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Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

Quality and standards in education and training in Wales

A re-inspection report on the quality of youth support services

in

Bridgend County Borough Council

November 2011

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:

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- ▲ secondary schools;
- ▲ special schools;
- ▲ pupil referral units;
- ▲ independent schools;
- ▲ further education;
- ▲ adult community-based learning;
- ▲ youth support services;
- ▲ youth and community work training;
- ▲ local authority education services;
- ▲ teacher education and training;
- ▲ work-based learning;
- ▲ careers companies; and
- ▲ offender learning

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Introduction

This re-inspection was undertaken in accordance with the inspection framework for Local Authority Education Services for Children and Young People. Estyn inspected youth support services in Bridgend in March 2010 during the previous inspection cycle (2004-2010) using the Common Inspection Framework 2004-2010.

At that time inspectors evaluated the services' performance in relation to each of the seven key questions as follows:

1	How well do learners achieve?
2	How effective are teaching, training and assessment?
3	How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?
4	How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?
5	How effective are leadership and strategic management?
6	How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?
7	How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?

The five-point scale used to represent youth support services inspection judgements was 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

In 2010, the inspection team awarded grade 4 (some good features, but shortcomings in important areas) to Key Question 6. This grade is below the quality threshold, which resulted in a re-inspection from 15th to 16th November 2011.

Since September 2010, Estyn has been using a new Common Inspection Framework. Therefore, this framework was used to evaluate progress against the recommendations of the March 2010 inspection. Inspectors made two judgements:

- an overall judgement on the current performance of the provider; and
- an overall judgement on the prospects for improvement of the provider.

Inspectors made judgements based on one of the four levels of judgements.

Excellent
Good
Adequate
Unsatisfactory

The arrangements for the re-inspection of youth support services are set out in the relevant sector guidance which is available on the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.uk).

This re-inspection report evaluates the provider's progress in meeting the recommendations from the last inspection.

Estyn's reports follow its guidance for the writing and editing of reports, which is available on the Estyn website (www.Estyn.gov.uk). The table below shows the terms that Estyn uses and a broad idea of their meaning. The table is for guidance only.

Nearly all	With very few exceptions
Most	90% or more
Many	70% or more
A majority	over 60%
Half/around half	close to 50%
A minority	below 40%
Few	below 20%
Very few	Less than 10%

The Learning and Skills Act 2000 requires the providers to prepare a written statement of the action they propose to take to address the recommendations in the inspection report and the timescales for completing the proposed actions.

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Context

The area

Bridgend County Borough Council is a unitary authority in South Wales. In 2010 Bridgend had the tenth highest rate of children living in workless households amongst the Welsh local authorities.

In 2010, average weekly earnings in Bridgend stood at £555. This was the joint second highest amongst the 22 Welsh local authorities. Between 2000 and 2010, earnings in Bridgend moved from below the Welsh average to above.

The conception rate among under 18-year-olds in Bridgend has fluctuated around the Wales average from 2005 to 2007, but increased slightly in 2008. Bridgend's percentage of looked-after children with three or more placements in the year was below the Wales average in 2009-2010. The percentage remained consistent with the previous year, but rose in 2010-2011 to be slightly above the Wales average.

The rate of homelessness acceptances in Bridgend has generally followed the trend for Wales, but remained well above the Wales average between 2001-2002 and 2009-2010, when it had the fourth highest homelessness rate of all local authorities in Wales. In 2010-2011 however the rate dropped sharply to below the Welsh average.

Bridgend has a crime rate 10 per cent lower than the average for Wales. It has fallen steadily to just less than two-thirds of the figure of eight years ago. The estimated number of individuals referred for alcohol treatment for Bridgend was lower in 2009-10 than the Wales average, and had fallen from the previous year.

The percentage of people age three years and over who spoke Welsh in Bridgend in 2009 was 14.5%, and was one of the lowest rates amongst Welsh local authorities.

