

Where should your services be and what should they look like? **A young person's consultation report by Jennie Noble , January 2015.**

Background

It is crucial that the Council operates services that meet the needs of Children and Young people and that every effort is made to hear and understand these needs so that they can be reflected in the services on offer. This consultation took place at a time of transformation for Young People's information, Advice, Guidance and Support Services in November and December 2014 and seeks to present key themes and recommendations made by potential and current service users. The consultation is designed to engage with as many youth voices across the city offering a range of opportunities to inform and shape the way, City of York Council delivers young people's services.

Summary

The following report will describe the methodology for engagement, reflect on building principles, present most popular models for service delivery and make recommendations for further work. This piece of work engaged with 81 young people within the age range of 13-25. The consultation itself was designed with the ideas and guidance of the Young Inspectors and The Youth Council. Both groups are voice and influence vehicles for York young people. Youth Councillors and Young Inspectors gave views on how the event, group work, online consultation and paperwork should look and took part in the consultation themselves.

Methodology

- A large event was used to reach out to as many service users as possible and was open to Year 11's and Castlegate users.
- Use of smaller and more targeted group work was used to speak to those who would not go to a big event or identified with a different young person's group.
- For those who wouldn't attend a smaller group session 1-2-1 consultation slots were made available.
- The young people who didn't have time or would not engage face to face were encouraged to make use of an online survey.

Over the period of 2 weeks in November and December 2014, 9 face to face sessions were delivered, engaging the following groups:

- Youth Offending team
- Youth Council
- Young Inspectors
- York Learning and other West Office Users
- Castlegate users
- Castlegate counselling clients
- Danesgate students
- Year 11's and some 6th form students
- Show me that I matter (LAC)

Services blueprint- Most young people agreed that the following things are very important.

Services are:

- Easy to find and easy to get to
- You feel safe getting there
- Its free to use
- That you know who you need to speak to before you get there
- That you are greeted positively when you come in- You feel welcome
- Open outside work/school hours
- That staff are friendly and helpful
- That staff talk to you in a way you understand
- Confidentiality- That users know what happens to the information they give
- Easy for people with disability or learning needs to use
- That staff are trained to work with young people
- Being able to build up a positive working relationship with a member of staff- reducing times you have to tell your story
- There is a wide choice of services under one roof
- There is information to take away with you

Most popular services used by respondents

- Help to get a job/ apprenticeship
- Career guidance
- Joined a group/youth club
- Just wanted to talk to somebody
- Housing/kicked out/eviction
- Claim benefits/ crisis loan
- Meet up with a support worker
- Sexual health/condoms/STI
- Counselling
- Rights/ legal advice

Most popular ways to access services

- City centre building
- Online
- Community hubs/schools and colleges

Key themes from group work

- Young people like to be able to see the same person
- Want to feel safe that they are not being overheard
- Don't want to be identified as using a particular service
- Worry about running into people they know- York is a small city so very hard not to be seen
- It really helps if you can relate to people around you and identify the service as a place for you
- Access to mental health support before problems get out of control
- Asking users and potential users is essential when designing services
- Young people want to feel respected, treated as an equal and not judged
- Support to beat addictions needs to be easier to access with less stigma
- Safe places and safe people are important for a successful transition
- The first experience of a building or service is the most important

Castlegate users felt:

- Castlegate had really helped them to overcome difficult obstacles in their lives
- That the people who greeted you was more important than the building
- That security at West Offices is needed to protect customers and staff
- Learning difficulties and disability are barriers and needed further thought and work
- That positive working relationships have been built up with staff and concern over what is going to happen next

Counselling clients felt:

- Being able to use the same room for counselling sessions was important
- More consultation needed to be done if decision is made to run counselling from West Office
- In an ideal world counselling would continue to be run from Castlegate, however the group felt that a compromise may be able to be found with further work
- More discussion needed about navigation of the building- Clients often arrive/leave session upset/distressed. It would be difficult to walk through the busy open plan customer centre
- Phones could be made available so clients could privately call counsellors to collect them
- West office works well for business purposes but for people in crisis its 'too business'

Young Inspectors and Show me that I matter felt:

- You should know who your support worker is and be able to contact them by walking into West Office
- Feeling judged by staff was of particular concern to both groups

YOT felt:

- Security are sometimes too quick to intervene when young people are shouting and distressed
- Concerns about feeling overheard and being judged

Key themes/ observations about using West Office generated through group work:

- Lack of availability of confidential spaces
- 121 spaces around the customer service area not seen as confidential
- Not seen as an easy place to come when in crisis
- Environment has a business feel to it
- Security viewed by some as unnecessary, although others felt it was important to have a presence to protect customers
- Not enough publicity of services running from West Office- Just know its a council building
- Some young people found it intimidating to be asked why they are there by security
- Issues navigating the building- Where do you go?
- Some young people felt building ok if you have an appointment but not clear how you would navigate service if you just wanted to talk to somebody
- An assumption is made on reading and writing ability. Asked to fill in forms when assessing services. How does the building break down barriers for disabled users? Blind, deaf, decreased mobility users? Different learning needs etc

Recommendations to improve feel for younger more vulnerable young people

- Background music
- Better use of the space between the front doors- Greeters to welcome and engage users
- Advertise services on bus's and taxis
- Increase availability of access to online services- Greater privacy when using computers/ making phone calls (screen guards)
- Informal areas or sections- More use of colour and comfy seating- not so open plan
- Less security presence on ground floor/ entrance
- Website- Could be improved so easier to use
- More thought to a separate entrance- concerns on how this would work though
- The tours helped to breakdown misconceptions about the building and some young people were interested in leading the tours themselves.

Evaluation and recommendations

Overall respondents liked being asked for their thoughts and opinions and enjoyed the relaxed discussion driven atmosphere. The opportunity to talk to front line staff and have the opportunity to discuss issues with their peers was particularly useful to most young people

31 respondents said that they would be happy to be involved in similar work, this shows there are plenty of York Young people who are ready and willing to get involved in the important work of designing services. Further engagement is needed and there are other methods of investigation that could be used to inform further transformation.

It is important that some time is spent exploring the ideas and recommendations that have been brought to light by this piece of work. The implementation of these recommendations will demonstrate to young people that not only are their voices heard and valued but they are powerful enough to change decisions and shape the services they need. The services blueprint, methodology for engagement and information gathered should be made available across the different transformation strands e.g. Community hubs, Childrens centres etc

Some resource should be put into producing a report with the Young Inspectors that includes feedback from all young people involved, so the consultation findings can be shared with participants and other young people across the city.