

# Youth Participation Action



## What is Youth Participation and why is it important?

Youth participation is young people taking an active part in decisions that impact on their lives and in their communities. It gives young people a voice or a way to be heard about issues that are important to them, whether it is through schools, sports, groups, clubs or local government.

Young people have said via the Youth Review consultation and at a YouthWise meeting how youth participation can be improved in Brighton & Hove.

This report recognises that there is currently good examples of youth participation in the city from current youth providers and that young people's suggestions are to build on existing good practice, to reach more young people, who are not engaging at the moment.

**Young people said that it was important to them for the following reasons:**

- We would like ownership, pride and want to be more involved
- To get good experience which could lead to life opportunities
- The right amount of power at the right time can change someone's life



- Young People make better decisions about what they need, which means we are more likely to take part and stay involved
- Treat young people with the respect they deserve, and you'll get the respect back

- Provides professionals with the understanding of the experiences, views and needs of young people, leading to greater understanding of the services provided for young people and support any required change
- Leads to improved services, so they better meet the needs of young people.

## Youth Participation can also help with the following:



## What is currently happening?

There are several active youth participation groups in the city, for example:



In addition, feedback is regularly collated from young people from other Council services, such as, Social Work, Youth Employability Service, Integrated Team for Families, Adolescence Service and Brighton and Hove's Inclusion Support Service. This feedback is used to inform and change practice.

Although young people recognised that there are many opportunities to get involved in decision making in the city, there was still more to do.

*(See appendix for a summary of the projects outlined above)*

## Young people stating what's needed

Other youth organisations to join Youth Wise and the Youth Council

To be better informed about what is happening

Better communication between clubs

Include more young people with more complex needs

Find ways to reach disadvantaged young people

Podcasts

Provide incentives for attending meetings

Youth voice groups in schools



# Action Plan - What we are going to do

## Improve Communication

- Improve links with secondary schools and colleges via head teachers to identify key personnel, to promote benefits to young people of taking part in youth voice groups and volunteering opportunities.
- Update and widely publicise the YMCA Right Here 'Where to Go for' (WTGF) website by:
  - The front page to have a link called 'have your say' and to list youth voice groups and opportunities
  - Contacting all service providers on WTGF to update their listing
  - Providers to be encouraged to create an Instagram social media post which WTGF will use as part of a social media service of the week promo campaign
  - WTGF to continue promoting in schools within PSHE lessons and via the YMCA Right Here Mental Health Champions programme
  - Encourage schools to add WTGF to their intranets
  - Youth proof content from Public Health around sexual health, and then upload the new Sexual Health area of the website
  - Develop a WTGF promotion plan with youth volunteers
  - Explore the costs of paid for Instagram advertising
- Youth providers to promote and encourage young people to attend Youth Wise to and reach out to other youth groups
- Youth Council to widely promote elections for next year and actively work to improve inclusivity. One suggestion is to have a representative from each of the equality groups on the Youth Council
- To investigate new ways of using social media to connect with hard to reach young people
- To share good practice and learn from other local authorities

## What Existing Groups plan to do

- The Youth Council will be:
  - Raising the profile of the Youth Council and current elected Youth Councillors (YC)
  - Advancing their campaign around plastic reduction in the city
  - Meeting in November where members will discuss and plan the elections for next year
  - Usually young people remain on the YC for a 2-Year term, however due to Covid, members will be asked if they would like to remain on the council, rather than stepping down next year so young people know which schools will need to be targeted to recruit new Councillors
  - Learn from good practice in other areas
  
- The Children in Care Council will be:
  - Continuing to meet virtually with both the younger and older groups and work hard to sustain relationships with current members by engaging them in fun and interactive sessions via Zoom
  - Setting up a task and finish group with young people that will result in a proposal to change the format of the Corporate Parenting Board that would give children/young people in care and care leavers an opportunity to set the agenda and lead on meetings so their voice is central in these meetings
  - Encouraging young people aged 16+ to take part in a review of the local offer for care leavers. Each local authority across the country has developed a package of support to prepare young people for independence by making sure they get the advice and help they need
  - Exploring methods of reaching and hearing the voice of all children/young people in care and care leavers
  
- YMCA DownsLink Group Children & Young People's Involvement and Influencing Strategy is currently being refreshed into a 5-year plan, which includes their intention to create a youth voice communication platform/channel, with content co-delivered and curated by young people.
  
- Youth providers meeting to take place to discuss the wider youth participation agenda, ensuring there is strong collaboration across the city

- People to take part in all aspects of the recommissioning process for youth services in the city.
- Young people to review the framework for Youth Led Grants programme and plan, advertise and make all grant decisions of future programmes.

