Quality and Standards in Education and Training in Wales

A Report on the Quality of Youth Support Services in

Blaenau Gwent Young People’s Partnership

January 2006

by

Estyn, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales
The purpose of Estyn is to inspect quality and standards in education and training in Wales. Estyn is responsible for inspecting:

- nursery schools and settings that are maintained by, or receive funding from, local education authorities (LEAs);
- primary schools;
- secondary schools;
- special schools;
- pupil referral units;
- independent schools;
- further education;
- adult community-based learning;
- youth support services;
- LEAs;
- teacher education and training;
- work-based learning;
- careers companies; and
- the education, guidance and training elements of Jobcentre plus.

Estyn also:

- provides advice on quality and standards in education and training in Wales to the National Assembly for Wales and others; and
- makes public good practice based on inspection evidence.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

Publication Section
Estyn
Anchor Court
Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gsi.gov.uk

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: www.estyn.gov.uk

© Crown Copyright 2006: This report may be re-used free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is re-used accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the document/publication specified.
Estyn carries out inspections of young people’s partnerships in accordance with the requirements of the Learning and Skills Act, 2000. For the inspection of youth support services, inspection activity may:

- be general or in relation to specific matters;
- relate to a specific person or institution providing services or to a specific class of person or institution; and
- relate to a specific area.

The young people’s partnership (YPP) is the mechanism for delivering youth support services to young people in Wales. The term refers to the partnership led by the local authority, which plans, co-ordinates and oversees all youth support services in an area in line with the statutory framework of the Learning and Skills Act 2000. ‘Extending Entitlement’ and associated directions and guidance set out the framework for the provision of youth support services in Wales and the responsibilities of local authorities.

Youth support services are those services provided, procured or facilitated by a local authority and identified in an area partnership delivery plan. They are those which, in the opinion of the Welsh Assembly Government, ‘will encourage, enable or assist young persons (directly or indirectly):

(a) to participate effectively in education or training;
(b) to take advantage of opportunities for employment; or
(c) to participate effectively and responsibly in the life of their communities.’

‘Cymorth’ is the Children and Youth Support Fund. It aims to provide a network of targeted support for young people within a framework of universal provision, in order to improve the life chances of children and young people from disadvantaged families.

Grade descriptions

The five-point scale used to represent all inspection judgements in this report is as follows:

| Grade 1 | good with outstanding features |
| Grade 2 | good features and no important shortcomings |
| Grade 3 | good features outweigh shortcomings |
| Grade 4 | some good features, but shortcomings in important areas |
| Grade 5 | many important shortcomings |

1 Extending Entitlement: Support for 11-25 year olds in Wales Direction and Guidance, July 2002 National Assembly for Wales
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standards</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Question 1: How well do young people achieve?</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The quality of education and training</strong></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Question 2: How effective is work with young people and assessment?</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Question 3: How well do learning experiences meet the needs and interests of young people and the wider community?</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Question 4: How well are young people cared for, guided and supported?</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership and management</strong></td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Question 5: How effective are leadership and strategic management?</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Question 6: How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Question 7: How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Provider's response to the report findings</strong></td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appendix 1</strong> The evidence base of the inspection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appendix 2</strong> The inspection team</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appendix 3</strong> Blaenau Gwent's Young People's Partnership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A Report on the Quality of Youth Support Services in Blaenau Gwent Young People’s Partnership, January 2006

Context

The area

1 Blaenau Gwent covers an area of approximately 10,900 hectares in the south east of Wales. It is made up of three major valleys. The traditional occupations for the population were in the coal and steel industries. The closure of these industries has left a legacy of high unemployment (7.5%), low skills and qualification rates and poor health. Transport links across the borough are poor, and car ownership is low. The area does have the advantages of beautiful natural scenery, striking landscapes that mark the people’s heritage and strong, well established communities.

2 The area has an estimated population of 68,930 with 18.4% (12,878) being young people between the ages of 11-25. This is in line with the national average for Wales. Minority ethnic groups make up 0.8% of the population. In the 2001 census, 9% of the population stated that they were Welsh speaking. From 1991 to 2001 there has been a significant growth in the number of young people speaking Welsh in primary school. There is no Welsh medium secondary school within the local authority area.

3 There are 16 wards in Blaenau Gwent. Thirteen of these are in the top 25% of the most deprived in Wales and 10 are classified as Communities 1st areas. According to the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2005, 26% of Blaenau Gwent’s Lower Level Super Output Areas (LSOAs) fall within the 10% most deprived LSOAs in Wales. Weekly earnings are the second lowest in Wales. In 2004-2005, 29% of the school population were entitled to free school meals.

4 Blaenau Gwent has the second highest proportion of lone parents in Wales and there are high levels of teenage conceptions. In 2004 to 2005, 96 16-25 year olds presented themselves as homeless to the council’s homelessness officer, and 80 young people were referred to the Youth Offending Team. Sixteen young people had Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs) and five had Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs). The overall crime rate is falling but there is still a perceived fear of crime in the communities.

5 According to the 2001 census, 45% of the population had no qualifications. Twenty eight per cent of 16 to 24 year olds had no qualifications. However, the percentage of pupils gaining five A*-C grades at GCSE improved from 29% in 1997 to 43% in 2005. Secondary school attendance rates improved from 88% in 2002 to 90.5% in 2005. Permanent exclusions are down from 11 pupils in 2003/2004 to four pupils in 2004/2005. Fixed-term exclusions are still high, at 51 in November 2005. Participation rates for post-16 learners in further and higher education are the lowest in Wales. In addition, the authority has the highest basic skills deficit in Wales.

6 Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council is committed to community regeneration. The five cross-cutting principles of the community plan are: equal opportunities; sustainability; safer communities; social inclusion; and Welsh identity and Welsh language. The borough has invested its hopes for the future in the Welsh Assembly Government’s Heads of the Valleys regeneration project and the redevelopment of...
the former steel works at Ebbw Vale as a learning campus, as key drivers to the renewal of employment and the improvement of the quality of life for its citizens\(^2\).

**The partnership**

7. Blaenau Gwent’s Young People’s Partnership is known as the Youth Entitlement Partnership (YEP). It forms one of the two sub partnerships of the Children and Young People’s Framework Partnership (CYFPF), the other being the Children’s Entitlement Partnership (CEP)\(^3\).

8. Responsibility for the partnerships is located within the Lifelong Learning Department and overseen by the Chief Executive of the local authority. The Children and Young People’s Framework Partnership takes the strategic lead in influencing services for 11 to 25 year olds in the community plan. The Youth Entitlement Partnership supports the planning and implementation of services for 11 to 25 year olds. It also offers guidance on the allocation of resources such as Cymorth\(^4\).

9. The Youth Entitlement Partnership meets bi-monthly and is coordinated by the Head of the Youth Service, who also manages partnership projects funded through Cymorth and other external sources.

10. The mission statement for the Youth Entitlement Partnership is: ‘Blaenau Gwent aims to provide quality, flexible and sustainable services empowering all young people to make informed choices about their lives’.

