



Kensington and Chelsea Youth Service Report

**Better
education
and care**

Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Children's
Services Authority Area

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Introduction

1. The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea provides youth work as part of an integrated Youth Support and Development Service (YSDS) which also incorporates Connexions, sports development programmes and a range of health initiatives. The service is located in the Community Learning Division of Family and Children's Services. The head of the YSDS leads a team of six managers (equivalent to five 5 full-time equivalents posts (fte)) and 105 youth workers (32 fte).
2. Youth provision comprises two youth centres, a water sports centre, outreach and detached work as well as a number of borough wide programmes. In 2006/7 the local authority budget for youth work was £2,200,000 including £863,000 allocated in grants to 17 voluntary youth organisations. A further £2,890,000 was secured through external funding including contacts for Connexions and the Positive Activities for Young People (PAYP) programme. The service reaches approximately 31% of 13-19 population which is well above the national benchmark of 25%.
3. The Joint Area Review (JAR) was enhanced to enable coverage of the youth service. Inspectors considered the self-assessment report and met officers and a cross-section of staff. They reviewed key documentation and carried out direct observation of a sample of youth work sessions.

Part A: Summary of the report

Main findings

Effectiveness and value for money

4. The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea has a good youth service with many strong features. Young people make very good progress and contribute regularly to decision making. Growing numbers gain formal accreditation which recognises their achievements. The service reaches a high proportion of its target age range and is successful in supporting vulnerable groups. The quality of youth work practice is good, although the quality of recording is mixed. Provision is carefully planned and well managed to meet the diverse needs of the area. The service is very well led with good partnerships and substantial external funding enhancing the range of opportunities and support. The council allocates a high proportion of funding to youth work compared to similar authorities and the service provides good value for money for this investment. Inspection grades concur with the overall judgements in the self-assessment report.

Strengths

- Young people's achievement and the positive contribution they make are good.
- There is much high quality youth work.
- Strategies to engage priority groups are effective.
- The curriculum is rich and diverse.
- Young people are involved extensively in decision making.
- Leadership is very good and team work is strong.
- There are well established and productive partnerships.

Areas for development

- Improve the way that young people's progress is recorded and develop the use of accreditation.
- Meet the training and supervision needs of all part-time staff.
- Further develop measures to assess value for money and the impact of improvement activities.

Key aspect inspection grades

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

5. The service makes a very good contribution to outcomes in a number of areas. Important strategic and operational links with a wide range of partners are well established, enabling the unique contribution of youth work to be recognised and increasingly influential in the context of the borough's integrated support services for children and young people. Many enjoyable activities are provided

which help to develop positive personal qualities and self-esteem, as well as practical skills and leadership potential. Young people's contributions to the youth forum, volunteering and community based projects are often outstanding. Their achievements, for instance in the arts, music, dance, performance and sport, are celebrated regularly in high profile borough-wide events. Those in challenging circumstances receive carefully tailored advice and help which enables them to make informed choices, for example in relation to health, education and responsible social behaviour. There is a well established culture of safeguarding young people and youth workers.

Part C: Commentary on the key aspects

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

6. Young people thoroughly enjoy what the service offers, are highly motivated and attend their clubs and projects regularly. Achievement at the Apollo awards, the youth forum, and the special needs club at Lancaster Road was outstanding. High standards and very good behaviour were typical of much of work seen by inspectors. Young people are successful in gaining nationally recognised qualifications and certificates, for example in the fields of sport, outdoor education, first aid and community service. Many also make significant progress in their personal and social development, displaying maturity, self-confidence and thoughtfulness towards others. Young people facing particularly difficulties know where to get help, show significant resilience in over coming barriers and demonstrate good capacity to learn from their experiences.

7. Excellent relationships between staff and young people characterise the collaborative approach to youth work in Kensington and Chelsea. Young people thrive when they are given opportunities to volunteer, to speak on behalf of others or to take a leadership role within their youth club, project or local community. Occasionally however, young people see activities as simply something to keep them off the street and out of trouble. Such attitudes, although uncommon, are more prevalent where young people have little involvement in programme planning and when youth workers fail to exploit the potential of activities for wider personal development gains.

8. The quality of youth work practice is good overall and often very good. Highly effective work was seen at Lancaster Road, Rugby Portobello, Break 4U young parents' group, the Royal Court Theatre young writers' project and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award group at Canalside. The focus on inclusion, enjoyment and the active involvement of young people underpins much of the work across the service. Sessions are generally well planned with clear objectives and good account taken of the diverse needs and interests of young people. Many youth workers, including those drawn from the local community, have progressed through the service from volunteering to part-time and sometimes full-time employment, providing excellent role models for young people. Youth workers

have high expectations of young people and encourage them to take risks and challenge themselves within the safe and stimulating environment that youth work provides. Good individual guidance and help is facilitated by referral to the strong network of specialist agencies and local support services.

