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## **Young People's Working Group**

**22 April 2009**

Report from the Assistant Director, Partnerships and Early Intervention

## **Update on Involvement and Participation work in York**

### **Summary**

1. This reports sets out the main developments in 2008/9 to promote the participation and involvement of children and young people in shaping services in the city. It also sets out forthcoming developments, including progress on establishing a new Youth Council in York. It is based on the YorOk cross partnership Involvement Strategy 2008-11, as approved by the YorOk Board and now updated by the new Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP).

### **Background**

#### **Children and Young People's plan**

2. In all, over 4000 children and young people took part in the consultation for the Children and Young People's Plan through events such as conferences for student councils within schools, focus groups talking about specific issues, and specially commissioned pieces of research. As part of the commitment to reach out to all communities, there was specific work undertaken with disabled children and young people, with Looked After Children, and with young people from minority communities.
3. It is clear from the final version of the plan that children and young people have had a significant influence on the content and format of the plan. The CYPP has included "Involvement" amongst its key priorities:

#### ***Value children and young people's contribution and celebrate their successes by:***

- *continuing to develop innovative ways to listen to children and young people's views, enabling them to influence the decisions that affect them and commissioning services where possible;*
- *listening to the harder to reach groups, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and Looked After Children;*

- *establishing an influential Youth Council in York and participating in the Youth Parliament;*
- *increasing young people's involvement in our "City of Festivals" programme and delivering a successful "Festival of Youth" in the city.*

Members of YPWG will see that these commitments also reflect their own discussions.

## **Commissioning**

4. A commissioning framework is being developed for services for children and young people in the city. Children and young people will play an increasing part in this process. Already their views are integral to initial needs assessments – as for example in the consultation that preceded the CYPP. Children were also heavily involved in consultation about decisions made for grants awarded under the Early Intervention Fund/Better Play Grant.
5. **Yorkash** is an example of young people-led commissioning. In 2008/9 there was approximately £145,000 available for projects for young people aged 13 – 19 years in the City of York, coming from the Youth Opportunities Fund and the Youth Capital Fund. Bids could be between £5,000 - £30,000. There were 50 applications for the funding; 14 groups made it to the interview stage and 12 were successful in their funding bids. This funding supported a number of projects, from equipment and building development to staffing costs and facilities hire. Applications are currently being invited for the 2009 round, with an application deadline of 1<sup>st</sup> May. Groups that are awarded funding will receive their cheques at a presentation evening on the 19th June.
6. In the longer term, there is an expectation that local authorities will enable an increasing proportion of their funding for positive activities to be directed by young people – 'up to 5% of their budget for services for young people in 2010 and 2011, with an aspiration of 25% by 2018' (*Aiming High for Young People: A Ten Year Strategy for Positive Activities*). We will be developing further proposals for achieving this in the months ahead.

## **Schools Council Conferences – towards a Youth Council for York**

7. York has developed over the past five years a model of holding a conference for student councils from York schools. The most recent event was for York secondary schools. Nearly all secondary schools attended including Applefields. The day was very ably organised by students from All Saints school with great support from staff at the school. This followed on from the event for Primary Schools councils which was organised by pupils from Heworth School. This event attracted almost 250 pupils representing 90% of primary schools in the city.
8. The strength of our Schools Councils will give us an excellent basis from which to grow a more formal Youth Council for York. We consulted young people on

this issue at one of the Conferences mentioned above, and they were overwhelmingly in favour of a formal Youth Council with links to Schools Councils, and with real opportunities to make decisions in their community. As a result of those sessions, 30 young people have expressed a wish to be further involved in developing a Youth Council for York.