---

\(^2\) All figures supplied to Estyn by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

\(^3\) See appendix 3

\(^4\) See introduction
Summary

Table of grades awarded

The inspection team judged the work of the partnership as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Question</th>
<th>Inspection Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 How well do young people achieve?</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 How effective is work with young people and assessment?</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 How well do learning experiences meet the needs and interests of young people and the wider community?</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 How well are young people cared for, guided and supported?</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 How effective are leadership and strategic management?</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most young people who take part in youth support services gain new knowledge and skills and achieve to a high level in their chosen activity. The achievements are best in sports, arts, leisure and consultation activities. Overall, young people are enthusiastic about what they do. They work hard, and enjoy themselves. Many gain awards to evidence their progress. Not all young people in projects that support formal learning achieve at appropriate levels to challenge their academic abilities or skills.

Generally, staff establish very good working relationships with young people which encourage them to participate in learning. Staff help young people to develop a wide range of skills, particularly in music, arts, drama, sporting and recreation activities. They encourage young people to develop skills for democracy and for playing active and positive roles in their communities. However, staff do not always plan their work well and do not provide enough opportunities in formal or informal settings for young people to develop their basic and ICT skills. Not enough use is made of opportunities for young people to accredit their work. Generally, staff are not aware of young people’s bilingual skills and do not include bilingualism in the planning and delivery of their work.

The Youth Entitlement Partnership provides young people with a wide and varied range of learning, leisure and developmental activities. Partners make a strong contribution to community regeneration and the health and well being of young people. The partnership has fully mapped the services. However, it has not yet used this information to address gaps such as the promotion of Welsh culture and language, better access to information for young people and the curriculum for young people educated out of school.
15 There is a good range of support, advice and guidance for young people across the borough. The partnership provides very good support for disadvantaged groups, in their communities and at places convenient to them. Young people in the Youth forum are undertaking useful work on anti-bullying on behalf of their peers. There are good arrangements made for health and safety and child protection. The partnership provides good support in schools for young people who are in danger of dropping out. However, these projects do not always do enough to ensure that the individual learning needs of young people are met. Generally, there is not enough basic skills support. There is no centrally based counselling service, not enough open access information services and not enough work with young men over 16. Staff and projects support diversity, but few workers are confident to challenge the views of young people on race and sexuality.

16 The council has good strategic plans for the partnership to build on and performance management is improving. However, the partnership is poor at action planning, and sharing its priorities with others. It does not monitor its plans or the plans of its partners well enough to know which services it needs to develop. It has many good joint projects, often with the voluntary sector. The partnership takes the health, safety and well-being of young people very seriously.

17 There are good examples of protocols between partner organisations that are used to ensure the quality of the joint working. Overall, leaders and managers make good efforts to seek out and take account of the views of young people, staff and other interested parties. Partners often find it difficult to evaluate outcomes because they are not working to agreed standards. There is no audit across the partnership to identify the quality of provision. Strategic managers have only partial information on quality issues. This makes it difficult for them to plan improvements. Too few projects provide a thorough evaluation of the impact of the work on young people and on their acquisition of new knowledge, skills and understanding. Not enough action plans have SMART\(^5\) targets.

18 The local authority is committed to making the best use of mainstream funding to fund youth support services but the Youth Entitlement Partnership has no mechanism to redistribute partners’ funding to meet the partnership’s priorities. It is able to influence local authority spending decisions through the Children and Young People’s Framework Partnership. Also, the Youth Entitlement Partnership has helped to raise significant additional external funding for youth support services in the area. The partnership has begun to plan for the sustainability of short-term funded work but generally services are driven by available funding sources, and not by local priorities.

19 Most workers are well qualified. The partnership has no overall training strategy, although the Youth Service offers free cross-sector training, and other partners contribute resources to this. Overall, accommodation and resources are satisfactory and are appropriate to the needs of young people. Many are of a very high quality, but too many are under used. Although there are examples of high quality resources, the standard varies too much across the partnership. The partnership provides adequate value for money.

\(^5\) Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time related.


**Recommendations**

In order to improve, the partnership needs to:

- **R1** monitor young people’s progress in informal learning and collate young people’s achievements and attainments across the partnership;

- **R2** improve the standard of individual learning plans so that young people can manage and assess their own learning better;

- **R3** make sure that staff challenge young people to work at an appropriate level and provide opportunities for young people to gain appropriate accreditation for their work;

- **R4** ensure that all staff plan sessions well, particularly in projects that support formal learning;

- **R5** make better use of the mapping exercise to identify gaps in provision and plan to fill these gaps, particularly in basic skills provision, work with young men over 16 in education and training, open access information services and projects to promote Welsh language and culture;

- **R6** ensure that young people on projects that support formal learning receive enough hours of formal education and have good access to vocational learning and appropriate GCSEs;

- **R7** make sure that all staff and young people are aware of the support services available across the borough;

- **R8** provide an accessible counselling service open to all young people in the area;

- **R9** improve effective partnership working through high quality action planning which is detailed, robust and regularly monitored;

- **R10** ensure that line management supervision includes regular discussion on the impact the work has on young people and the outcomes that young people achieve;

- **R11** collect robust data to understand which young people are accessing services, to quantify and measure progress across the whole partnership activity, and to understand the impact of the services on young people;

- **R12** improve communication between all partners in the Youth Entitlement Partnership, particularly the smaller voluntary organisations, and ensure that all providers are well informed about the partnership’s priorities and their role in achieving its aims;

- **R13** develop consistency in monitoring and evaluation across partners and support voluntary partners to fulfil their quality assurance role;
R14 develop performance indicators for partnership provision and SMART targets for all action plans;

R15 develop a workable mechanism to ensure that provision is driven by prioritised need and that funding is realigned to meet that need;

R16 develop an overall training strategy for staff across the partnership, to ensure that they have the necessary skills to meet the Extending Entitlement agenda, including bilingual skills;

R17 increase ICT facilities in the community and encourage young people to use IT as a learning tool; and

R18 ensure that young people’s views are taken into account when responding to the proposals for the new learning campus at Ebbw Vale and other community regeneration activities.
Standards

Key Question 1: How well do young people achieve?

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Young people's standards of achievement</th>
<th>Grade 1</th>
<th>Grade 2</th>
<th>Grade 3</th>
<th>Grade 4</th>
<th>Grade 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21 Overall, those young people who attend learning activities participate well and demonstrate good attention to task. Young people are enthusiastic about what they do. They show high levels of application and enjoy their learning. This is especially true in recreation, sport and arts activities, consultation work and a few of the alternative curriculum projects. Young people attending the open-access project to improve their basic skills work hard.

22 Nearly all young people who take part achieve very well in sports and leisure activities. They develop a good understanding of nutrition and exercise issues and engage in leisure activities which teach them about healthy living choices. As a consequence, these young people smoke less, eat more healthily and exercise more. In addition, the young people learn important additional life skills such as relating to others and taking responsibility for their own behaviour.