## Equalities Groups Plans

**Note:** *It is recognised that all young people, particularly the equalities groups have been adversely affected by local and national events and circumstances beyond their control this year.*

- Building on established participation work with young people with SEND, an action plan is being developed by Extratime and Amaze to ensure the voices of young people with SEND are heard in decisions that affect them and to support their involvement in YouthWise and other relevant groups. This includes a new mini project in partnership with the Hangleton & Knoll project.
- BMEYPP is planning to develop is a BME young people's Engagement and Consultation Project. The project will recruit a group of young people as 'youth researchers' who will be trained in participatory engagement methods. They will then decide what experiences themes and topics to engage young people in, how they will engage with young people and organise youth consultation and engagement events with their peers. Young people's views, opinions, experience and ideas will be recorded and will form the basis of the BMEYPP youth strategy and will inform projects and activities we develop for the following three to five years. Young researchers will receive accreditation for their participation in the project at all levels that this project will enhance their employability skills.

(BMEYPP are currently promoting a mentor scheme for BAME young people to increase confidence and access to opportunities).

- ALLSORTS young people feel they have a voice and are listened to within their own organisation. They would like other groups to be more inclusive. Online meetings should offer the choice to have video or not, to have voice or not and the ability to only send in comments if wanted. Young people at Allsorts to be asked what they would like to go on the agenda



for future YouthWise meetings. The agenda to be sent out in good time to enable their young people time to respond if they are interested. Would like to feel welcome to attend. YouthWise to find signifiers of inclusivity, for example, a welcome message with invitations to attend and a statement at the start of each meeting.

They also suggested the following: -

- Have an officer/representative from all minority groups as a specific role in the Youth Council.
- Information about what diversity training both councillors and council officers have attended to be made public. This would increase their confidence to attend meetings.
- Inform people clearly about YouthWise and what it is about.

## Appendix 1

### Summary of some of the active youth voice groups in the city

- Youth Council - Aims to represent all young people's views and opinions and influence decisions made by politicians, councillors and other local and national decision makers. They run campaigns about important issues, attend youth voice meetings and have a seat on the Children & Young People's Skills Committee.
- Children In Care Council - Open to any young person aged 13-25 who has experience of being in care
- Youth Advocacy Project - Supports Brighton & Hove young people aged between 8-25 years who are supported by a social worker to get their wishes and feeling heard when decisions are being made about their lives.
- Young Ambassadors - Trained care experienced young people involved in recruiting social workers and other staff working with young people
- BMEYPP Management Committee - The Black and Minority Ethnic Young People's Project works with young people who are Black, Asian, Arab and Mixed Heritage aged 11 to 25 in Brighton and Hove
- Youth Climate Assembly - It is an opportunity for young people to critically and creatively reflect on the information given to us by experts in transport, urban planning and active travel among others to help us come up with local solutions for the future of Brighton & Hove.
- Youth Led Grants programme - A young person led grants programme.
- Youth Wise - The purpose of YouthWise is to gather the views of young people to share with Councillors from each main political party and the Director/Assistant Director of Families, Children and Learning to inform decisions. Views and recommendations from Youth Wise will be considered and will be represented at the Children Young People and Skills Committee by the Councillors and Youth Council representative.

- YMCA DownsLink Group - Children & Young People's Involvement and Influencing Strategy. - this is currently being refreshed into a 5-year plan, which includes an intention to create a youth voice comms platform/channel, with content co-delivered and curated by young people. This could provide a single portal to engage and consult young people on different issues/themes.
- Allsorts Youth Forum - opportunities for LGBTU+ young people to have their views and voices heard. LGBTU+ young people are vital in helping to influence and shape services within the Brighton and Hove area.
- Brighton Youth Centre - a decision making forum where young people meet regularly and play a key part in the planning and delivery of services and support on offer.
- Trust for Developing Communities Youth Leadership Group - Gives young people the opportunity to directly influence the direction of youth work at TDC. This includes volunteering in youth sessions, planning activities and training staff. The project will harness the skills, knowledge and enthusiasm of young people and maybe create their future youth team.
- Hangleton & Knoll, Step Out group - Step Out are a group of young people who volunteer in their community in a range of roles but who are also interested in having a voice on what youthwork looks like in the City. At HKP we have two young trustees who oversee the strategic development of HK youthwork and a young people led community group (18-21) who develop and bid for their own projects. All HKP activities are co-produced with young people on a six-weekly basis
- Youth Voice group - attached to the Violence Reduction group
- YMCA Right Here - a health and wellbeing project for 11-25 year old's. It is an award-winning project that works with a team of youth ambassadors to improve health outcomes for young people locally and nationally.