9. The next stage in this initiative will be to consult with children and young people about the precise nature of the Youth Council, its membership and how those members would be elected; and also on the relationship between Schools Councils, the Youth Council and Ward Committees. Members of YPWG will recall from our previous discussions that a possible stumbling block was the officer resources to develop and support these new mechanisms; we are therefore pleased to report that we believe we have found a way forward, in conjunction with Neighbourhood Services, through the government's "Taking Part" initiative. This two-year project is designed to promote greater participation in local decision making, and Government Office for Yorkshire and Humberside has *provisionally* indicated that it is in principle prepared to fund City of York to develop enhanced means of Civic Engagement for children and young people. This welcome news, subject to final confirmation, means that we can now see a way forward for covering a large proportion of costs involved in developing a Youth Council for York.
10. In the next few months we will work up more detailed options, a project timetable, and associated costings, again in conjunction with Neighbourhood Services. We will then put a paper for decision to the Executive Member. Meantime, we hope that YPWG will welcome these developments.

## **Volunteering**

11. We have an ongoing commitment to increase opportunities for young people to become involved in volunteering and active participation (again reinforced through the new CYPP). 'Involved' has been running a volunteering brokerage service in York since March 2007. Although this is a universal project, it has had a strong focus on attracting non-traditional volunteers. The project offers a range of opportunities aimed at capturing young people's interests and allowing them to try out volunteering before committing. The project has been very successful in significantly increasing the number of volunteers registered (369 – 519 [07-08]), numbers placed into opportunities (274 – 361 [07-08]) and opportunities created (up to 1300+ in 2008).

## **Communications with young people**

12. The Yor-Ok website plays a key role in communicating with children and young people. Since the website was launched it has received over 22,000 visits and 80,000 page views. In terms of people accessing information about Involvement, it has proved very successful with for example nearly 3000 downloads of the individual toolkits for carrying out consultations. The website hosts a range of information about Involvement work in the city, including a full summary of the responses from the consultation for the CYPP, and a *You Said - We Did* publication which details the views of disabled children and young people.

13. From the outset of the website project, the intention was to continually develop the website to match more closely the needs of children, young people, parents, carers and practitioners. To that end, over the summer of 2008 a consultation was carried out with all of the target audiences that make use of the website. The consultation yielded a diverse range of views on all aspects of the site. The key messages were:

- Making the different zones more defined so users are more likely to only read information targeted towards them;
- To continue the work of reviewing the categorisation of services within the service directory;
- To develop the look and feel of the site, in particular the young people's zone;
- To improve the searching functionality within the service directory;
- To introduce more interactive elements and to make information aimed at young people less text heavy.

We are now working to put these ideas into practice.

14. As well as our own website, it goes without saying that social networking sites such as Bebo and Facebook are becoming an increasingly important method for communication between young people: they also represent an opportunity for communicating with them. It is estimated that up to half of young people are registered on social networking sites and use them for up to two hours per day. A recent seminar was hosted by the Involvement Strategy to discuss the issues around using this media. Further work will be undertaken to develop safe practice protocols both for children/young people and practitioners. There will then need to be further work to pilot effective use of social networking to inform, consult and engage with young people.

## **Consultation**

15. As the whole of this report is about involving and consulting young people, there is nothing additional to convey under this heading.

## **Options/Analysis**

16. This report is for information so options and analysis are not appropriate. In due course further papers will be put to the Executive Member which do contain options for certain issues, particularly the development of a Youth Council.

## **Corporate Priorities**

17. The issues covered in this paper are relevant to the Council's direction statement:

*"We will listen to communities and ensure that people have a greater say in deciding local priorities"*

## Implications

*This report is for information to update members. Certain of the issues raised may develop into decision-making papers later in the year, at which point the appropriate implications will be identified.*

- **Financial** No Implications at this stage
- **Human Resources (HR)** No Implications
- **Equalities** No Implications
- **Legal** No Implications
- **Crime and Disorder** No Implications
- **Information Technology (IT)** No Implications
- **Property** No Implications
- **Other** No Implications

## Risk Management

As this report is for information, there are no known risks involved.

## Recommendations

The Young People's Working Group is asked to note the developments outlined in this report.

*Reason:* To ensure Members are aware of young people's views.

## Contact Details

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**Report  
Approved**

Yes

**Date** 9 April 2009

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

**All**  Yes

**For further information please contact the author of the report**