23 Young people aged 16-25 make good progress in a range of targeted projects. These include the OAKS Community Education project and the Catapult post-16 programme. These learning opportunities include informal, non-accredited and accredited courses.

24 Young people gain recognition for their achievements through a good range of awards. These awards include: OCN credits, Duke of Edinburgh’s Award Scheme, Scouting Awards, ASDAN Youth Achievement Awards, St. John’s Ambulance first aid certification, food hygiene awards, Sports Leadership Awards and Millennium Volunteers certificates. Young people in the after-school trampoline club gain an additional GCSE for their sporting activities. Both staff and young people confirm that, through achieving these awards, young people boost their self-esteem and recognise that learning has a currency that can improve their life chances.

25 In the best examples, a very few young people on alternative curriculum programmes gain GCSEs. However, too often, young people in alternative curriculum projects cannot access GCSEs.

26 Where the young people achieve well, they assess and reflect on their own learning. They record their achievements using records of achievements, portfolios or handbooks. In the best examples young people:

- are actively involved in setting their own goals;
A Report on the Quality of Youth Support Services in Blaenau Gwent Young People’s Partnership, January 2006

- follow learning programmes appropriate to supporting their learning pathway; and
- make decisions about what they are doing and how they are assessed.

27 Young people on alternative curriculum and Catapult’s post-16 programmes have individual learning plans. However, the poor quality of many of these plans means that these young people are unclear about their learning goals and how they can transfer what they are learning to other parts of their lives. Therefore they do not achieve their full potential.

28 Many young people from different areas and backgrounds are confident to participate in debates in youth councils, and the youth forum. These young people develop high levels of confidence and skills and make significant progress as they begin to influence decision-makers in the local authority. They can articulate clearly the learning they have achieved. In the best examples, young people understand their entitlement to learning and their responsibilities to move their own learning forwards. For example, young people describe that as a consequence of achieving with the Oasis programme, they have improved their attendance and behaviour in school and are no longer bullied.
'Talk It Up'. Young people who take part in a range of Blaenau Gwent youth forum activities gain valuable experience and skills.

Many young people develop a range of skills through their participation in youth forum activities.

The borough wide forum ‘Talk It Up’ engages in a variety of high level activities. The Youth Mayor and his deputies act as ambassadors for young people and support young peoples’ different activities in the communities. The forum is grounded in the principles of local democracy and lines of accountability are strong. A variety of local youth councils, school councils and interest groups engage in activities at local level and elect members to the main forum.

Local groups also send representatives to the monthly forum meetings in the borough council chamber. Staff provide transport. Young people from the various youth councils and forum members get involved in consultation activities, fundraising and other activities in their communities. Forum members are the first young people under 18 to sit on the management board of a national organisation for young people, Funky Dragon. They received special permission from the Welsh Assembly Government to do this. They also work with the Children’s Commissioner for Wales on issues that affect young people, and the Youth Mayor is a member of the British Youth Council. Others represent the young people of Blaenau Gwent on the council’s scrutiny committee and on the Local Health Board.

‘Talk It Up’ representatives get involved in:

- policy development;
- learn media and public speaking skills;
- become aware of equal opportunities;
- contribute to their community with enthusiasm and optimism; and
- promote a positive view of young people.

In most settings, young people demonstrate a range of key skills including team work and effective communication. This is particularly true in sports and leisure provision.
In many settings, young people work with staff to agree a behaviour contract. In the best examples, this leads to improvements in young people’s behaviour and helps them to engage better in activities. This is notable in settings such as Catapult youth club, where young people’s behaviour is especially good.

Many of the young people observed make good progress onto further learning routes. These can be within their existing learning setting or to other opportunities.

Examples of progression include:

- from Prince’s Trust projects locally to national projects;
- from belt to belt in Judo club;
- from alternative curriculum to main-stream further-education; and
- from local committees to Funky Dragon and other national organisations.

Nearly all young people involved in alternative curriculum projects, significantly improve their attendance and punctuality. Most young people work hard and achieve their learning outcomes in sessions. In the best examples, young people help their peers and gain experience of leading teams. In a few projects, workers use the Rickter scale to measure young people’s progress. This allows individual young people to measure the progress that they make.

All young people involved in the Scouting activities have individual training records. This means that they monitor their own progress and are clear about opportunities for progression. The young people in Blaenau Gwent who complete the Queen’s Scout Award reflect on, and describe their own learning with a panel of adults. This enables young people to consider carefully the impact the learning achieved has made on other aspects of their lives.

Most young people gain new skills and knowledge from experiences they get within youth support services. These young people make good use of this experiential learning to enhance their ability to participate actively in their learning and in community life. A few young people learn skills to support community regeneration and strengthen their citizenship skills. These include technical skills in film making. There are examples of young people gaining these skills in a variety of projects, including the ASSET project for young people with challenging behaviour. However, young people do not always develop information technology, key or basic skills from involvement in youth support services activities.

A few young people develop a variety of practical and behavioural skills to prepare them for work, through the Vocational Opportunities Programme, Another planet, Tredegar Development Trust and SOR TED. In the best examples young people are also supported by good careers advice.
36 Young people in projects that support formal learning do not always achieve at appropriate levels. Many of these young people work at a low level which does not challenge their academic abilities or skills. These included the Attendance Project, Oasis, and SORTED. In many sessions observed, young people have limited involvement in programme planning. In a few instances young people are not working together effectively, and they do not learn important social skills.

37 Although many young people gain important key skills through taking part in projects and activities, their achievements in key skills are not officially recognised. A few students following basic skills programmes do not take responsibility for their own learning. Not enough young people are accessing the available basic skills service as often as they could. A few young people over compulsory school age who are referred to the Youth Offending Team do not achieve as well as they might. This is because they do not have access to education and training tailored to their needs.

38 In a questionnaire to service users, Estyn asked 350 young people about the youth support services they receive in Blaenau Gwent. Seventy two per cent of the 300 young people who returned the questionnaire believe that they are making progress in their learning.
The quality of education and training

Key Question 2: How effective is work with young people and assessment?

Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The quality of work with young people and assessment</th>
<th>Grade 1</th>
<th>Grade 2</th>
<th>Grade 3</th>
<th>Grade 4</th>
<th>Grade 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

39 All workers in youth support services establish very good relationships with young people, which encourage the young people to participate in learning in a safe environment. Most workers are suitably qualified to deliver the work they do with young people. Most are familiar with the national priorities for young people, the 10 Entitlements, and follow the principles of the Youth Work Curriculum Statement for Wales. In open access youth club settings, workers encourage young people to participate in activities and they generally ensure that there are a variety of recreational resources.

40 In the best practice, workers encourage young people to make decisions about their individual and centre programme, to evaluate current activities and to be involved in the planning of subsequent sessions. Workers also provide young people with opportunities to participate in off-site activities and visits and in the regeneration of their communities. In Rassau, young people attending the drop in provision have been involved in river cleansing and young people in Cwm have participated in local events and in litter picking.

