

Findings from Young Inspectors' observations of Youth Work - For Information

Integrated Youth Services places the co-production of services alongside young people at the core of its working methodology. This ranges from young people designing and delivering activities, to senior member training, peer mentoring and participation in decision making groups. Young people have been directly involved throughout the Youth Service Transformation process and groups of young people around the county took part in the evaluation and scoring of tender documents.

At time of writing this summary 24 young people had trained as Young Inspectors and more than 16 of these had carried out a total of 28 inspections of practice. These inspections form part of the ongoing quality assurance programme for the delivery of Youth Work in Kent.

Once any inspection takes place (and these generally take the form of 'mystery shopping' i.e. the young people attend unannounced) the young people's report is sent back to the local provider in order to support them in improving service delivery and/or celebrate good practice. The information below summarises the findings from young people to date:

Good practice	Areas for improvement	Recommendations
<p>Young people are being actively involved in a range of participation activities which enables them to develop their learning and gain leadership skills. Senior members often support other young people well in planning and organising events.</p>	<p>In some provision young people are not being involved enough in decision making and the leading of activities. This was more prevalent in newer provision than in established work.</p>	<p>Implement more training and leadership opportunities for young people to be able to develop across all provision – share the good practice that is already happening.</p>
<p>In 27 out of 28 of the inspections carried out the staff were rated as good or outstanding for the welcome they gave young people and how friendly and approachable they were.</p> <p>Staff are praised for being helpful, engaging, giving young people a tour of provision [when building based] and explaining what activities are on offer and how they can be involved.</p> <p>When young inspectors spoke to regular members they were very positive about the provision they attended and the activities they took part in. The support given to junior members by senior members is often acknowledged.</p>	<p>In a number of projects young people reported staff not being clearly identifiable through wearing a uniform or some kind of ID badge. This was noted to be particularly important in street-based settings.</p> <p>Young people also noted that in some street-based settings staff could do more to engage with groups of young people who are near to provision but not taking part.</p> <p>Young people felt that not everywhere offered the best possible induction to new members to provision. Also standards of challenging poor behaviour were not always consistent or high enough.</p>	<p>All staff should be recognisable as youth workers with clearly visible identification. Staff could also wear clear uniform if appropriate.</p> <p>Staff should be prepared to be flexible in working locations and ensure they actively engage with young people.</p> <p>Consistent standards of behaviour and how to challenge this should be developed across all provision. Expected standards of behaviour should be made clear as soon as young people join provision.</p>

<p>Young people felt safe accessing provision and parents felt safe leaving them there. Building based provision is of a good standard of accessibility and easy to find and access.</p> <p>The quality of provision of some mobile units delivering street-based provision was thought to be very good with some good activities on offer.</p>	<p>Some street-based provision has been delivered in areas where not all young people felt safe – often this was due to a lack of local lighting.</p> <p>Sometimes the offer which street-based provision was delivering was not clear or consistent to young people and sometimes more activities could have been offered.</p>	<p>Staff should consider using locations already well-lit and popular with young people and/or invest in mobile lighting.</p> <p>Provision needs to be consistent and well-advertised in local communities ensuring that what is on offer is clear for all to understand.</p>
<p>The range of curriculum activities available for young people to take part in and learn from was very good in some provision. For example the ability to take part in activities such as cooking a wide range of foods and link this to learning and accreditation was really positive where available.</p>	<p>In contrast there are elements of provision where the curriculum offer is not broad or challenging enough – a good example of this was that whilst cooking was still widely available (and very popular!) it was not sufficiently linked to learning outcomes and the development of wider life skills.</p>	<p>The range of curriculum issues need to be developed across all provision ensuring existing good practice is shared. It is important that a range of issue based work, linked to learning opportunities, is offered everywhere.</p> <p>Young people felt that more provision should offer more support for Young Carers, young disabled people, young LGBTQ people etc.</p>

When asked if they could identify differences between provision that was directly delivered by KCC staff and that through commissioned providers, not all inspectors could notice significant issues. Some inspectors identified that directly delivered provision was better resourced and, perhaps more significantly, provided more opportunities for young people’s learning and development than they had witnessed through commissioned provision and therefore was providing better outcomes. This is not particularly surprising given that many aspects of KCC provision were working with groups of young people which had been established for a number of years whilst commissioned provision was often developing new work.

Young people clearly identified that although some KCC provision offered very good curriculum-based activities, the issue of developing a much broader curriculum offer with stronger links to learning life skills was true across all delivery, especially on issues such as bullying, drugs and alcohol, LGBTQ, relationships and personal safety. Some projects are doing a lot already but this simply isn’t consistent enough yet.