



North East Lincolnshire IAG Gold Standard assessment North East Lincolnshire Young People's Centre

External Assessment carried out on 17th February 2011

Assessor – Vince Barrett

In attendance – Paula Shaw, Curriculum Adviser

Overview

The Young People's Centre (YPC) is one of a broad range of facilities providing for learners with additional or specific learning needs across North East Lincolnshire, a unitary authority area that has a mix of socio-economic circumstances with some relatively affluent areas contrasting with a significant number that are manifestly economically and socially deprived.

The YPC is situated on the old Western School campus to the west of Grimsby and provides for pregnant schoolgirls, teenage mothers and learners with medical and/or psychological needs from across the area. The hospital and home tuition service also falls under the remit of the YPC. A large proportion of YPC learners have a statement of special educational need and most are eligible for free school meals. Learners usually remain on their secondary school's roll and may attend part time at the centre and part time at school or attend for a set period before returning to school. Most, however, attend full time from the point of referral until they are 16. There are currently 16 learners on roll. The Young People's Centre works alongside a partner learning centre, also based on the Western site; the Western Study Plus (WSP) which supports disengaged Key Stage 4 learners who are capable of achieving five A* to C grades at GCSE.

This Gold Standard assessment report is based solely upon the information, advice and guidance provision offered at the Young People's Centre.

Assessment

Prior to the formal assessment, Paula Shaw, Connexions Curriculum Adviser for North East Lincolnshire, worked closely with key personnel in the YPC, assisting in the compilation of the self-assessment form in preparation for external assessment. A detailed portfolio of evidence containing documented IAG policy and practice was provided to the assessor prior to the date of assessment and a planned programme for assessment prepared. During the course of the assessment, I interviewed Heather Smith, Centre Manager; Terry Pollard, Home Tutor; Dot Walker, Teenage Pregnancy Co-ordinator, North East Lincolnshire Primary Care Trust; Rachel Reeve, Connexions Personal Adviser and seven learners.

Due to the small size of the YPC, The assessment procedure was undertaken in a single four hour session. In addition to the interviews listed above, a visual inspection of the available facilities for provision of information, advice and guidance was carried out and consideration given to other evidence of the YPC's demonstration of good practice in information, advice and guidance such as the 'Healthy Schools' status which encourages learners to adopt healthy lifestyles

All interviews and observations were later cross-referenced against the portfolio of paper evidence pre-submitted by the YPC. This, and additional evidence collected during the assessment demonstrate each Element and Component of the North East Lincolnshire Gold Standard for Information, Advice and Guidance as described in summary below:

Element 1. Management of IAG Provision

The work of the YPC is overseen at a strategic level by North East Lincolnshire's Head of Specialist Learning Services Jean Barney, who acts as the centre's overall headteacher but day-to-day management is the responsibility of centre manager Heather Smith. As stated in the overview to this report, the YPC serves a spectrum of need and so places a high priority on providing a rich, meaningful and yet challenging experience for all with the expected outcome that all will grow as people and go on to lead fulfilling lives as adults. The YPC reports that it has no learners who leave to become Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). To help achieve this, many professionals are required to meet the range of learners' needs and the YPC works very closely with social, medical and specialist agencies to ensure matching of expertise to particular interventions. Referrals to external agencies are understood by all YPC staff and there are detailed policies in place for all aspects of the work of the centre. Service Level Agreements are made with the wide range of services and agencies that work in liaison with the YPC.

Element 2. Administration of IAG Provision

There is a secure SIMS database containing detailed records of all learners and careers guidance interventions are currently recorded on the Connexions CCIS Trakrekord database. Key YPC staff have received training in use of the Lincs2 Prospectus and Common Application Process (CAP) and there is close liaison between the centre and Humber EBP to ensure the provision of work experience placements for those learners who will benefit.

Systems for communication between YPC staff and external practitioners are good and provide a sound basis for partnership working. Multi-agency team meetings are convened as appropriate to ensure the needs of learners with emotional, psychological or specific medical needs are met.

Element 3. Facilities to support impartial IAG

The YPC's accommodation is secure and comprises rooms on two floors which include the centre manager's office, adjoining social and communal area, three teaching rooms and a confidential one-to-one interview room. Catering as it does for a small number of learners with specific needs, Centre Manager Heather Smith has an 'open door' policy which allows all learners and staff to seek her advice during the day.

All staff and personnel from external agencies involved in supporting learners are CRB checked and arrangements made for safeguarding and child protection are thorough and observed by all.

Element 4. Access to Information

With a maximum of 24 learners on roll at the centre at any one time, the YPC is able to tailor each individual's curriculum and learning activities to meet their specific requirements. This results in learners being able to access help with finding any information they require via centre manager Heather Smith – which addresses topics as wide ranging as personal hygiene, relationships, childcare and anger management as well as the more traditional information about possible progression routes.