41 In formal settings, in most cases, workers undertake effective initial assessment of young people’s skills. Young people agree their individual learning plans and staff regularly assess the young people’s progress. Generally, workers across the partnership support young people in gaining qualifications. They ensure that the work meets the required standard of the regulatory body. In many cases, in part-time open access provision, workers do not systematically assess young people’s current skills and they do not record young people’s individual progress. Workers do not always challenge young people to achieve at an appropriate level and sometimes miss opportunities for young people to gain qualifications or accreditation for their work. Very occasionally, this happens in projects that support formal learning.

42 Workers provide good support to facilitate the work of young people in the development of school councils and youth councils at local and county level. This is highlighted in the celebration of young people’s achievements during the inauguration of the Youth Mayor and the representation of young people on the local authority Scrutiny Committee and other high level management boards.

43 In the majority of cases, staff teaching in the Digilabs provide a high standard of support to young people who are using ICT as a learning tool. These staff adapt the work to meet the varying abilities of young people. In the youth café in Tredegar,
National Children’s Homes (NCH) staff helped to set up an ICT link. This will enable young people to access their computer-based homework from school. The staff are currently working to help a young person who attends a Welsh medium school to access this facility. In a minority of cases however, staff working in the Digilabs lack the necessary skills to deliver ICT training to an acceptable standard. Workers use information technology creatively to engage young people well in a community filming project. They teach the young people to take photographs using a digital camera and to download them on to a computer. The staff use a range of appropriate teaching skills, set achievable tasks and involve the young people well in group discussions.

44 Workers in recreation, sport and music provision involve young people very well, giving them good opportunities to enhance their skills. They make good use of available resources. Workers deliver effective healthy eating and sexual health programmes for young people, and also provide programmes of support for young parents.
Effective work with a group of 11 young men aged 16 and 17

In the Healthy Lifestyles Project at Ebbw Vale Leisure Centre, staff have engaged young men in a programme of fitness activities. Previously these young men were involved in anti-social behaviour and patterns of harmful lifestyle choices. By developing a positive relationship with them, the worker engaged them in the programme of fitness activities with clear positive outcomes.

With the support, encouragement and guidance of the worker, members of the group have:

- given up smoking;
- reduced their alcohol intake;
- begun to choose healthier foods; and
- committed themselves to reducing their weight and their blood pressure which they monitor every week.

The young men:

- work on their own programmes of fitness activities at the gym;
- relate well to other members of the public who use the facility; and
- become involved in volunteering in the local community.

The worker’s positive relationship with the young men has been key in motivating them to commit to healthier lifestyles.

However, in too many cases, in projects that support formal learning, workers do not plan well enough for individual or group work activities. Workers do not always challenge young people to achieve at an appropriate level and the assessment of young people’s basic and ICT skills is not carried out by all providers, where appropriate. In informal settings, there is little evidence of young people having opportunities to develop their basic skills or of them being able to use ICT as a learning tool.

In many cases, workers do not monitor ethnicity, language choice or the abilities of young people well enough. Generally, staff are not aware of young people’s bilingual skills and do not include bilingualism in the planning and delivery of their work.
Key Question 3: How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of young people and the wider community?

Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

47 The Youth Entitlement Partnership carried out a detailed mapping exercise of the services available to young people and where provision is located. The partnership provides a good range of services for young people who are underachieving or in danger of dropping out of formal education, and good projects that address healthy living and sexual health issues. However, although the partnership has identified gaps in provision it has not planned to provide projects to address key priorities for the area such as the high levels of young men over 16 who are not in education, training or employment.

48 In particular, there is too little provision to help young people to improve their basic skills. The partnership has recognised the need to raise levels of achievement in basic skills and key skills in its self-assessment report. However, the partnership has not developed an overall strategy to address these skills needs. Coleg Gwent, at Ebbw Vale has a very good drop-in facility, which is open to everyone in the borough. The partnership does not do enough to extend the college provision for basic skills or encourage staff working in youth support services help young people to access the services available.

49 The partnership offers a wide range of alternative curriculum settings for young people who have difficulties in school. Most schools value, and are actively involved in the planning of these arrangements. The range of options for young people include: the pupil referral unit; Oasis; Pre-16; the attendance project; and the SORTED programme. Generally, young people who take up one of these options increase their attendance in their project, often from a very low baseline. They also improve their self esteem. However, there are too few hours of formal learning, too little vocational learning and not enough access to GCSEs for young people on the SORTED programme and for teenage mothers and other young people receiving home tuition.\(^6\) The local authority, in partnership with its schools, has set up a useful joint liaison panel in every secondary school. These panels plan action to provide the most suitable project for individual pupils. However, curriculum planning within the alternative curriculum programmes does not always meet the complex needs of the learners.

50 The partnership has limited provision which promotes Welsh culture and language. There is no provision to target Welsh speakers and little emphasis on the Welsh culture in the curriculum of most activities. Young people who speak Welsh at school have little opportunity to use the language in informal settings.

51 The partnership provision does address important national and local priorities such as community regeneration and health and well-being. The Communities 1st projects are particularly good at emphasising this aspect of work with young people. Four comprehensive schools and the pupil referral unit are involved in the healthy eating programme. Health Promotion Wales provides good accredited learning in food and nutrition.

---

\(^6\) This is not in line with the National Assembly for Wales Circular 1/2004: Education Otherwise Than At School.
52 The Youth Entitlement Partnership actively supports young people to develop skills which will help them to participate as active citizens in their communities. Examples include the Communities 1st projects which involve young people in the clearing of rivers and streams, cleaning up litter and protecting their environment. Young people in Llanhilleth made a film about their village and how they would like to see the area improve. Workers use these activities well to get young people interested in learning and to discuss issues that affect their lives.

53 The partnership is successful in developing activities to meet the national priority for young people of consultation and participation. These local activities prepare young people well to take an active role in their communities. On the ‘Talk it up’ forum and on youth councils, young people gain valuable experience of their role in the democratic process. These young people have developed an anti-bullying strategy for all schools in the area. The policy is based on how young people believe these issues should be dealt with. The young people have also developed a user-friendly and supportive complaints system for young people.

54 There are good examples of projects that help young people prepare for global citizenship such as the D-Day landings DVD project in Normandy. The young people show the DVD in schools. This is a good example of peer-led education. In several projects, young people raise funds for various good causes.

55 The partnership provides a wide and varied range of learning, leisure and developmental activities which enrich young people’s lives. Young people can take part in drama productions and produce films and DVDs on issues such as bullying and anti-social behaviour. One group has built a wildlife sensory garden for hospital users at Ysbyty Tri Chwm, and others attend a club for young carers.

