

# **Progress Update of Youth Participation**

## **Children's Health, Social Care and Education**

### **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Date: 24<sup>th</sup> January 2018**

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Author:	Project Manager – Swindon 10 to 18 Project (STEP)
Wards:	All
Locality Affected:	All
Parishes Affected:	All

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#### **1. Purpose and Reasons**

- 1.1 This report provides the Children's Health, Social Care and Education Committee with an update of performance and key issues relating to youth participation; Swindon's Members of Youth Parliament (MYPs), Swindon Youth Council, Young Inspectors and Thought Tank (SEND Participation Group).
- 1.2 A key purpose of Children's Health, Social Care and Education Overview & Scrutiny Committee is to hold Commissioners of Children's Health and Social Care Services to account.
- 1.3 This work links to the following One Swindon Priorities:
  - Everyone is enjoying sports, leisure and cultural opportunities
    - Improve health and wellbeing for all by widening participation in sports, leisure and cultural activities
  - Living independently, protected from harm, leading healthy lives and making a positive contribution
    - Increased community involvement so that everyone is able to make a positive contribution

#### **2. Recommendations**

##### The Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 Continue to support the work of the Members of Youth Parliament, Swindon Youth Council, Thought Tank and the wider youth participation agenda across Swindon.
- 2.2 Make available opportunities for children & young people to contribute to the work streams of Health, Adults & Children Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 2.3 Agree when a further report on progress should be brought back to the Committee.

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### **3. Detail**

#### Youth Participation Proposal for 2018 / 2019

#### **Seeking representation from the widest range of Children & Young People**

- 3.1 As an organisation, we take all reasonable steps to ensure our participation work is as inclusive as possible and that we are capturing the voice of 'all' children & young people within Swindon. Our ethos is based on creating positive relationships between staff, children and young people to promote a safe, respectful environment. However, we understand there are areas of the youth population who are 'under represented', who also should have the opportunity to have a voice in the matters that affect them.
- 3.2 In order to reach out to these groups, we will create a dedicated Participation Worker role to – in the first instance - develop work in schools with children and young people from diverse groups across the school population. We will ensure that the projects or activities are engaging, relevant and accessible to all children and young people regardless of race, class, gender, ability, impairment, sexuality, or religious beliefs. By treating each child as an individual and avoiding assumptions or stereotypes; and understanding that each child or young person may require support personalised to their needs, we can promote positive and honest participation and gauge the right model of 'connecting'.
- 3.3 Following this initial engagement process through schools, we would undertake a mapping exercise and identify multi-agency and partnership working opportunities to develop outreach work. Swindon already has many statutory and voluntary groups running that can provide access to a wider range of young people – not to necessarily recruit to the Youth Council, but to ensure the mechanisms are in place to capture the views of a diverse range of young people to make sure their views are fed into all our participation work, such as:
- Out of the Can – LGBT
  - TaMHS & CAMHS – Mental health & Emotional Wellbeing
  - Young Carers Forum
  - Children in Care Council – Children looked after
  - Youth Offending Team – Youth Justice
  - Harbour Project – Refugees and Asylum Seekers
- 3.4 We already have good working relationships across health, education & social care, and will ensure that we work closely with them to identify and recruit young

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people, along with a proven track record of engaging with SEND young people through our Thought Tank Project and the relationships we have built with special schools and SRPs (Special Resource Provisions within mainstream schools).

- 3.5 With regards to accessibility and location of activities / sessions, we will ensure that all venues used by the organisation are appropriate to the needs of the young people; and wherever possible ensure all our services and communications are accessible to people whose first language is not English; encourage understanding and knowledge of cultures other than our own through training and involvement within community groups. We recognise that communication needs to be flexible and adaptable to accommodate different groups.

### **Ensuring the voice of Children & Young People is heard**

- 3.6 Historically we have had a mixed response from traditional ways of advertising and communication (hard copy posters, leaflets and newsletters); in some instances (MYP Elections) they have worked well, but in other cases (SEND Reforms Information) they have not been as successful.
- 3.7 In the current climate, communication 'trends' are rapidly changing, and the key for us is to regularly consult with young people as to the best way to get information out to them. The mechanisms already exist – Text, Facebook, Twitter, SnapChat, Vine, and Tumblr and local website 'The Dock'. However, we need to be regularly asking young people what the preferred method is.
- 3.8 Many of these online ways of communication fit well and meet the instant gratification culture, and serve an adequate purpose for basic information. However, when we need to deliver a larger volume of information – surveys and invitation to take part in projects etc. – children and young people still respond well to the face to face approach. A visit to a school council or youth project usually creates greater interest; if the young people have the opportunity to ask questions and clarify details, they are more likely to engage.
- 3.9 A consistent approach to delivering information is key; young people respond better to adults they are familiar with, so regular visits and updates are necessary - it's better to provide regular, short updates over the year rather than one long update 'out of the blue'. Therefore the role of a Participation Worker, who has built relationships with both partner organisations and the young people, is key.
- 3.10 The real issue with engaging young people has been that they are not always interested in information from adults – especially if they feel it is created and led by them, so it is about listening to their needs and making information interesting

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and relevant, and where possible – and practical – all information needs to be designed by, and either approved by, or delivered by them.