9. The quality of youth work recording does not always do justice to young people's good progress. In addition, there are missed opportunities to use external accreditation to recognise achievement and to improve young people's employability and progression, for example, in further education. The service is taking steps to develop youth workers' skills and confidence in the use of the different accreditation schemes and to improve the quality of recording and evaluation overall.

Key Aspect 2: Quality of curriculum and resources

10. A broad range of activities meets the diverse needs of young people with a rich curriculum offer including creative arts, residential programmes, consultation events and information and advice services. Centres used for youth work are well located in the areas of greatest need and complemented by area wide programmes, for example, promoting healthy life-styles and tackling the misuse of alcohol and drugs. There is a well established Duke of Edinburgh's awards scheme. Significant emphasis is given to promoting and celebrating diversity and tolerance. Strategies to engage and monitor the participation of priority groups are successful with a high proportion of young people from minority ethnic backgrounds and those with learning difficulties and/ or disabilities represented. The service is improving what it offers to looked after young people.

11. In consultation with staff and young people, the service has updated its useful curriculum framework with priorities mapped against the Every Child Matters outcomes. Youth workers have adapted supporting documentation to suit local circumstances and to help them plan and develop their work. However, managers recognise the need to continue to monitor the implementation of the new framework to ensure consistent application across the service as a whole.

12. Staff are enthusiastic, highly committed and bring a wide range of skills and interests from different professional and cultural backgrounds. Full-time staff are generally well qualified but only a low proportion of part-time staff currently holds a nationally recognised qualification in youth work. The recent development of unit and area based training has been well received and is a positive move forward in meeting the particular training needs of this group. In a small number of sessions seen, the high ratio of staff to young people was unwarranted.

13. The quality of accommodation is mixed and does not always reflect the service's otherwise high standards and aspirations for young people. A number of key centres still require considerable refurbishment to improve access and meet the requirements of the Special Education Needs and Disability Act. There are good specialist resources to support the curriculum, for example in music, information technologies and outdoor education.

Key Aspect 3: Leadership and management

14. Strategic and operational leadership and management are good. The local authority has a clear vision for youth work and the service makes a very good contribution to council priorities, particularly in relation to strengthening community cohesion, promoting health and well-being and developing active citizenship. The core budget for youth work is high compared to similar authorities and the council achieves a good return on its investment. The location of youth work alongside Connexions, sports development and teenage pregnancy / health initiatives ensures an extensive and coherent range of high quality provision which meets the needs of young people, promotes inclusion and tackles disadvantage. The council takes positive action to safeguard young people and youth workers and carries out appropriate Criminal Record Bureau checks.

15. The service is very well led and has made significant progress since the last full inspection in 2002. Operational management and team work at all levels are effective. Morale is high: staff are supported well in their day-to-day work, although not all part-time staff receive the formal supervision and appraisal to which they are entitled. Staff have regular opportunities to influence policy and service development, but opportunities to share best practice are not always taken. The service is very well informed about the changing needs of the borough through community based research and regular consultation with young people and stake holders. Young people make a very good contribution to decision making and service improvement, for example through staff recruitment, marketing, website and magazine design, and management of the new youth grants scheme. The service's contribution to the achievement of the advanced standards of Hear by Right and the impressive activities of the borough's youth forum is excellent.

16. Very effective partnerships have enhanced the range and quality of opportunities and support services. Substantial external funds are attracted through partnership approaches to tackling anti-social behaviour, increasing participation and improving outcomes in education, employment and training. There is a long established and mutually beneficial relationship with the voluntary youth sector. Formal partnership arrangements, which include the allocation of grants and the secondment of staff, are monitored closely to identify promptly any concerns that arise on either side. The service continues to build the capacity of local voluntary management committees.

17. A well conceived quality assurance framework, alongside a new electronic management information system, provides useful and timely data on performance against key targets. Managers undertake regular observation of youth work and young people make unannounced visits to report on the quality of council, as well as voluntary sector, services. Regular surveys of staff and users show very high satisfaction rates. There is a strong culture of continuous improvement and the service is beginning to develop more meaningful ways to assess value for money and evaluate the impact of its improvement activities. Managers have a good understanding of the service's strengths and weaknesses and the self-assessment

provides an accurate evaluation of standards, performance and areas for improvement. The service has very good capacity for further improvement.