56 A key priority for Blaenau Gwent is coping with or reducing teenage pregnancy rates and improving the sexual health of young people. The partnership supports a variety of projects to address these issues. Blaenau Gwent has successfully reduced the number of teenage pregnancies since 2000. The Sure Start antenatal group works with partners such as the local health board, smoking cessation and leisure services to provide a very good antenatal road show. This gives pregnant young women and their partners, valuable information on childbirth and health and well being for their new families. The road show makes young women aware of opportunities to return to learning after their babies are born.
In the C Card scheme well qualified and trained youth workers provide young people with non-judgemental and practical advice on contraception and sexual health. Young people use their mobile phones to contact the sexual health coordinator when they need urgent advice or support and they can access pregnancy testing at cost price. In this scheme youth workers carefully assess young people’s knowledge and understanding of sexual health and if they how to use a condom effectively. Once these youth workers are sure a young person knows how to use a condom properly, young people receive a card which entitles them to a maximum of 10 condoms and protection for oral sex. Young people collect this protection in privacy at an evening disco and receive advice on sensitive sexual health matters. The young people appreciate the scheme and show a very good understanding of safe sex and contraception. When asked about the value of the scheme they say, ‘It’s really confidential, we are treated like adults rather than children and we get good information about where the clinics are. Condoms are expensive so (thanks to the clinics) we have no worries about buying them and they teach you how to use them properly’.

The Youth Offending Team (YOT) works well within the partnership to provide activities and support for young people that will improve their life chances and prevent further offending.
The Youth Offending Team (YOT) works closely with community police officers, local magistrates, Blaenau Gwent comprehensive schools, Prescoed open prison and College Gwent at Ebbw Vale to present ‘the Crime of your Life’ to year 7 young people in Blaenau Gwent schools. Young people discuss a DVD which shows how a young man gets a custodial sentence and the trigger points along the way where he could have changed the course of events. They attend well planned workshops which include a powerful presentation by a prison officer and a prisoner.

Local magistrates and drama students from Coleg Gwent simulate a court room and young people decide the sentence, say why they chose it and ask magistrates questions. YOT workers, a police officer, a community practice nurse (CPN) and a worker from Drugaid, discuss the causes of crime with the young people and explain how, as a team, they support young people who offend and also their victims. A community policeman explains the Anti-Social Behaviour Order process and answers questions. This work is followed up by teachers during PSE lessons. The course materials are tailor made, attractive and accessible to young people.

The young people understand the personal cost of crime better because:

- they are fully involved in and enjoy the event;
- they ask searching questions of key professionals; and
- they hear first-hand evidence of how crime affects the offender and the victim.

The YOT and the NCH network have a useful protocol on homelessness. However, the Youth Entitlement Partnership has not prioritised the development of projects to support homeless young people.
Effective and visible street youth work

The Police and NCH work well together to target hard to reach young people and educate them about risky behaviours. The staff do outreach work on Wednesday and Friday evenings. The police wear uniforms on Friday but work in plain clothes on Wednesday. So that the wider community recognise that the youth workers are working with the police, they wear yellow tabards. The staff tell young people about other services available such as the C Card and Splash. In addition they discuss anti-social behaviour and inappropriate use of alcohol. As a result, the young people:

- are comfortable to approach police officers when they are in uniform; and
- have built constructive relationships with the police and youth workers, that help them all work together within the community.

59 The voluntary sector contributes well to the pattern of partnership provision. For example:

- National Children’s Home (NCH) activities play an important role in engaging groups of young people in activities in their communities;
- Scouting Cymru involve both young men and women in character building and adventurous activities; and
- the Prince’s Trust also works effectively in partnership with the youth service and Communities 1st to engage young people in learning new skills.

60 The partnership does not yet have an overall strategy for providing youth information and there are not enough open access opportunities for young people to get good quality information for themselves. The partnership has identified this need as a priority in its annual development plan. There are well advanced plans to buy and set up a mobile unit so that young people who live in isolated areas can have better access to information and support.

61 Although the partnership has made good attempts to address national and local priorities, development has been piecemeal. Not enough emphasis is placed by the partnership on vital areas of work such as improving poor basic skills and reducing the numbers of young people leaving school with no qualifications. Because projects are targeted at specific groups, activities or areas of work, they involve low numbers of young people. The partnership does not collect overall participation data so it does not know how many young people are accessing services across the county. The partnership has not yet addressed the issue of ensuring that all young people across the county have equal entitlement to youth support services.
Key Question 4: How are young people cared for, guided and supported?

Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

62 The Youth Entitlement Partnership is committed to providing young people with a wide range of support, advice and guidance services across the borough. There is a good range of drug, alcohol and substance misuse services as well as good access to sexual health advice and guidance. The text messaging service ‘Cyber M8’ provides useful information on services available in the area to young people who register with the service. However, an information worker specifically for the 11 to 25 age group is not yet in post. There are not enough open access information points available to young people.

63 Careers Wales is active in community settings giving advice and guidance on careers to young people. In Youth Gateway and Skillbuild, young people clearly recognise the benefits of being on the programme both in preparation for employment and for developing their independent living skills. A qualified youth and community worker is based in each comprehensive school as part of the Oasis Project. This is effective in supporting young people who are at risk of exclusion from mainstream education.

64 Many projects support potentially vulnerable groups of young people well. The Young Carers Project provides good support and guidance to young people with responsibilities as carers. It gives young carers valuable time for themselves and an opportunity to meet and talk to others with the same responsibilities. This work is backed up by strong policies and guidelines for staff. The Sports Development Team provides high quality support and guidance for groups of young people in the community including young people with additional learning needs. Communities 1st youth workers and NCH workers provide very good support for young people. By working with different age groups within the community, these workers get to know young people’s families well. This helps workers to understand young people’s needs better so they can provide targeted support when it is required.

Support to overcome barriers to learning

Through outreach activities the Parents into Education (PIE) workers, have engaged young people from hard to reach groups, including a travelling family, in learning. They have involved a young mum in improving her basic skills and provided her with additional support to help her take her driving test.

A young man with learning difficulties engaged with the SkillBuild Programme in Blaina Communities 1st shop clearly recognised the benefits of the extra support he had been given by the programme and described how his confidence had improved. He was able to share information he had gained about independent living, particularly the cost involved in moving to a different area for employment opportunities.
Partnership projects provide good support for school age mothers within the community. Services include an antenatal group, ‘Parents into Education’, good quality local health professionals and a ‘teenage mums’ group. However, the amount of hours of home tuition provided for pregnant young women and school-age mothers is too low. Good quality, affordable childcare facilities are available at the college, but generally, the levels of crèche facilities provided to enable young people to return to education or to increase their skills do not meet demand.

Many providers make flexible arrangements to suit young people’s individual needs. For example, the computer sessions at Rassau resources centre are at times to suit young women and fit in around their childcare arrangements. In order to improve the take up by young men of their social enterprise initiative in Brynteg community centre, the Princes Trust gives a talk in a local pub at 6pm. However, generally, there is a limited range of support for young fathers and for young men over the age of 16.