Partnership arrangements for youth support services

Bridgend's children and young people's partnership (the Partnership) has been in existence since 2002. The structure of the Partnership at that time conformed to the Extending Entitlement and Early Entitlement Guidance. The Partnership operated mainly with staff below Chief Officer level and had no political representation. Following the Children Act 2004, the Bridgend Partnership was re-structured to meet new requirements. This ensured that the Partnership had representation that was more senior at Partnership Board level, a Business Planning Group and three sub groups. Bridgend Association of Voluntary Organisations (BAVO) is the lead agency for the voluntary sector. The Partnership support team is located within the local authority's Children's Directorate.

The local authority was restructured in April 2008 to bring together education, children's social services, the youth offending service and the children and young people's partnership into a single Children's Directorate. The corporate director – children is the lead director for children and young people.

Bridgend is reviewing the partnership structure through the local service board (LSB). This is part of its preparation for the intended integrated single plan.

Summary

Judgements awarded

The inspection team judged the youth support service (YSS) work of the Partnership as follows:

Overall judgement on the current performance of the partnership	Adequate
Overall judgement on the prospects for improvement of the partnership	Good

Overall judgement on the current performance of the Partnership

Overall, the Partnership has made adequate progress against the recommendations of the inspection of youth support services in 2010, because:

- it has a comprehensive map of all support services for young people in Bridgend;
- there is a useful analysis of needs which, with the service profile, gives good baseline indicators for the Partnership to better plan provision;
- improved data collection and use of information help the partnership to plan and monitor improvements; and
- the development of a quality framework helps to set appropriate quality standards for youth support services.

However, there are still areas for improvement, because:

- the target set for the implementation of the YSS strategic plan was not appropriate, taking two years to develop and implement, which is too long;
- communication between local authority officers and the Extending Entitlement network is not always clear enough;
- reports to the local authority and the LSB do not contain enough appropriate information and analysis about the impact of the work of support services for young people aged 11-25; and
- the Partnership does not have an adequate overview of all financial resources available in the Bridgend area for youth support services.

Overall judgement on the prospects for improvement of the Partnership

Prospects for improvement are good because:

- there are good and improving relationships between partners in youth support services;
- there is improving data collection for better analysis and reporting; and
- the implementation of the YSS strategic plan will provide a clearer framework for the Partnership to judge how well strategies and policies are meeting the needs of 11 to 25-year-old young people and their communities in Bridgend.

Recommendations

In order to further improve, the Partnership needs to:

- R1 complete the consultation on the YSS strategic plan, and implement the plan as soon as possible;
- R2 ensure that the roles and responsibilities of the authority and the Extending Entitlement Network are communicated effectively to all parties so that they are clearly understood;
- R3 improve the quality of reporting to the local authority and to the LSB; and
- R4 map all the financial resource currently used and available for 11 to 25-year-old young people in Bridgend and identify future sources of funding.

Outcomes of the re-inspection

Progress against recommendations from the previous inspection

Recommendation 1: develop and implement appropriate strategic and operational plans for youth support services.

The Partnership has made adequate progress against this recommendation. In March 2010 Bridgend's YSS offered good and supportive learning environments for young people. This provision was effective at helping young people to enter into or remain in their chosen areas of education, training or employment. At that time, the Partnership and the local authority did not know enough about the reach and the impact of this provision to know if it was meeting the identified needs of young people well enough.

Because of this the Partnership is developing a strategic plan for YSS, which will help it and the local authority to better plan, monitor and evaluate the success of the activities it offers. The Partnership has worked well with partners to develop this plan, and the draft YSS strategy is currently out for consultation. The Partnership has set a target date for implementation of the YSS strategy of March 2012, and is on track to achieve that target.

However, not all YSS providers have enough ownership of the current draft. They have contributed fully to the draft, but changes made by the local authority to the format and presentation of the document have not been communicated well enough to them. This means that not all contributors to the draft plan understand the changes or why they have been made.