- 3.11 We will aim to create a working group of young people who will be responsible for creating regular update reports (quarterly), promotional material, and social media posts on the progress of participation work and its priority campaigns.
- 3.12 We will support young people with any relevant training and understanding of online safeguarding concerns.

### **Buildings links with schools, colleges and youth voluntary groups**

- 3.13 Currently 12 schools are represented on the Youth Council. We will continue to publicise our participation work to as wide an audience as possible; through use of posters, regular presentations from our Participation Worker, leaflets, newsletters, our web-site and Facebook, other social media, as well as other locally established information web sites: The Dock, Schools Online, and Mycaremysupport. We will ensure that agencies working with young people are aware of the flexible options available in engaging with participation.
- 3.14 We will ensure that publicity materials are circulated to libraries, leisure facilities, youth organisations, voluntary groups and schools and use free and local press wherever possible to inform agencies about the participation opportunities and 'how to get involved'
- 3.15 We will monitor involvement of young people and take all steps to ensure that all secondary schools, special schools, EOTAS, colleges and voluntary groups are represented, or are aware of how to be involved and feed into the process. If gaps are identified in representation, then we will focus communication on the appropriate organisation(s) to encourage engagement.
- 3.16 We will ensure that we establish a named organisational link adult that will be responsible for all updates on participation activities / events, and that campaigns are circulated to the whole school community.
- 3.17 We will ensure that secondary schools are included in all electronic communications about participation events / activities and campaigns and that any posters, leaflets and newsletters produced are circulated to the adult links.

### **Celebrating and Measuring Outcomes**

- 3.18 Due to the diverse range, and length of involvement and engagement of children and young people involved in our participation activities, there is no 'one size fits all' method of measuring young people's success, so we aim to adopt a number of approaches:

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- 3.19 For those young people who have regular involvement in participation work (e.g. Members of Youth Parliament and Youth Council Members), we will be using the Youth Voice Wheel Log book which has been specifically designed to enable young people to track their personal and social development over their time within a Youth Voice programme. Alongside this, we have secured additional funding to support an accredited programme that is easily accessible to all involved in the participation agenda.
- 3.20 For those young people involved on an 'ad hoc' basis, we will undertake individual feedback to understand not only how they feel about their contribution and any outcomes, but also on how we as an organisation have done with regards to delivery. Evaluation forms will be used or adapted from Evaluating Participation Work: The Toolkit.
- 3.21 Alongside the personal development aspect, the key indicator of successful youth participation is that young people can see, or understand that their contribution has made a difference (however large or small). Not only does this encourage young people to remain engaged and promote it with their peers, but it also evidences that participation leads to change within the wider community.
- 3.22 To celebrate achievements, we would hope to hold an annual 'event' similar to the Children in Care awards, where young peoples' contributions would be recognised, and rewarded.

### **Voices are heard by local 'decision makers'**

- 3.23 Project Manager sits on a several strategic groups within the local authority; ensuring that not only do we have a comprehensive understanding of local need that is reflected in the delivery of our service, but current work and priority campaigns are communicated to decision makers. Groups currently involved in, include:
- Children's Health, Social Care and Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Incl. Young Person representation)
  - SEND – Workstream 2: participation and Engagement group
  - SEND – Strategic Board
  - Transition Planning Meetings
  - Great Western Hospital - CQUIN Transitions and Engagement group

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- 3.24 Partnership-working and discussions are currently taking place with Director of Children's Services, Senior Public Health Manager, Head of Transitions – Adult Social Care and LSCB Strategic Manager.
  - 3.25 We will aim to create a working group of young people who will be responsible for creating regular update reports (quarterly), promotional material, and social media posts on the progress of participation work and its priority campaigns which will be disseminated to decision makers.
  - 3.26 Updates are provided when requested for inclusion in Lead Members Bulletin, and we are planning on including our quarterly update on Schools Online.
  - 3.27 Annual meetings (which we hope to increase in frequency) take place with local MPs to make them aware of current campaigns, and possible areas for joint working.
  - 3.28 Local priorities and the annual 'Make Your Mark' ballot results are fed into the regional and national United Kingdom Youth Parliament priorities.

#### **4. Alternative Options**

- 4.1 None

#### **5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management**

##### Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 There are no financial or procurement implications arising from this report.

##### Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.2 There are no direct legal or human rights implications arising from this report.

##### All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 5.3 There are no implications arising from this report.

##### Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.4 A diversity risk assessment is not required as this is an ongoing service.

##### Risk Management

- 5.5 A risk assessment has not been completed as this report is not recommending a specific amendment to a policy or strategy.

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#### **6. Consultees**

- 6.1 The Board Director, Resources (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

#### **7. Background Papers**

- 7.1 None

#### **8. Appendices**

- 8.1 None.