Youth Entitlement Partnership partners work closely together to provide good joined-up support for looked-after children and those young people leaving the care system. Looked-after children have their own advocacy service which enables them to have their voices heard. As a consequence of this extra support, last year, 70% of looked-after children achieved A-G GCSE results. The partnership also supports foster carers by making sure they have access to training and educational materials to support young people in Key Stage 4. However, there is not enough planning and action taken by the partnership to ensure that looked-after children have access to the full range of opportunities that are available outside of the school day.

However, all young people across Blaenau Gwent, do not always get the support they need as many workers across the partnership have limited knowledge of the range of services and support available.

Young people do not have access to a community-based counselling service and have to wait too long for child and adolescent mental health services. There is insufficient outreach and detached provision across the borough to help young people access the many support services that are currently available.

Blaenau Gwent does not have large numbers of young people from minority ethnic backgrounds but too many young people and workers are not aware of issues of diversity. Coleg Gwent at Ebbw Vale holds a ‘Diversity Day’ each year. This event raises awareness of diversity in the population and also publicise the services offered by the college. Workers in the Communities 1st Shop in Blaina have engaged and support young Polish men between 20-25 years old. This work was initiated by the continental market held in the town. However, too few workers across the borough challenge young people’s views and comments, particularly around race and sexuality.

Health and safety arrangements are good across the partnership services and risk assessment processes are in place. Projects and services have a good ratio of well-trained workers to young people. Services have very good levels of workers with Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks, with many workers having enhanced checks. The arrangements for Child Protection reflect the All Wales Child Protection Procedures. Comprehensive multi-agency training on child protection is available for partners, including the voluntary sector.
Leadership and management

Key Question 5: How effective are leadership and strategic management?

Grade 4: Some good features but shortcomings in important areas

72 There are good links between key strategic plans for the area such as the Community Plan, the Regeneration Plan and the Health Social Care and Well-being Strategy. These plans form a good basis for the partnership to plan youth support services. Partnership plans clearly set out the reasons why different groups of young people cannot access appropriate education, training and employment. Councillors know and understand the issues which affect young people, and work hard to address these issues. However, the Youth Entitlement Partnership does not use good action plans to manage change. Plans are not SMART enough to ensure that strategic aims inform operational work. The partnership does not have robust systems in place to monitor how well partners achieve against their own or the partnership’s plans.

73 Many senior managers do not attend meetings on a regular basis. This means that there is a lack of strategic leadership at the highest level within the partnership. However the partnership knows it needs to improve the way it works and has identified well the issues which previously blocked good joint working. The co-ordinator does a good job in pulling the partnership together.

74 The partnership does not communicate its priorities very well with the wider partners, and other partnerships. Members do not communicate the partnership’s work or priorities effectively to those they represent. Partners do not share important information about their own services well enough with one another. Consequently, workers in partnership services do not know about the partnership’s priorities. In a recent survey of these staff 23% of those surveyed either did not know how their work contributed to the work of the partnership, or disagreed with the statement that their work contributes to the Youth Entitlement Partnership.

75 The Council has recently put in place an executive and scrutiny structure to monitor council contribution to joint strategies. This is a promising initiative which aims to improve partnership working. However, it is too early to evaluate the impact of this on partnership working or on the provision of services to young people.

76 The partnership sets out clearly its equal opportunity responsibilities and aims in its planning documents. However, the partnership and service providers do not do enough to collect data about the young people they work with, or record the young people’s attainment and achievement. This means that the partnership does not know how much use is made of services by minority or disadvantaged groups. It cannot plan effectively to fill gaps in services, identify trends in performance, compare results and retention rates, or judge how well services match needs.

77 The contribution of the voluntary sector to the partnership has gradually improved since the partnership was set up. The Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations (GAVO) works well with the partnership. A few of the larger voluntary organisations
make significant contributions to joint projects. However, many smaller organisations find it difficult to get involved in the work of the partnership. GAVO has begun to take steps to address this. However, the time available to the voluntary sector co-ordinator is too limited to give these organisations the support they need.

78 There are many good examples of joint working between local providers to manage and deliver youth support services. These joint projects respond well to locally identified needs. The best projects make good use of service level agreements. These agreements clearly establish the commitments partners make to joint projects. They have enough detail to agree clear project outcomes and quality measures to manage resources effectively.

79 The local authority has recently implemented a new performance management system. This system links each officer’s own performance review targets to departmental plans, which then impacts on work relevant to the partnership. This development is at an early stage, it is therefore too early comment on how effective it is. In a few youth support services, line management supervision focuses too much on the delivery of provision. It pays too little attention to the impact the work has on young people or the outcomes young people achieve. In these cases, workers are not well supported, nor are they helped to learn how to work better or more effectively. Some managers’ expectations of their part-time staff are too low.

80 Many partners fulfil their responsibilities for the health, safety and well-being of young people appropriately. Youth Service staff on joint Police, NCH and Youth Service projects, insist young people who use service minibuses have properly completed parental consent forms before they can travel. The Leisure Service has the Adventurous Activities Licensing Authority licence for its outdoors and adventure work.

Key Question 6: How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality standards?

Grade 4: Some good features but shortcomings in important areas

81 The Blaenau Gwent Youth Entitlement Partnership is a large partnership involving over 23 different organisations. All of these organisations have their own formal or informal mechanisms in place to monitor the nature and effectiveness of their work with young people.

82 In formal settings, such as schools and colleges, managers engage in regular reviews of performance based on examination data such as GCSE, A, AS and vocational qualifications. This is a useful process for measuring outcomes within a framework of accountability.

83 Partners working in more informal settings such as youth clubs, often have greater challenges in measuring outcomes. In part this is because of the informal nature of their work with young people, and the difficulty of accessing reliable data on which to make judgements. However, workers do not make enough of an attempt to measure outcomes in these settings. Other projects funded from sources such as Cymorth and the European Social Fund (ESF), measure and report on the outcomes needed
to meet their funding requirements, but do not measure the broader impact of services on young people. There is no audit across the Youth Entitlement Partnership to identify the range, scope and quality of provision. This lack of data and limited use of performance indicators (PI) makes it difficult for improvement to be measured. Also, there is little use of impact assessment across the partnership.

Strategic managers have only partial information on quality issues to inform decision making and planning.

At a strategic level, and in partnership providers, leaders and managers make good efforts to seek out and take account of the view of young people, staff and other interested parties. The council has purchased a well developed tool for consulting with and analysing the views of its citizens. This tool is being well used by the Youth Entitlement Partnership. Managers and planners have sought views of young people on the development of the new learning campus at Ebbw Vale and other regeneration initiatives. However, it is too early to tell if these views will be acted upon.

A very high proportion of young people completed and returned the Estyn inspection questionnaire which the partnership sent to a variety of service users. Managers produced a good analysis of this questionnaire and plan to use the information to inform their own planning. In general the young people asked, have a very positive perception of youth support services in Blaenau Gwent.

The youth forum has taken a positive role in quality monitoring for the inspection process by contributing to the self-assessment report. There are also good examples where young people are members of consultative boards, such as the local Health Board, and give their opinion on the quality of services they receive.

