



An Roinn Oideachais  
Department of Education

# Evaluation of Youthreach Provision

## Report

### REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Youthreach Kiltimagh
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Further Education Centre Colaiste Raifteiri Kiltimagh Co Mayo F12CK33
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	40577J
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	26/09/2024

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# What is an evaluation of Youthreach provision?

Evaluations of Youthreach provision are conducted in centres for education and community training centres. The evaluations examine the extent to which the centre is identifying and meeting the needs of the young people who attend it and the quality of the governance, leadership and management of the centre. They provide advice and support to teaching staffs, resource persons, centre coordinators and centre management

## How to read this report

During these inspection, the inspectors evaluated provision under the following headings or areas of enquiry:

1. Identifying and meeting the needs of the young people
2. The governance, leadership and management of the centre

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the centre's provision in each area.

The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

## Actions of the centre to safeguard young people

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the centre's child protection and procedures were conducted:

1. The name of the DLP and the child safeguarding statement are prominently displayed near the main door of the centre / in the reception area
2. The centre's child safeguarding statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.
3. All learning practitioners visited have reported that they have read the centre's child safeguarding statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as a mandated person
4. The centre's child safeguarding statement meets the requirements of Children First 2015.
5. The minutes of the last three board of management meetings contain a child protection oversight report
6. The board of management has ensured that arrangements are in place to provide information to all centre personnel on child protection procedures in line with Children First 2015
7. Centre planning documentation indicates that the school is making full provision for the relevant aspects of the curriculum (SPHE, RSE)
8. Child protection records are maintained in a secure location

The centre met the requirements in relation to checks 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7 and 8 of the child protection checks. It did not meet the requirements of check 5 of the child protection checks. However, the centre subsequently furnished evidence of compliance with this requirement.



*Youthreach Centres are co-funded by the Government of Ireland, the European Social Fund and the Youth Employment Initiative as part of the ESF Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020*

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# Evaluation of Youthreach provision

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	19/09/2024 - 26/09/2024
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation and engagement in learning settings</li><li>• Interaction with young people and review of their work</li><li>• Meetings with:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• centre management</li><li>• staff</li><li>• young people</li><li>• parents</li></ul></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of documents and assessment data:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Centre improvement plans</li><li>• Plans for training and skill development, teaching and learning</li><li>• Individual support plans</li><li>• Relevant policies and procedures</li></ul></li><li>• Feedback to centre coordinator, ETB management and practitioners</li></ul>

## Centre context

Youthreach Kiltimagh has capacity for thirty learners and operates under Mayo, Sligo, Leitrim Education and Training Board (MSLETB). At the time of the evaluation enrolment stood at twenty-six. The centre provided Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) courses at level three. The coordinator and resource person have been in their current role for the past two years.

## Summary of main findings and recommendations:

### Findings

- Overall, the quality of the centre's ability to identify and meet the needs of young people was very good.
- The learning environment was inclusive and caring and learners were supported by dedicated staff.
- In some lessons, where the learner experience was most effective, concrete or digital resources were used to activate learners' interest in topics and well-planned collaborative learning tasks were integrated, leading to purposeful learner engagement and successful outcomes.
- Leadership and management in the centre was of a very high standard overall; practitioners and learners expressed high levels of satisfaction with how the centre was run.
- The centre demonstrated a high capacity to continually improve and develop; centre staff and management embraced opportunities for change and they demonstrated willingness for further centre development.
- The coordinator and centre management have been highly effective in raising the profile of Youthreach Kiltimagh and in building strong relationships with the local community.

### Recommendations

- As data from initial and ongoing assessment of learners was underutilised, centre staff should use assessment data to establish a baseline, identify priority learning needs, and inform training, teaching and learning. Practitioner upskilling in this area is required.
- While counselling was available one day per week for learners, the ETB should investigate ways of increasing its counselling resource in the centre.

