessions, youth workers establish good relationships with young people based on mutual trust and respect. There is a calm atmosphere, which promotes young people's learning and development. Work is well planned and the majority meets the needs of individuals. Equality and diversity are promoted effectively. Clear boundaries are set and maintained in agreement with young people. In one session, young people were preparing effectively to work as volunteers in the service. The well-planned session included

a variety of activities. Enthusiastic youth workers demonstrated high expectations of young people and celebrated their achievements.

9. In a few sessions, learning was not planned in enough detail to meet the needs of individual young people or offer them sufficient challenge. Their achievements were not always reviewed sufficiently for young people to recognise and articulate their development. They were not always fully involved in the planning and delivery of individual sessions.

Key Aspect 2: Quality of curriculum and resources

10. Overall the quality of the curriculum and resources is very good. The well established curriculum framework is used effectively to plan an excellent range and large number of programmes and projects based on the five outcomes of *Every Child Matters*. The rich blend is inclusive in its scope and caters very well for the needs of diverse groups and individuals. The powerful mission, vision and pledge to young people are reflected in all aspects of the service's work.

11. A thorough needs analysis takes into account the views of young people who are fully involved in developing the curriculum and shaping the service. As well as open access sessions, the offer includes specific provision for vulnerable and minority groups including young people of black and minority ethnic heritage and those who are lesbian, gay and bisexual. A mobile unit and detached work provide well for young people meeting on the streets. More than 94% of young people responding to the annual survey of their views consider that the activities or service are good or better; 89% report that they have the opportunity to have their say and influence what happens.

12. Curriculum planning and management are very good. Youth workers are supported well by high quality curriculum packs on topics such as healthy eating and planning a fund raising event. These suggest how to cater for different learning styles and provide a good range of activities with advice on how to put them into practice. High quality training helps youth workers use these materials effectively. The youth centre programme includes issue based work that promotes equality, diversity and fairness very well. The service has been successful in recruiting a high proportion of staff of black and minority ethnic heritage from local communities.

13. Staff are highly committed to their work and, despite recent changes, morale is high. More than 80% of youth workers have suitable national qualifications, the rest are working towards these. There is good progression from participation by young people as users of the service and volunteers to become qualified youth workers. Staff development needs are identified systematically through regular meetings with managers and rigorous appraisal and quality assurance procedures. Good access to a very well planned programme of high quality externally accredited training helps raise standards in the service.

14. Accommodation is good overall. A carefully planned strategy is in place to improve the quality of buildings. Six new or refurbished centres provide very good accommodation for youth work; older buildings are well maintained. Three have planned works remaining that will bring them to the required standard by the end of the year. Good use is made of displays to stimulate learning, celebrate achievement and promote equality, fairness and respect for others. There is some very good equipment such as that used in the "Clifton Multi-Media Project"; not all is of this high standard. Most centres have a suitable range of resources such as pool tables, indoor and outdoor games and computers. Two centres provide allotments. In response to young people, some produce is grown by them for use in the "Youth Café", a drop-in advice and information centre.

Key Aspect 3: Leadership and management

15. Overall leadership and management are good. Very strong leadership by senior managers has established a clear vision shared throughout the service. While providing an inclusive service for all, there is a focus on young people who are vulnerable or disadvantaged. The Young People's Services are an integral part of the Children and Young People's directorate and are supported well by senior managers and elected members. The authority is successful in securing additional resources to extend the service. For example, the Young People's Services have a contract to manage 11 Connexions personal advisers who support and advise vulnerable young people such as those at risk of offending, looked after children, those with mental health difficulties, young people not in education, employment or training and teenage parents.

16. The service meets the requirements of the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000. A good range of policies and procedures are in place to ensure the health and safety of staff and young people. Risk assessment is thorough. Good progress has been made towards meeting the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act. There are thorough procedures for child protection.

17. Comprehensive and very effective performance management incorporates a well thought out cycle of planning, evaluation and improvement activities that are raising standards and quality across the service. Rigorous quality assurance procedures cover all aspects of the service including administrative systems and lead to improvements. They include regular observations of youth work sessions by managers, youth workers and young people who are prepared very well for their role. Managers make very good use of information and data in evaluating and planning the service including that available from the increasingly streamlined and comprehensive computerised system. However, its use is not fully established at all levels in the service. Effective use of unit costing steers the development of the service in line with the priorities set. There is some inflexibility in the deployment of staff that at times can lead to a high number of adults relative to young people in some sessions.

18. Partnership working with statutory bodies such as the health services, police, the youth offending service and schools is very good. The Young People's Services are a lead partner in providing Connexions services in Rotherham. Young people benefit from these partnerships. There are many examples of effective links with the voluntary sector such as the Rush House project and Ricochet for homeless young people. However, these depend too much on effective co-operative working and good relationships between individuals; they are not yet sufficiently strategic and lack coordination.