Consulting with young people to improve the quality of provision

The local health board actively seeks out young people’s views to plan provision. At the recent Youth Work Week, young people were encouraged to use an electronic voting system to record their views on particular proposals. In other cases, the views of young people have been used to change some public documents to ensure that services are more responsive to their needs. Also, following consultations with young people, a sexual health clinic has moved from the local surgery to the careers office, to enable more confidential interviews with clients to take place.

The Blaenau Gwent Monitoring and Evaluation Officer has good plans to develop consistency in evaluation practices across the borough. Individual providers within the Youth Entitlement Partnership often produce action plans to structure initiatives for improvement. However, there is limited common practice in the monitoring and evaluation systems used by different partners.

There are good examples where protocols are in place in order to ensure quality where organisations work in partnership. A good example of this is the protocols that guide the work of the local authority and the National Children’s Homes (NCH) over
the accommodation of young people. In addition, the Blaenau Gwent Leisure Services department, through the work of the Sports Inclusion Officer, targets provision well at disadvantaged groups in order to improve outcomes.

89 Service based self-assessment is a regular process in the Blaenau Gwent Local Authority. This process links in to the work of the recently established Corporate Performance Management Unit. It is too early to evaluate the impact of this new arrangement on service improvement.

90 The overall Self-Assessment Report (SAR) produced for this inspection is an honest attempt to evaluate the work of this partnership. It is based on the seven key questions of the Common Inspection Framework (CIF) and recognises a number of the strengths and issues for improvement identified in this inspection. Every partner organisation, but not every member of staff, has been involved in the SAR process.

91 The grades that the partnership has awarded the key questions in their SAR are in line with the grading by the inspection team in two of the key questions, but are too generous in four of the key questions, and not generous enough in one key question. This mismatch is due, in part, to the lack of audit of provision and youth support service work outcomes, and a failure to realise the significance of some shortcomings.

Key Question 7: How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?

| Grade 4: Some good features but shortcomings in important areas |

92 The work of the Youth Entitlement Partnership informs the Children and Young People’s Framework Partnership’s planning for youth support services. Thus work includes decisions about the allocation and distribution of Cymorth funding and other funding resources.

93 Successful partnership work has resulted in significant additional funding from sources such as Objective 1, New Opportunities Fund and the Big Lottery Fund. These contribute to the delivery of a broad and varied range of activities and services for young people, such as the Assets, Young Carers, Prince’s Trust, Splash, Oasis, NCH Outreach, VOP, Citizenship programmes, the sexual health clinics and information services.

94 The Children and Young People’s Framework Partnership is committed to exploring all possible funding sources to secure much needed resources for the area. This includes making best use of local authority and Health Service mainstream funding. In 2004, the Framework Partnership identified a comprehensive system to inform effective resource planning. This includes agreeing criteria for success and measuring progress towards targets and outcomes. However, at the time of the inspection, this system was not in place.

95 All Cymorth funded projects are closely monitored and evaluated within the requirements of the funding body. However, these evaluations focus too much on the progress of the projects and not enough on their impact on the lives of the young people. The partnership has also started to plan for the proposed funding changes of
Cymorth funded projects in 2008. Similarly, planning for the future of other funded projects has also begun. This includes partnerships such as the 14-19 Pathways network, the Local Area Network and the CCET.

96 However, without an effective quality system operating across the whole of the Youth Entitlement Partnership, it is not able to collect, monitor and evaluate how well the activities impact upon the lives of young people in Blaenau Gwent. The partnership is not able to analyse and establish agreed priorities to help make informed recommendations for future funding.

97 Funding of provision is short-term and the work of the partnership is mainly driven by the available funding sources. The partnership does not identify gaps in provision then identify funding to provide the necessary service. In the main, partnership priorities are set to match the outcomes required by different funding streams. The risk of losing funding for services for young people remains high. How the partnership will ensure continuity of staffing and resourcing of many services is not clear.

98 The partnership’s self-assessment notes that the recent Estyn Area Inspection of Blaenau Gwent identified the need to increase numbers of young people entering and remaining in post-16 learning programmes, and to raise the levels of attainment, especially for young males in the area. The self-assessment also notes the difficult resource implications of developing bilingual support services for young people. It is not clear how priorities such as these will be acted upon if the delivery model of the partnership remains a project funded driven model. The partnership does not identify whether or not the way partners use mainstream funding is most effective in delivering the services young people need.

99 Members have agreed to set up an overarching database for the partnership. The purpose of the database is to share good practice and make best use of available resources. The partnership aims to identify which agencies work where, what staff skills are available, at what qualification levels and the availability of resources. This takes the work of the partnership one step on from an overall mapping of services. It is too soon to judge the success of this development.

100 Organisations within the partnership recognise the contribution that their staff make to the partnership’s aims. In the main, partners delivering these services show their commitment to staff development and many workers have high levels of qualifications and experience. The partnership’s 2005-2006 Annual Delivery Plan gives staff training a high priority.

101 The local authority Youth Service is very pro-active in offering free, open access training in youth work at introduction, intermediate, access and higher levels across the partnership, through the Welsh Assembly Training Grant. Partners also contribute their own resources as the grant cannot meet the growing training demands in the area.

102 Workers from partners such as the police, health care, teaching, community work, play work and also elected members access this training. They value the opportunity and benefit from the sharing of ideas and the increased knowledge and awareness
they gain of each other’s main roles and responsibilities. This also helps partners gain a common understanding of priority issues in youth support services.

103 However, there is no overall training and development strategy for the partnership. The partnership is not able to identify effectively and address development needs or share good practices across services. The standards of the delivery of services vary too much across the area. For example, a few workers in youth settings are highly qualified but lack sufficient on-the-job experience and coaching to deliver high quality work. Many staff are not confident to challenge young people’s views of other groups. In a few cases, staff do not have sufficient bilingual and ICT skills to deliver services.

104 The partnership does not know whether or not the deployment of staff is effective. In a few cases, staffing ratios are too high. There are examples where there are equal numbers of workers and young people. In other cases there are very low numbers of young people accessing provision.

105 Overall standards of accommodation and resources are satisfactory. Young people are welcome in the very good, high quality accommodation at the new Abertillery leisure centre and the leisure centre in Ebbw Vale. Other programmes and centres also have good resources and use these well. These include ICT and sports facilities, the Communities 1st shop in Blaina and the Young Carers project. The accommodation for the SORTED project is poor.

106 A local club in Abertillery is used well as a venue for the sexual health club and C Card scheme. This is an appropriate setting where young people feel confident to access such services. In another example, when young people were not comfortable attending the sexual health clinic at a local surgery, the partnership helped the clinic to move to confidential interview accommodation at Careers Wales Gwent premises.

107 The partnership itself has published a 2006 calendar. This is a good example of marketing and reinforces the entitlements for young people. The Youth Forum has good bilingual publicity leaflets, and an attractive and informative newsletter. Key forum members are given personal use of laptop computers and have produced a useful booklet on the roles and responsibilities of ‘officers’ and how to conduct meetings for new members.