- In addition to the work experience currently on offer, the summer programme should be expanded to provide structured opportunities for learners to engage in additional experiences.
- Practitioners should further collaborate in order to share the highly effective practice found in a few lessons, particularly in the areas of meeting a wide range of needs during lessons, providing feedback to learners and enhancing the involvement of the young people in their learning.
- Centre management, with the support of the ETB, should ensure that a programme of professional development is made available to practitioners to equip them to address the improvements needed in training, teaching and learning.

## Detailed findings and recommendations

### 1. Identifying and meeting the needs of young people

Overall, the quality of the centre's ability to identify and meet the needs of young people was very good.

#### ***Supporting the transition into the centre***

Enrolment practices were very good. The centre accommodated ongoing enrolment throughout the year. If a learner was enrolled late in the academic year they participated in a variety of QQI courses. This allowed the learners to receive some qualifications as well as prepare them for the LCA programme the following year. The learners' suitability for enrolment was assessed through an interview and an induction process supported by their parents and relevant educational professionals.

A mentoring system was in place to support learners. Mentors met regularly with learners to discuss any challenges that they faced since their last meeting and to support their social and emotional needs. There was a focus in these meetings on skills such as communication, attitudes to learning, ability to work with others, confidence and self-presentation. The learners also had an opportunity to develop their own goals, which is good practice. Learners reported that they valued the guidance and support they received from their mentors. It is suggested that a learner handbook be used to support the mentoring programme. This handbook could include information on learners' goals, progress, achievements and career paths and, if consistently used, may support engagement in learning.

During the learners' first few weeks in the centre, their learning needs were assessed using standardised testing. The outcomes of these assessments were used to identify learners in need of examination supports, such as readers and scribes, but optimal use was not being made of this information. Currently the centre's capacity to meet the needs of learners with identified needs is limited and this impacted the quality of supports that could be provided to learners. The centre, in conjunction with MSLETB, should seek to build capacity of the staff. This could be achieved by sharing staff working in another centre in the scheme, or by upskilling a current staff member. In developing the centres capacity, particular attention should be afforded to establishing processes to establish a baseline of learner attainment, particularly in literacy and numeracy; inform the identification of priority learning areas and influence training and teaching approaches that support learners to reach their potential.

Most learners participate in work experience during the summer programme due to the limited availability of staff to facilitate a wider variety of activities. A formal summer programme should be developed, with the support of the ETB, to ensure full engagement of all learners and provide additional opportunities for certification. For example, Driving Theory and a Safety and Awareness training programmes could be provided.

#### ***Promoting learner wellbeing***

Supporting and promoting the young person's wellbeing was a priority for the centre. The centre provided an inclusive and caring learning environment for their learners, supported by dedicated staff.

One of the most visible and impactful aspects of the physical learning environment was the positive mental health murals throughout the centre. This learner-led art project provided learners with a creative outlet that fostered ownership and pride in their learning space. The initiative, which had the aim of promoting mental health awareness, was awarded the *FET Learner Mental Health and Wellbeing Accreditation* from ETBI and Jigsaw in 2023.

Externally, the learning environment has been enhanced with the establishment of an outdoor classroom and wellbeing meditation garden. With the support of MSLETB and the help of the local community such as the Tidy Towns committee, an overgrown area at the back of the centre was redeveloped to create an outdoor space which offers learners a place to relax, reflect and engage in activities such as gardening, outdoor music classes and mindfulness sessions.

It was positive that counselling was available one day per week for learners. However this is not sufficient to meet the needs of the learners. The ETB should investigate ways of increasing its counselling resource in the centre.

The learners displayed pride in the centre and appreciated what the centre was doing to promote their wellbeing. The learning environment throughout the centre was effectively used to share and celebrate the young peoples' successes and achievements.

### ***Meeting learner needs through effective learner experiences***

The quality of learning was very good overall, however some practice required improvement.

In some settings where learning was effective, learners were actively involved in their learning rather than passively receiving information. They were engaged in activities to solve problems, apply knowledge in new contexts and connect learning to real-world situations. In addition, they were provided with opportunities to regularly reflect on what they learned and how they learned it and to identify their strengths and areas where they needed to improve.

