

Report from the Assistant Director, Partnerships and Early Intervention

Developing Young People's Involvement in Decision-making in York

Summary

1. This report invites members of the Young People's Working Group (YPWG) to review young people's involvement in decision-making processes in the City of York, and to debate possible future developments. It will be supplemented by an oral presentation. In particular we will be inviting members to discuss the idea of "change champions", as an evolution of the ideas debated at previous meetings of YPWG.
2. A separate agenda item will recommend a complementary mechanism for the greater involvement of disabled young people in decision-making.

Background and Consultation

3. York has historically used a number of methods to engage with young people. The Take Part York project, which has run from March 2009 and will finish in March 2011, has allowed a range of materials and techniques to be developed. This has developed young people's involvement in local structures and has highlighted the need for different professionals to work together.
4. Currently there are a number of valuable initiatives taking place across the city aimed at encouraging pupils to become "active citizens", including:
 - Two annual School Council conferences, one for primary schools and one for secondary schools. These are well attended;
 - Take Part York working with schools and Ward Committees;
 - York Youth Council;
 - Healthy Schools Award;
 - Food For Life Partnership;
 - Sustainable Schools-Participation;
 - Citizenship Curriculum in schools.

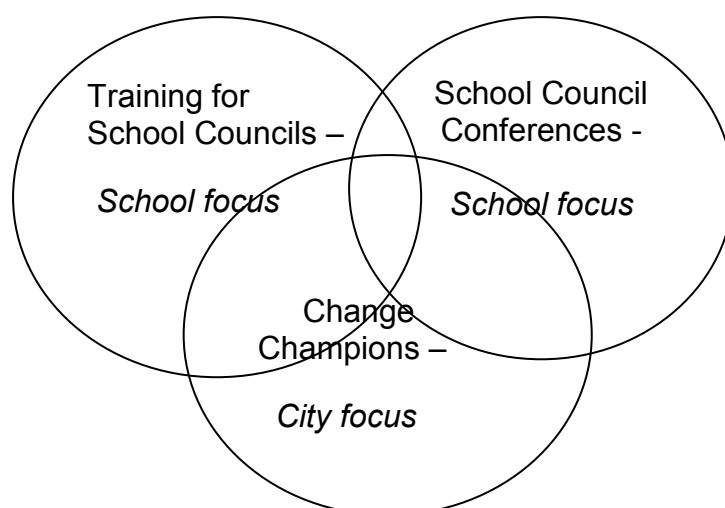
We believe there is now scope to coordinate better the range of such involvement activities across the city. The ideas in this paper have been discussed at the York Youth Council and their views have been incorporated.

Options and Analysis

5. A coordinated strategy for Pupil Voice across schools and the city would be beneficial to enhance the quality of provision and focus the purpose of school councils within their settings and communities. In officers' view, supported by members of the Youth Council, there are three key elements that could form such a Pupil Voice Strategy:

- Training for those involved with school council/change champions' work.
- School Councils/School Council Conferences (Secondary and Primary)
- Change Champions

This can be represented diagrammatically as follows:



Each aspect of the strategy links together but delivers a different purpose.

6. In a little more detail, our emerging proposals for training for school councils envisage:

- developing participants' communication skills, confidence and working as part of a team;
- developing facilitation skills to allow information to be gathered by representatives of young people;
- learning how local and national democracy works, and how to be heard effectively;
- giving school councils a clear focus;
- developing high quality school council/pupil voice activity across the city as "Future Decision Makers";
- School Councils becoming the "school champions".

7. We see the role of School Conferences as:

- Bringing together the school councils and change champions at an annual celebration of all best practice;
- A training opportunity;

- A chance to evaluate current stage of development and to develop an action plan for future development;
 - Schools sharing information and working together on national school initiatives.
8. To this existing mix we would like to introduce the idea of change champions to:
- Bring the voice of primary and secondary school pupils together;
 - Agree common issues in York that need addressing;
 - Enable schools, pupils and local service providers work together to solve issues;
 - Create a joint action plan, to be monitored through the YPWG.
9. In more detail, our emerging plans for “Change Champions” envisage a process whereby representatives of primary school councils and the Youth Council can be brought together once or twice a year, alongside elected members from YPWG and other decision makers, to debate topics of importance to young people. We would employ established “planning for real” techniques to filter the topics, collate them where necessary, and then ensure that any agreed actions were turned into a meaningful action plan that can be monitored through YPWG.
10. As we will explain in more detail at the meeting, our ideas are still at a relatively early stage and may need to be piloted in the first instance; their implementation will, inevitably, be subject to resource constraints. However, within these caveats, we believe that the idea of “Change Champions” is a logical progression from the debate at the last YPWG about the best way to ensure that decision makers their age, take all young people’s views, whatever into account. If elected Members of YPWG can spare the time to attend the joint meetings of primary and secondary age pupils, this would further enhance the connectivity between young people and the Council.

Corporate Priorities

11. The issues discussed in this paper are consistent with the Council’s objectives to encourage children and young people to become active citizens, and to consult them about decisions that affect them.

Implications

12. **Financial** implications: these are still being assessed, but would consist mainly of the costs of hiring Conference facilities for any additional meetings, plus any refreshments. Such costs would need to be absorbed within the base budget for Young People’s Services, which of course will itself have to wait until the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review is known.
13. There are no Human Resources, Equalities, Crime and Disorder, IT or Property Implications.

Risk Management

14. There are no specific risks associated with this report.

Recommendations

15. That the Young People's Working Group discuss the issues identified in this report and support the notion of "Change Champions" as a means of bringing together young people of all ages with decision makers and elected members.

Reason: To ensure the views of young people are taken into account in Council decision-making.

Contact Details

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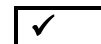
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Wards Affected:

All



For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: None