Computer terminals with controlled internet access are located throughout the building for researching online information and there is open access to the wealth of information contained in the Lincs2 Area Wide Prospectus. A stock of hard copy information regarding health and other relevant issues is available to learners as required. .

Element 5. Access to Advice and Guidance

There is a strong multi-agency approach to advice and guidance. The YPC has close links with a broad range of external services and agencies to support its work with learners. For example, there are weekly timeslots for learners to meet with a nurse, health visitor, midwife or Connexions careers adviser. There is also close liaison with mental health services, allowing learners to access as necessary independent counsellors for help with anxieties and personal issues - and with the Education Welfare Officer who rigorously pursues any unauthorised absences. The Connexions careers adviser is available on call at all times and is fully integrated within the excellent support systems in place. Confidentiality is assured for all learners and records of interventions are held in a secure database.

In a learning centre such as this, liaison with parents and carers is of paramount importance in judging whether the advice and guidance provided by the centre is appropriate and of value. A termly newsletter informs parents and carers about YPC events and questionnaires issued at end of each term record 100% parental satisfaction with provision. Feedback from parents regularly indicates that the majority of learners would not have gained the positive personal attitudes, aspirations, confidence or qualifications to progress into further education or training without the curriculum, advice and guidance offered by the YPC. This is a view endorsed by Ofsted in its 2009 inspection report when the care, guidance and support provided at the YPC was judged to be outstanding.

Element 6. Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance

Careers education is not delivered as a discrete element of the curriculum but as an important part of the overall supportive ethos of the centre. Delivery of the entire curriculum revolves around developing the necessary personal career skills of self-awareness, decision-making, team working and opportunity awareness. Visits to Grimsby Institute and Franklin Sixth Form College are arranged for all learners in partnership with the Connexions Careers Adviser to raise awareness of available opportunities.

Given the variety of needs of its learners, the YPC has developed a menu of personal development activities and opportunities for all and wherever possible has linked these into nationally-certificated programmes. For instance, learners may undertake the Certificate of Personal Effectiveness (COPE) at Level 1 or Level 2.

Element 7. Personalised Information, Advice and Guidance

Each learner has a personalised learning programme and the views of parents and carers are sought regarding the health and well-being of each individual when planning programmes. Careers information, advice and guidance are given according to individual need and realistic targets are set with clear guidance about available progression routes. Consequently, learners have realistic and informed aspirations for further education or training. All learners interviewed as a part of this assessment demonstrated a good understanding of where they hope to be going post Year 11 and what they need to do to get there. As a part of the guidance process, all Year 11 leavers are visited on a weekly basis throughout the summer break to ensure support in starting and attending their chosen courses in September. The vast majority of learners leaving the YPC in June 2010 were enrolled on and attending courses or training at the end of Sept. 2010.

Element 8. Enterprise and Work Related Learning

From Year 10, all learners are encouraged to take part in a work experience placement in order to acquaint them with the demands of a real workplace. The YPC has built a bank of suitable placements, including a number of sheltered placements to meet the needs of its more vulnerable learners. All of this has resulted, as indicated in Element 5 above, in learners developing the skills and personal qualities they need in order to progress successfully.

Element 9. Evaluation of IAG

The centre's IAG provision is constantly monitored, reviewed and modified via the range of multi-agency and internal mechanisms described in this report. Staff meetings promote discussion regarding the help and support available to learners and adjustments are then made as necessary. An unusual method for recording and evaluating learners' experiences is the large number of photograph albums illustrating learners in a number of environments with evaluative comments to describe each situation. Parents and carers are heavily involved in regular evaluative processes and each learner's regular reviews provide an opportunity for them to evaluate provision. Through its inspections and reports Ofsted is also an external evaluator of the IAG provided in the YPC (inspection report 315837, 23rd February 2009).

Recommendation

The North East Lincolnshire Young People's Centre provides some outstanding examples of good practice in the provision of information, advice and guidance. Indeed, many elements of the delivery of IAG at the centre could be used as exemplary practice for pupil referral units across the Humber sub-region.

There is a commitment from all staff to continually review, maintain and improve the support and guidance provided for learners and their parents, with a strong emphasis on the development of self-awareness and growth. The Centre Manager and her team recognise the importance of IAG in its broadest sense being a foundation for this individual

development, with the overall aim being to prepare learners, starting out in life with many disadvantages, for a fulfilling future.

I have no doubt that the YPC currently meets the prescribed standard and I strongly recommend that it should be awarded the North East Lincolnshire Gold Standard for IAG.

Vince Barrett
External Gold Standard Assessor

1st March 2011