A very good focus on the development of learners' subject-specific literacy was evident in a small number of lessons. In these lessons, relevant vocabulary was explicitly taught. This good practice should be used more widely to reinforce subject literacy. Building capacity in special educational needs will further support this work.

A few lessons were tailored to the interests, strengths and needs of the young people, fostering purposeful work and deeper learning engagement. However, while some practitioners provided different activities to meet the varying needs of learners in their group, this was not common and opportunities to challenge some learners were missed, hindering the promotion of deeper learning. There was a need for practitioners to plan for activities and learning opportunities that ensure all learners are appropriately challenged by the learning task. Professional development in training and teaching skills in this area would be of benefit to practitioners.

Learners reported that they appreciated the variety of modules offered at QQI and LCA during the focus group meeting.

### ***Meeting learner needs through effective training and teaching***

Instances of excellent practice were observed in a few lessons, and elements of teaching observed in other lessons required improvement.

Questioning was used effectively in most lessons to assess learners' recall and progress. In most lessons, questions encouraged the use of higher-order thinking skills and deeper engagement with the content of the lesson. In some instances, practitioners probed the initial response and encouraged learners to extend and develop their responses. Best practice was noted when learners were expected to justify their responses, sufficient wait time was given, and questions were directed to individuals rather than the whole class. Practitioners should share their skills and expertise in this area.

A sample of subject plans, which practitioners used to guide their lessons, was selected for review. These plans provided some detail about the intended learning outcomes and the course content to be covered. Further planning for how the learning outcomes will be achieved,

approaches that would best support learning and how this learning will be assessed should be undertaken.

Practitioners used a digital learning platform to support training, teaching and learning and very good practice was observed in a few lessons where additional resources were provided to support learning. It is suggested that the centre review and formalise their use of digital technologies through the development of a digital learning plan.

## **2. The governance, leadership and management of the centre**

The overall quality of governance, leadership and management of the centre was very good.

### ***Highly committed leadership and staff***

Youthreach Kiltimagh was staffed by a team of hard-working, dedicated and committed staff, some of whom have worked in Youthreach provision for several years. The staff worked well together to make sure that the centre did its best for the learners. Staff meetings were held regularly to provide information and updates on the evolving needs of learners. To improve learning experiences, training teaching and learning should be discussed at all staff meetings and opportunities should be provided for staff to share practice.

Day-to-day management of the centre was very effective and the senior management team, consisting of the coordinator and resource person, worked very well together. Each were aware of their roles and responsibilities and often delivered lessons when practitioners were absent or were engaged with other centre activities.

The value of learner voice and participation was recognised by the establishment of a learner council. The council had met a number of times and learners had made a number of valuable suggestions.

### ***Centre organisation and leadership***

Leadership and management in the centre was of a very high standard overall; staff, parents and learners, through interviews and surveys, expressed high levels of satisfaction with how the centre was run.

The coordinator and resource person have created a culture where all learners and staff feel valued, respected, and included. They promoted diversity and encouraged a climate where everyone's voice is heard and appreciated. They celebrated both small and large successes and fostered a positive atmosphere of encouragement.

The centre was very well supported by MSLETB and the board of management. The board exercised oversight of the five Youthreach centres under the remit of MSLETB. The Adult Education Officer (AEO) demonstrated a high level of oversight and an understanding of the work, challenges and achievements of the centre in Kiltimagh and placed high importance on the service it provided. The AEO also acknowledged the key role senior management have had over the past number of years in continuously striving for improvement for the young people it serves.

The centre co-ordinator and staff were reflective and open to new ideas and demonstrated a clear willingness to work towards improvement. Review processes such as the centre evaluation improvement planning process, were well-developed. The centre's improvement plan with identified actions was regularly monitored and reviewed. Overall, the centre demonstrated a high capacity to continually improve and develop.

### ***Attendance and retention***

The quality of support for learner attendance and retention was very good overall.