The target date set for the implementation of the strategy is two years from the date of the last inspection. This is too long a period for this development to help the authority and the Partnership to plan and prioritise services for young people effectively enough. Progress has also been constrained by decreasing resources and illness amongst key staff.

The authority has appointed a Partnership manager, who has helped to take this agenda forward well. The development of the YSS strategic plan, together with the preparation of Bridgend's new Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) for 2011-2014, has improved relationships between YSS partners in the Extending Entitlement Network. This network has good cross-sector representation, with the voluntary sector taking a leadership role alongside the statutory services.

The draft YSS strategy builds appropriately on the outcomes of a comprehensive audit of young people's needs, and on the service profile, which identifies the range of support services available. It appropriately identifies priorities for action and priorities for system and structural change. However, success indicators are not specific enough to help the YSS providers, the Partnership and the authority to monitor and evaluate progress effectively enough.

A good range of operational plans underpin the YSS strategy. However, a few of these are still in draft form. Not all YSS providers have a clear enough understanding that these are the plans that will deliver the actions needed to achieve the strategic aims for YSS in Bridgend.

Recommendation 2: build on existing work to develop a comprehensive Partnership wide map of all support services for young people in Bridgend.

The Partnership has made good progress against this recommendation. It has completed a good baseline assessment of service provision for the 2011-2014 Partnership Plan. This has helped to improve its understanding of gaps in provision and where further work should be focused. The service profile gives a useful breakdown of provision, with appropriate categories such as age range and geographical locations of services.

This is used well with the information gathered for recommendation 3 from the previous inspection.

Recommendation 3: a needs analysis and resource map to inform the planning of all youth support services across the Partnership

The Partnership has made adequate progress in meeting this recommendation. It has undertaken a comprehensive audit of needs of children and young people and linked these well to the seven core aims of the Partnership Plan. The audit gives a good range of information, performance outcomes and demographic indicators. However, the Partnership does not have an effective overview of the staff skills and accommodation available, nor the financial resources for youth support services in Bridgend.

The Partnership engaged young people well with the audit of needs. It also engaged well with important sources of information such as the youth offending service and local neighbourhood networks. As a result of this, the audit reflects the priority needs of young people well, including themes such as substance misuse, accessibility of services, social and emotional support, training and employment, and housing. The Partnership recognises the value of these services to help young people with their learning and overall wellbeing.

The Partnership has used the needs audit well to link the outcomes to its established system of identifying levels of need, termed the '4, 5, 6 model', which helps to ensure that the audit fits clearly within the authority's integrated working methodology.

There are good examples of the Partnership identifying resources that can be shared, for example through the joint training group and the youth service.

Recommendation 4: improve the coordination of quality standards across the partnership and establish a more robust system to monitor and evaluate the performance of youth support services across the Partnership

The Partnership has made adequate progress against this recommendation. Through the Extending Entitlement Network, the Partnership has developed a useful draft quality framework that builds well on the quality framework of the

authority's 14-19 network. This has been developed initially for use in providers of YSS in the voluntary sector but the Partnership intends that it will be rolled out to all providers of YSS. Quality assurance is clearly written into the draft YSS strategy. Participating members will be able to achieve the local quality mark for their provision if they meet the standard.

This is a clear framework aimed at helping YSS providers to improve the quality of their management, delivery, monitoring, evaluation and planning for improvement. However, it is too early for the authority to evidence the impact of this.

The Partnership demonstrates a better understanding of the need to use accurate and timely data across multi-agency services in order to analyse and plan services better. It has plans to undertake needs audits and more regular and systematic reviews of young people's services, to make sure all data is up-to-date and accurate.

The Partnership commissioning plan and toolkit is a good example of how the Partnership and its providers can be helped to develop a systematic approach to their work. This development is too recent to have produced any measurable outcomes.

