

Young People's Working Group

10 July 2008

Report of the Assistant Director, Partnerships and Early Intervention

UK YOUTH PARLIAMENT

Summary

1. This report considers the role of UK Youth Parliament (UKYP) and the level of support and involvement by the council, which could include the appointment of a young people's representative.

Background

2. UKYP was launched in July 1999 and held its first sitting in February 2001 in London. It is an independent national charity, which works closely with the Government. There are currently over 500 MYPs (Members of Youth Parliament) and Deputy MYPs. Each LEA in England represents a UKYP constituency with similar arrangements in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In England, 90% of all LEAs are currently participating with UKYP.
3. UKYP aims to:
 - Ensure that the young people of the UK (aged 11-18) are given a voice on any issue that affects them in accordance with the principle of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
 - Give the young people of the UK an opportunity to be involved in the democratic process at a national level.
 - Empower young people to take positive action within their local communities based upon their issues of concern.
4. In order to appoint MYPs and Deputy MYPs, it is usual for elections to take place annually. There is an allocation of between 1 and 6 MYPs for each LEA constituency, dependent on the number of young people residing in the area – York has 1 place allocated. A number of Deputy MYPs can also be nominated.
5. There is an expectation that MYPs will be supported at local level by a local youth participation or youth worker. UKYP regularly brings together its MYPs at a regional level, to organise campaigns, projects and events and identify common issues of concern. Links to regional Government Offices, Assemblies and Development Agencies to ensure young people's views are being acted upon are being developed in some regions. Once a year the UKYP holds an annual sitting, which brings together MYPs from across the UK for a four day

residential to create a youth manifesto, which is presented to Government for a response.

6. In addition to working locally and regionally, the UKYP also undertakes to facilitate meetings between MYPs, Government Ministers and Government Departments on the issues that are raised in the Manifesto.
7. York, through the Youth Service, was involved with UKYP, almost from its inception, for about 3 years. We were very active at a regional level and became a pioneer authority in the development of a local Youth Council, which later became a Forum. Following reorganisation of the former youth service in 2004 it was decided to develop citizenship, democracy, and 'voice and influence' activity through partnership working with citizenship development work in schools and the emerging Children's Trust inclusion initiatives. Indeed this has resulted in many forums through which children and young people represent themselves and their peers. A multi-level approach to participation has developed, which does not rely on a central youth forum.
8. We did not have a positive encounter in our involvement with UKYP, either regionally or nationally. Our MYPs reported negative experiences at the annual sittings, poorly organised, boring and lacking in inspiration. Regionally, support was almost none existent, with our staff complaining of poor communication, meetings cancelled at late notice and a general lack of professionalism. These experiences, our wish to focus on local matters and the desire to ensure positive experience for young people resulted in the decision not to continue our involvement.
9. Recent correspondence to the Director of Learning, Culture and Children's Services from York's MP, Hugh Bayley, enquiring about the status of our involvement with UKYP, has prompted the need for further debate on the subject.

Consultation

10. Young people with whom we were working at the time were fully behind the decision to withdraw our allegiance to UKYP. Subsequently, following some pressure to resume our involvement in early 2007, York's representation was carefully considered by the Involvement Sub-group of the YorOK Board. This group co-ordinates all involvement and participation work across the city ensuring there is wide reaching involvement and influence by children and young people from all backgrounds in decision-making.
11. This group carefully considered the advantages and disadvantages of being part of UKYP. Their conclusion was that such representation was not a priority for York at the moment, in the light of the focus on a cross-partnership Involvement Strategy, previous experiences and the fact that resources to support this sort of activity are inevitably limited. In addition to the cost of organising an election process there would also be the cost of supporting the young person, his/her travel expenses and accommodation.

Options

12. There are two options on which a decision can be made.

Option 1 – to maintain the decision made by the YorOK Inclusion sub-group not to join the UKYP and to prioritise local inclusion, democracy and participation work. This decision can be reviewed at a future date.

Option 2 – to resume our involvement in the UKYP and identify appropriate resources to ensure a positive experience and good outcomes for the MYP and young people in York.

Analysis

13. It is acknowledged that there are advantages for York in being represented on the Youth Parliament:
- The individual(s) elected as MYP should benefit by being fully involved in the democratic process and undertaking the responsibilities of office.
 - Issues pertinent to young people would be highlighted
 - Elections would serve as a way of educating young people about the importance of voting and would raise the profile of the democratic process in the City.

However, there are a number of issues that seem to outweigh these:

- The relative lack of financial resources in relation to a young person's membership, travel costs and worker support time would pull resources and support away from wider work.
- Creating and supporting a mechanism which would only serve to elect MYPs is not cost effective for our authority at this time.
- Elections and wider democratic processes are already supported through the city wide process to elect a Children and Young Peoples Champion; through school councils; and representative councils such as a 'Children in Care Council', which hold elected members to account for their actions.
- The negative experience encountered by young people who previously took part in UKYP activities.
- There appears to be little interest from young people with whom we currently work.

It was on the basis of considering these competing priorities that the YorOk Inclusion sub-group made their fully informed decision not to rejoin the UKYP.

Corporate Priorities

14. Voice and Influence work contributes to 'Improve the life chances of the most disadvantaged and disaffected children, young people and families in the city '.

Implications

15.

- **Financial** – There are financial implications, which are contained within the body of this report and relate to support worker costs and expenditure for the MYP. This is estimated to be in the region of £6k. The cost for a full election process has not been assessed and will be dependent on the method used.
- **Human Resources (HR)** – There are no HR implications.
- **Equalities** – There are no Equalities issues.
- **Legal** – There are no legal requirements.
- **Crime and Disorder** – There are no crime and disorder implications.
- **Information Technology (IT)** – There are no IT issues.
- **Property** – There are no implications for Property.

Risk Management

16. There are no known risks

Recommendations

17. Members are asked to:

- 1) Consider the options outlined in the report

Reason: To give due attention to whether the City of York should support the UKYP or not.

- 2) Advise the Executive of the views of the working group.

Reason: To support the Executive in making an informed decision on future involvement with UKYP.

Contact Details

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report:**

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**Report
Approved**

25/06/08

Specialist Implications Officer(s) List information for all

Implication ie Financial
Name
Title
Tel No.

Implication ie Legal
Name
Title
Tel No.

Wards Affected: List wards or tick box to indicate all

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

Further information on the work of UKYP can be accessed at:
<http://www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk>

Annexes: None