

Report from the Assistant Director, Partnerships and Early Intervention

Update on Involvement and Participation work in York

Summary

This reports sets out the main recent and forthcoming initiatives in the work to promote the Participation and Involvement of children and young people in shaping services in the city. Members' comments are invited.

Background

1. **Elections for Children and Young People's Champion.** At the October meeting, members agreed an election process using un-numbered ballots in all primary, secondary and special schools within the City. Members agreed that any final amendments to the rules, timetable, process and or delivery required be delegated to Officers and the Executive Members and Shadow Executive Members for Youth and Social Inclusion.

There has been considerable progress made on this piece of work. An oral update will be presented to the meeting.

2. **Involvement Strategy.** This is the strategy which brings together all the Involvement and Participation work within the city. The original strategy has been in operation since 2004. A draft of an updated Involvement Strategy was presented to this group for comment at the October meeting. This group approved the draft.

As a Yor-Ok Trust strategy, the draft has now been presented to the Yor-OK board and approved. The Board requested that the short, medium and long term aims be tabulated to show their current position and that the aims be reviewed to ensure that they remain effective. The attached paper (Annex B) lays out the format for this tabulation. Work is already being developed on a number of issues that have been identified. Those of particular note are:

Community Planning – A more coherent approach to this was already one of the aims of the strategy and the YorOK Board highlighted that through the community call for action, a lot of wards were already engaged with youth issues, such as surveys to try to engage young people to find out what was missing in the wards, but also that there needed a more coherent approach.

Officers have already met to begin discussions on a model whereby there can be a strategic approach to engaging children and young people in neighbourhood planning.

The aim of this work is develop a set of resources which can be utilised in all wards across the city. These resources will act as a common foundation (which could be added to in individual circumstances). The resources can be used in a variety of settings (eg schools, either in class or through schools councils) or in youth settings. There would be a clear pathway into which the information could channelled for maximum effectiveness and feedback for the children and young people.

Schools Council Conferences - York has developed over the past 5 years a model of holding a conference for student councils from York schools. The aims have been to:

Promote student/pupils councils in schools;

- Share information between councils;
- Enthuse council members;
- Link schools councils to the wider strategies

There has recently been a conference for councils from primary schools. Workshops were held on young people's vision for York, sharing information between councils, and the effectiveness of councils – as well as on dance.

In February a conference is being planned for secondary schools. This will also have workshops on promoting effective councils, dance and young people's vision for York. The end of the day will finish with a mini question time based around the five outcomes of Every Child Matters.

The conferences are seeing a record number of schools attending (45 signed up with 40 actually attending the primary event) reflecting the universality of school councils in York's primary and secondary schools. The involvement strategy acknowledges this and calls for a greater emphasis on developing the effectiveness and inclusiveness of schools councils. The workshop at the secondary conference on promoting effective councils is the first stage in this process.

Coordination and Training - A key element of the Involvement Strategy is developing interagency cooperation, coordination and training. To promote this, the Yor-Ok Involvement sub-group is investigating the potential to hold a conference event in the first half of 2008.

This event would draw on the many elements of outstanding practice within the city in order to share good practice, boost cooperation between agencies and their links to the Involvement strategy. It is hoped that the event could be provided a little or no cost to practitioners within the city and be made available for a fee to agencies on a regional basis – linking in with the various Beacon schemes.

3. **OFSTED TellUs2 Survey.** OFSTED have undertaken a national survey of young peoples views. Attached to this paper is a summary document from the survey (TellUs2) (Annex A). The results from York closely reflect the national findings. Two areas are of particular interest:

A large proportion of respondents in year 8 and year 10 (60%) said that children and young people's views in decisions about the local area are not taken into account. The national figure is 58%. Only 48% said that their views are listened to in the running of their school. Clearly there is a need to do more work both to further the ways in which children and young people can have their say and to ensure that they know about those opportunities.

Children and young people feel they do not have sufficient access to information. In the report this is highlighted in regard to health information but it is reflected locally about information about 'things to do places to go'. The launch of the **Yor-Ok website** (linking in with the Youth Offer) is likely to have an impact on this. The website came fully online in November. In its first month of operation there was the following activity on the site: 1,348 visits comprising 5,245 page views. The breakdown of views by zone is 236 children, 223 parents, 196 practitioners and 159 young people.

Most visits to the site have been from people who have already known the address (65.6%) and have gone directly to the site (i.e. have followed a link from an email or typed the web address into the browser) with a significant number (22%) following links from other websites. Only 12% have come from search engines. This indicates that its activity is overwhelmingly from people for whom it has a particular significance rather than being found randomly.

While the use of the site will ultimately depend on how useful people continue to find it, there is promotion of its use with information in a wide variety of media outlets, including: Local Link and A-Z, Schools Out, Shared Foundation and PLA newsletter, Look it up, Streets Ahead, Your City, News and Jobs, Ward Newsletters (fact-sheet produced by Youth Service), Mail out of flyers to all GP's, libraries, childcare providers and community centres.

4. **Takeover Day.** On 23rd November the Office of the Children's Commissioner promoted an event – Takeover Day. This was to celebrate the ways in which children and young people make a positive contribution to their communities. In York there were a number of activities linked into the day:

- Young people from Badger Hill School became Lord Mayor for the day

- Young people from Woodthorpe school were involved in a neighbourhood planning day
- Young people from Heworth school were involved in developing the Yor-Ok website
- Young People from Elvington school documented the day
- Young people from a number of schools took over their own school for the day
- Young people from Carr School took over editing the Evening Press for the day
- Young people working with the Children's Society were involved in planning ways they could lobby their local MP's
- Young people working with Arts Action York took over the Arts Council
- Young people from a number of secondary schools met up with local politicians through the shadow executive and through spending a day with the executive member for Youth and Social Inclusion

There was good publicity generated by the day with coverage from local press and radio.

At the current time it is unclear whether this would be an annual event. Overall the event was successful with a large number of young people and schools being involved in events. Events were planned in a way which meant that young peoples involvement have had an ongoing effect and contribution.

The main lessons from the day would be to:

- Make the event more of a collective priority. This would enable more resources to be allocated to the planning of the day and enable greater opportunities for children and young people.
- Develop a key focal point for the day. This would follow from making the day more of a priority. One suggestion would be for an event such as a Young Person's Question Time. This type of event has been held in the city in the past. However it can be resource-intensive to organise but would act as a focal point.

Consultation

This report is all about consultation and involvement, as covered above.

Options and Analysis

This report is for information.

Corporate Objectives

This report is particularly consistent with the objectives to improve young people's skills and knowledge, and to improve the life chances of the most disadvantaged and disaffected children, young people and families.

Implications

This report is for information and has no specific financial, HR, equalities, legal, crime and disorder or IT implications.

Risk Management

There are no significant risks inherent in this report.

Recommendations

The Young Peoples Working Group is asked to note the developments outlined in this report.

Reason: So that Members are aware of progress in these areas.

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Report
Approved

Yes

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Specialist Implications Officer(s) None

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

All Yes

For further information please contact the author of the report

Annexes

Annex A OFSTED TellUs2 Survey

Annex B Yor-Ok Involvement Strategy 2008 –11 - *Monitoring of Strategic Aims*