Service level agreements and contracts with providers of youth support services have improved. The implementation of these service contracts has helped to bring together a wide range of useful information on service delivery for the partnership. They also set out clear criteria for monitoring and evaluating the provision, including outcomes-focused targets. Contractors are expected to link their work to at least two of the six local outcomes identified for young people in Bridgend which are: learn and achieve; participate and enjoy; give and receive respect; be healthy; be safe; and be confident and self-reliant.

Appropriate monitoring and evaluation of these activities take place through the sub-group structure of the Partnership. The Partnership appropriately reports progress against activities to the Partnership's Business Planning Group and the Partnership Board. The Partnership reports to the scrutiny committee of the LSB.

However, reports do not reflect well enough the impact of the work of YSS. Elected members of the cabinet or the overview and scrutiny committee for children and young people do not receive enough comprehensive information and analysis about the impact of the work of support services for young people. This means that the local authority and the Partnership do not know how well their strategic priorities for young people aged 11-25 are met, in order to help them to give clear guidance and direction for future work.

Recommendation 5: promote the profile of bilingualism across all providers to ensure that the young people of Bridgend are confident in working within both Welsh and English

The Partnership has made good progress against this recommendation. It has worked well with to further develop the profile of bilingualism in Bridgend. Good work with Menter Bro Ogwr and Urdd Gobaith Cymru is improving opportunities for young people through identifying and developing activities to promote Welsh culture and

bilingualism. A Welsh language awareness training pack is being developed for providers of YSS. This aims to support the new requirement in all service level agreements and contracts that providers have to show how they will promote the Welsh language and culture of Wales within their activities.

The 14-19 Network and Menter Bro Ogwr have also worked well together. Menter Bro Ogwr is the bilingual champion for the network, to help raise the profile of bilingualism across all 14-19 work.

However, these developments are too recent to have produced any measurable outcomes.

Recommendation 6: ensure that the Partnership has appropriate information to help improve service provision for all young people in Bridgend
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The Partnership has made adequate progress against this recommendation. Improvements in the collection of data and in the use of data give the Partnership better information on which to base its evaluation and analysis of support services for young people. Improved service level agreements and contracts have helped to bring together a wider range of useful information on service delivery for the Partnership. The joint training group of the Partnership has a good focus on the needs of the workforce to support effective partnership working. However, these developments are too recent to have produced any measurable outcomes

The Partnership is reviewing services which are at risk from cuts in core funding or from short-term grant funding. This improves its ability to identify how and where YSS are delivered to meet priority needs. However, the Partnership does not yet have an adequate overview of all financial resources available in the Bridgend area for YSS. This means that the Partnership does not know if it is making best use of these resources.