In general, attendance in the centre was good. The centre had an attendance policy and a number of measures for tracking and encouraging attendance were in place such as the

provision of a bus and food at breakfast and breaktimes. The ETB are planning the introduction of a digital attendance monitoring system that will reduce the administration load and provide more effective communication of attendance data between the centre and the ETB.

In the surveys and learner focus group meeting, learners reported that they felt safe and cared for in the centre and that the mentoring system provided a positive space where they could speak with a staff member if they had any issues. The learners felt this supported attendance.

Retention of learners within the centre was very good. Most learners complete a level three QQI qualification and LCA. The centre accepted learners throughout the year and this flexible approach is commended.

### ***Creating an improved vision for Youthreach Kiltimagh in the community***

The coordinator and resource person have been highly effective in raising the profile of Youthreach Kiltimagh and in building strong relationships with the local community since they started in their roles two years ago. The coordinator has led the very effective use of social media to share information and to celebrate the successes of the learners.

The co-ordinator promoted an open-door policy within the centre. Parents, through their questionnaire responses and in the meeting with inspectors, were very appreciative of the positive lines of communication that were established between the centre co-ordinator and parents. Parent-practitioner meetings occur annually and learners are also included in these meetings.

A clear vision for the future of the centre, that aligns with the needs of learners and the community, has been established. The coordinator communicated this vision consistently, ensuring all staff and learners understood and are motivated by the same vision.

The co-ordinator, staff and learners had a sense of pride in the centre which was maintained to a very high standard. The learners and parents that were met during this evaluation felt that Youthreach Kiltimagh was recognised as a place where young people can thrive, acquire life skills, and gain the qualifications necessary for future success.

The centre have worked effectively to strengthen their ties with the local community through various projects that involve businesses, organisations, and residents. The learners have taken part in community-based initiatives, art projects, and events, enhancing the visibility of Youthreach and demonstrating its value to the wider community. This engagement has led to opportunities for internships, partnerships and ongoing collaboration. These partnerships benefit both learners and the broader community.



# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

## **Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report**

Youthreach Kiltimagh welcomes the Inspection Report and the recognition of the many positive aspects of the Centre and its provision. Youthreach Kiltimagh welcomes the insightful recommendations as a positive contribution to the development of the Centre and will implement where possible.

## **Part B Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.**

This was a wonderful opportunity for all involved. The process supports the effective running of Youthreach as well as upholding its ethos.

We welcome the recommendations and will ensure, where possible that the recommendations will be adhered too. We have already put in place some of the recommendations to ensure the policies are accurate.

## The Inspectorate's Quality Continuum

Inspectors describe the quality of provision in the centre using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown below. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the centre's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Examples of descriptive terms
<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Provision that is excellent</b> is exemplary in meeting the needs of learners. This provision provides an example for other schools and settings of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Excellent; exemplary; outstanding; exceptionally high standard; with very significant strengths
<b>Very good</b>	<b>Provision that is very good</b> is very effective in meeting the needs of learners and is of a very high standard. There is potential to build on existing strengths to achieve an excellent standard.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful
<b>Good</b>	<b>Provision that is good</b> is effective in meeting the needs of learners. There is need to build on existing strengths in order to address the aspects to be developed and achieve a very good standard.	Good; of good quality; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; strengths outweigh the shortcomings; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist
<b>Requires improvement to achieve a good standard</b>	<b>Provision that requires improvement to achieve a good standard</b> is not sufficiently effective in meeting the needs of learners. There is need to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is good or better.	Fair; less than effective; less than sufficient; evident weaknesses that are impacting on learning; experiencing difficulty; shortcomings outweigh strengths; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
<b>Requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard</b>	<b>Provision that requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard</b> is not meeting the needs of learners. There is immediate need for significant action to address the areas of concern.	Weak; poor; ineffective; insufficient; unacceptable; experiencing significant difficulties; serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated; requiring significant change, development and improvement to be effective