
Young People's Working Group

13th July 2006

Report of the Director of Learning, Culture and Children's Services.

REVIEWING THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S CHAMPION SELECTION PROCESS

Summary

1. This paper looks at the lessons learned from the selection process for the Children and Young People's Champion this year and sets out actions for consideration in designing and undertaking future selection.

Background

2. In April/ May 2006 City of York involved 1600 children and young people in selecting the City's first Children and Young People's Champion. This selection process was undertaken via primary and Secondary schools councils. The opportunity to participate was also extended to all secondary schools in the City via a DVD and small resource pack. 4 secondary schools took this up. The selection process was run on a very short timescale, because of the opportunity presented by the School council Conferences.
3. This first selection process can be viewed as a pilot. There are a number of areas where we can learn from and develop the process in future years:
 - a. There were no clearly set out or agreed election rules
Action: Draw up and agree election rule before the process begins.
 - b. Due to short notice candidates were not always available for hustings
Action: Draw up and publish an election timetable at the beginning of the process so that any potential candidates are aware of dates in advance.
 - c. Officers performed mixed roles, acting as returning officer as well as election agents
Action: Returning Officer role to be fulfilled by representative from Democratic Services.
 - d. Whilst all primary and secondary schools within the LEA were offered the opportunity to participate in the process, not all accepted and not all offered the opportunity to vote to all students, as a consequence of

which not all children and young people had the same opportunity to participate.

Action: Be clear about the selection process, whether it is a full election open to all or a selection by a sample of the age group.

Options

4. There are a number of options for undertaking the selection process in following years which are outlined below:

Option 1: Full election process run in all schools

5. Full election process- involving all primary and secondary schools within the City. This would cost around £4k (£3k for transport of polling booths/ ballot boxes. £210 for production of 22000 numbered ballot cards , £500 To produce materials to support the election process that would be distributed to schools). Young people themselves would be involved in organising the elections within the schools with support from teachers, this includes counting the ballot papers.

Analysis

6. This option is very expensive and would use most of the remaining Voice and Influence budget. It would also require additional Officer time in terms of getting schools on board and co-ordinating the process, which is not currently available. If schools were not willing to participate, the children/ young people from that school would not be able to participate. It would extend the number of children and young people who are able to participate and promote the work of the Champion. The children and young people would have limited opportunities to have face to face contact with the candidates as organising visits to the 67 schools across the City would be problematic.

Option 2: Election at the primary/ secondary school council conferences

7. This would be similar to the process run this year with voting being open to the children and young people who attend the school council conferences for primary and secondary schools. This would include a hustings which both candidates would attend and the children and young people would vote based on this.

Analysis

8. This limits the number of children and young people who participate in the selection process. Young people who attend a school without a school council or schools that are unable to attend on the day would not be able to participate. However it creates an easily manageable process that is transparent and deliverable within existing budget and officer time.

Option 3: Hustings at the school council conferences followed by simpler voting process in schools.

9. Both candidates would attend a hustings event at the primary and secondary school council conferences. Information from this would form the supporting pack that are sent to schools, including a short DVD of the key point from the

hustings at the conferences. Voting would then take place in schools. The voting process would be overseen by the schools on photocopy-able voting cards, without the provision of ballot boxes and polling booths.

Analysis

10. This would cost around £500 to produce the support packs for schools. It provides an opportunity for a cross section of children and young people to meet and talk to the prospective candidates face to face, which was something they said they preferred. However, equal participation of all schools cannot be guaranteed so not all children and young people could be guaranteed a chance to participate. The scaled down voting processes is manageable within existing officer time as it requires less commitment from schools.

Option 4: I'm a councillor get me out of here.

11. "I'm a councillor get me out of here" is a national scheme. It offers a national web based approach that is run during democracy week as the forum for the selection. It gives children and young people the option to spend up to 2 weeks questioning and chatting to councillors on line. The councillors use the site to publish their manifestos and answer questions asked by children and young people. The young people then vote for the councillor of their choice, and councillors are evicted until only the winner for each Council is left. The process is time specific and only runs over 2 weeks in October (coinciding with democracy week). There are national press campaigns to promote the event.

Analysis

12. This process is relatively expensive and does not extend the numbers of children and young people who can be involved. It costs £2k to sign up, for which the authority receives 20 Teacher packs (each contain 40 passwords cards- so only 40 young people can vote). An additional 800 passcards are included, meaning that in total 1600 young people can vote (which is approximately the same as participated in the last selection process). The site organisers have indicated that we could buy additional pass cards and teacher packs if we wanted, but this would increase the cost to around £3750. This process is targeted at secondary school pupils and so it might not be appropriate for primary schools. The process relies heavily on the Internet, which may limit children and young people's opportunity to engage. Any participation during lesson times would require access to an IT suite. Further participation would mean the young person would need access to a computer outside school time. It is not clear how many young people in each school would actually be able to participate given these limitations, or how many schools would be able to engage fully with the process. This method ensures a relatively secure voting process.

Frequency of elections

13. Option 1: elections occur annually

This establishes the process in the minds of Children and Young People, offering regular opportunities for them to have their say about the role the Champion plays and will also serve to promote the role of the Champion and the work they undertake. However this requires an annual expenditure of resources and time on the selection process and means the Champion has a

short time in post to achieve things. It also requires that there are at least 2 candidates prepared to stand for the position each year.

14. **Option 2: Elections occur in line with council elections**

This fits in with the local election schedule and can be linked to this process, which will inform children and young people about the operation of local democracy. It allows the Champion an extended period in post to build networks and make changes.

Date of next election

15. It is proposed that the next election takes place in October 2007. This follows the next local council elections, allowing time for members roles to be allocated before candidates are sought. This can also coincide with democracy week and can tie to nation campaigns and information.

Corporate Objectives

16. Involving children and young people in the selection of their Champion meets the Council objectives of:
- Encouraging all Children and Young People to become Active Citizens
 - Consulting with young people about the future of the City and about provision by the council on behalf of young people.

Implications

17.

- **Financial** Any spend is within existing budgets, so there are no financial implications.
- **Human Resources (HR)** No implications.
- **Equalities** No implications.
- **Legal** No implications.
- **Crime and Disorder** No implications.
- **Information Technology (IT)** No implications.
- **Other** No implications.

Risk Management

18. There are no risks associated with this report.

Recommendations

19. That the Working Group advise the Executive Member that:

- 1) Election rules are set and agreed before the process is run again and a clear timetable set out 3 months in advance of election date

Reason: to ensure the fair and smooth running of the election process

- 2) Members agree to the process outlined as option 3 (para 9)

Reason: This ensures a cross section of children and young people have an opportunity to talk with the candidates face to face as well as extending the option to vote to the maximum amount of children and young people at a reasonable cost.

- 3) Members agree that the selection process should be run every 4 years (para 14) in line with local council elections and the next process should be undertaken in October 2007 (para 15).

Reason: in order to allow the Champion time to achieve changes and to tie in with local democratic processes.

Contact Details

Author:

Carole Pugh
Voice & Influence Co-ordinator
Youth Service
628829

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Patrick Scott
Director, Learning Culture and Children's Services

Report Approved tick Date *Insert Date*

Report Approved tick Date *Insert Date*

Wards Affected: *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

All tick

For further information please contact the author of the report