Appendix 1: The evidence base for the inspection

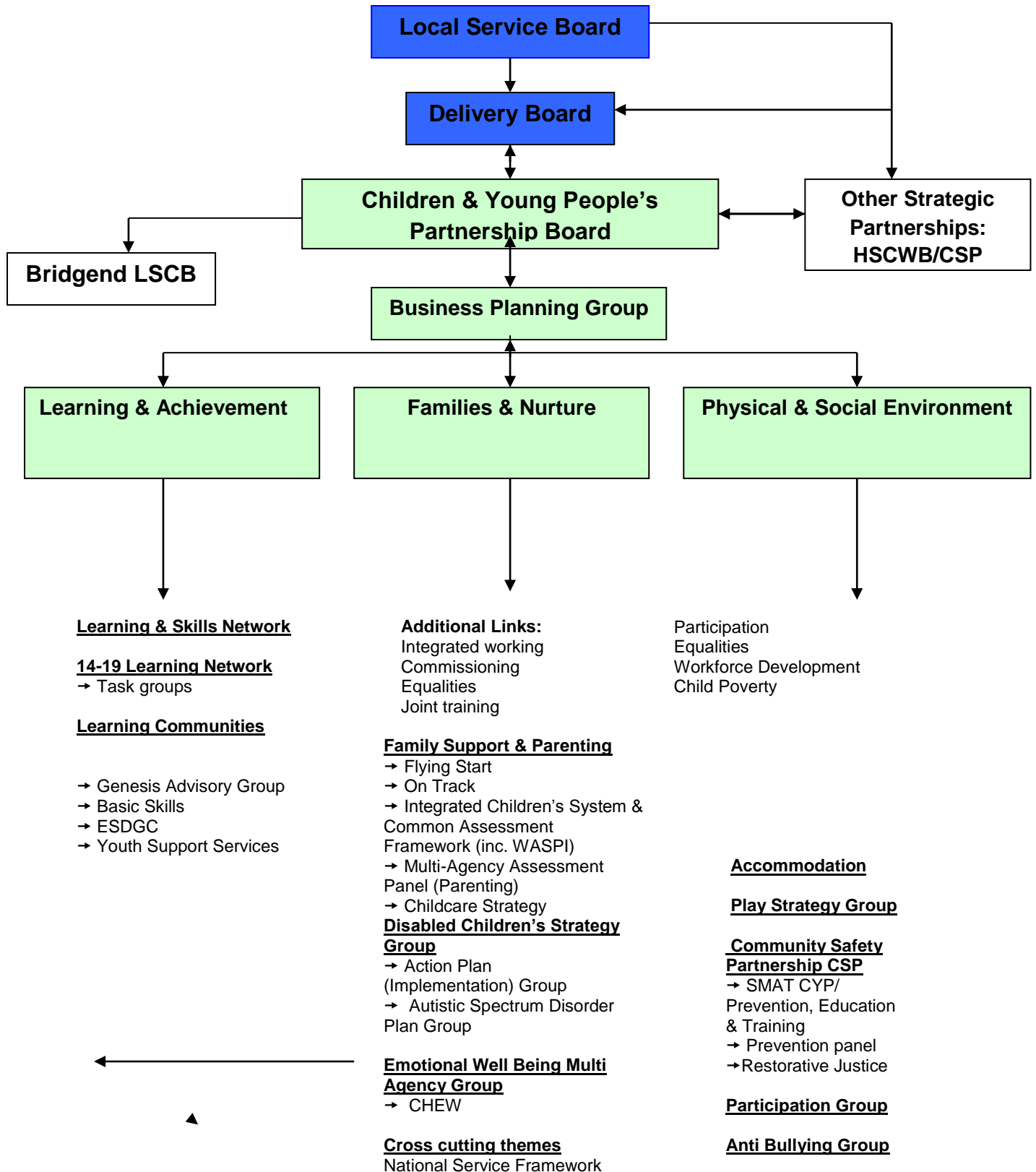
A team of two HMI visited Bridgend for two and a half days in November 2011. Members of the inspection team met senior managers, elected members, representatives from the voluntary sector and other partner organisations and young people. The inspection team scrutinised the self-assessment report and documentation made available by the local authority and its partners.

Appendix 2: The inspection team

Jane Taylor HMI	Estyn	Reporting Inspector
Liam Kealy HMI	Estyn	Team inspector
Angela Davies	Bridgend County Borough Council	Nominee

Appendix 3: Bridgend Children and Young People's Framework Partnership arrangements

Bridgend Children & Young People's Partnership Structure



Appendix 4: Recommendations from the previous inspection (March 2010)

In order to further improve, the partnership needs to:

- R1 develop and implement appropriate strategic and operational plans for youth support services;
- R2 build on existing work to develop a comprehensive Partnership wide map of all support services for young people in Bridgend;
- R3 a needs analysis and resource map to inform the planning of all youth support services across the Partnership;
- R4 improve the coordination of quality standards across the partnership and establish a more robust system to monitor and evaluate the performance of youth support services across the Partnership.;
- R5 promote the profile of bilingualism across all providers to ensure that the young people of Bridgend are confident in working within both Welsh and English, and
- R6 ensure that the Partnership has appropriate information to help improve service provision for all young people in Bridgend.