108 However, there are examples where resources and good equipment in buildings sit idle for most of the time. In a few cases, the lack of resources is not addressed particularly in a few alternative curriculum settings. In these cases there are poor basic skills teaching materials and open college network work books written by staff that are inappropriate to the level of the award being followed by young people.

109 The inspection judged that the Youth Entitlement Partnership in Blaenau Gwent provides adequate value for money.
Provider’s response to the report findings

The main findings of the report generally match the Partnership’s own perceptions as identified within the self assessment in relation to its strengths and weaknesses and the Partnership would concur with the inspection report in respect of the areas for development.

Whilst some of the grades fall below the threshold of quality and this is somewhat disappointing it is important to note that the report supports the Partnership findings and that there is a high level of good quality youth support service being delivered in Blaenau Gwent.

For key question one 76% of the observations were awarded grade 1 or 2 and in key question two 70% were awarded between grade 1 or 2. The Partnership through its self assessment process, as acknowledged by Estyn, had been open and honest throughout the whole process. The Partnership in the main recognized its own shortcomings, many of which, were also identified by Estyn.

This report has given us a focus for strengthening and improving the work of the Partnership and youth support service in Blaenau Gwent. Whilst we are in agreement with the high standards set in the Estyn Inspection Framework and recognise that the achievement of the standards will benefit young people in Blaenau Gwent, there are significant resource implications in relation to sustainability and the short term funding regime. One of the priority tasks for the Partnership will be to find a way of increasing the resources for sustainability and improve capacity so that we are in a position to implement an action plan within a realistic timescale.

The Young People’s Partnership has met to discuss the draft report and the key recommendations within it. Work was already underway at the time of the inspection on addressing some of the recommendations made by Estyn and the Partnership had also made the implementation of the Estyn action plan a priority within its own delivery plan in 2006/07.

Further work is now being undertaken so that by the time the final action plan is required, considerable progress should have been made. Young People will be given the opportunity to comment on the key recommendations and participate in planning how to address them through the action plan. The Partnership, relevant sub groups and individual members will all take responsibility for implementing the action plan and for monitoring progress.
Appendix 1

The evidence base of the inspection

Inspectors and peer assessors made 54 inspection visits and held about 36 interviews and meetings.

These inspectors observed, a wide variety of partnership provision including:

- youth support services provided by the local authority;
- services provided by other statutory bodies;
- services provided by further education colleges; and
- voluntary sector provision.

Members of the team had meetings, and talked about issues with:

- young people;
- workers and volunteers;
- Young People’s Partnership members;
- managers and representatives of other projects, organisations and providers;
- Local authority senior managers and elected members; and
- representatives of communities.

The team also considered:

- the Young People’s Partnership self-assessment report;
- a wide selection of examples of young people’s work;
- comprehensive documentation made available by the Young People’s Partnership and providers, both before and during the inspection; and
- the results of an Estyn questionnaire to young people asking them their views about the services they receive.
## Appendix 2

### The inspection team

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lin Howells HMI</td>
<td>Lead Inspector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betsan Dafydd HMI</td>
<td>Team Inspector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerard Kerslake HMI</td>
<td>Team Inspector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane Taylor HMI</td>
<td>Team Inspector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gareth Wyn Jones HMI</td>
<td>Team Inspector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claire Yardley HMI</td>
<td>Team Inspector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judith Jenkins</td>
<td>Additional Inspector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anne Marie Sutton</td>
<td>Additional Inspector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rob Edwards</td>
<td>Peer Assessor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeanette Keefe</td>
<td>Peer Assessor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Walker (week 1 only)</td>
<td>Peer Assessor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liam Kealy HMI (week 1 only)</td>
<td>Team Inspector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suzanne Doran (1 week only)</td>
<td>Additional Inspector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheryl Beach (3 days only)</td>
<td>Inspector Social Services Inspectorate, Wales (SISSW)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julie Cundick</td>
<td>Provider’s Nominee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3

Blaenau Gwent Youth Support Service Young People’s Partnership

Local Authority Planning Structure

\[ \Delta = \text{statutory requirement} \quad \star = \text{Task Groups} \]
## Membership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statutory Membership Requirements of YPP by the Welsh Assembly Government</th>
<th>Membership of Blaenau Gwent’s Young People’s Partnership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local Authority</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief Executive or Strategic Director</td>
<td>• Chief Executive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Three Corporate Managers (Youth Service, Housing, Social Services) | • Corporate Director Governance  
• Corporate Director Education  
• Corporate Director Social Services  
• Representative Corporate Director Environment  
• Assistant Director, Children Services |
| An Elected Member | • Executive Member Helping People into Work  
• Executive Member Health and Wellbeing – Social Care |
| **Other Statutory Sector** |  |
| Chief Executive / General Manager of Local Health Group | • Representative of Local Health Group |
| Divisional Commander of Police | • Representative Gwent Police (PC) |
| Senior Representative of ELWa | • Representative ELWa |
| Senior Representative of Careers Wales | • Representative Careers Wales |
| Local Youth Offending Team Manager | • Youth Offending Team Manager |
| **Voluntary / Independent Sector** |  |
| Director of Local Voluntary Council (LVC) or Senior Nominee | • Two representatives: Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations (GAVO) |
| Representative from Council for Wales Voluntary Youth Services (CWVYS) | • Representative CWVYS |
| Three representatives of those voluntary community based organisations which undertake significant work with young people across or within the LA area | • Representative Community Service Volunteers (CSV)Action Cyfle  
• Representative Gwent Scouting  
• Representative Tredegar Development Trust  
• Representative Ebbw Vale Development Trust  
• Representative Prince’s Trust  
• Representative National Children’s Homes (NCH)  
• Representative NCH Network |
<p>| Local employers | - |
| Local secondary head teachers | • Representative Glyncoed Comprehensive |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local FE and training providers</th>
<th>• Representative Coleg Gwent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HE providers</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local authority corporate managers</td>
<td>• Head of Community Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Senior Officer, Gwent Joint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Passenger Transport Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior local health representative</td>
<td>• Two health representatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• School Nurse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Representative Gwent Healthcare Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Representative Community Gynaecology and Sexual Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of local Probation Service</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior manager of Job Centre Plus</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representative of local Federation of Housing Associations</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other appropriate organisations (s125 Learning and Skills Act)</td>
<td>• CCET Representative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communities 1st</td>
<td>• Two Area Coordinators, and one representative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAVO</td>
<td>• Voluntary Sector Network Representative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug Aid</td>
<td>• Director and one representative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership Support</td>
<td>• Children and Young People’s Framework Partnership Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Youth Entitlement Partnership (YEP) Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Children’s Entitlement Partnership (CEP) Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• YEP Development Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Citizenship Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Monitoring and Evaluation Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Youth Awards Development Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Pupil Support Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Youth Service Representative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Play Development Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Youth forum Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• YEP Administrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Forum</td>
<td>• Two representatives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>