

Youth Service Update

Introduction

The following information covers the work delivered by the Councils youth work team with and for young people and their communities during the last year. This update subsequently relates to current SDC youth work strategy (2020-2024). It refers to young people (as our client base), who act as voluntary participants in their role as youth voice representatives.

Progress During 2022

Following the departure of Jemma Grieve (youth participation officer) at the end of November 2021, the youth work team has been operating under capacity. Initial efforts to recruit were not successful, therefore outcomes and impact in the last year reflect this. However, a mini review has recently begun with view to restoring this capacity.

The youth work officer (Seb Williams) and I have continued to work with young people and their communities throughout – many of which still carry the impact of the covid pandemic. Intensive work to support our youth voice representatives has featured regularly and whilst some new relationships have been developed through recruitment, those young people seeking pastures new have naturally moved on or moved away.

Whilst the number of youth voice representatives is currently much lower than pre and early pandemic, our client base remains diverse and still includes those that have difficulties, disabilities, and personal and social challenges. Our inclusive approach to youth work, means that whilst we consider these aspects, we focus on young people's abilities and their potential to further develop skills and attributes - both as individuals and as groups in their respective community, whilst influencing change.

Thankfully, some schools have recently begun to welcome us back to their student gatherings, and we are now promoting our service face-to-face, as well as via social media and other outlets.

1) Outcomes for young people:

Our bespoke self-assessment tool ensures outcomes for young people are central to programme development. Having assessed it in 2020, our youth voice representatives did so again in 2022 to consider how their own personal and social development had evolved since they got involved. We again used a 0-5 rating scale* against the 7 capabilities from the Catalyst Outcomes Framework. Here is a snapshot of what they said:

Communication: 15% increase in those saying it had improved 'A Huge Amount' (*5); 30% increase in those saying it had improved 'A Lot' (*4).

Manage Feelings: 15% increase in those saying it had improved 'A Huge Amount' (*5); 15% decrease in those saying 'None' (*0).

Resilience and Determination: 15% increase in those saying it had improved 'A Huge Amount' (*5); 10% decrease in those saying 'None' (*0).

Creativity: 10% increase in those saying it had improved 'A Huge Amount' (*5); 20% increase in those saying it had improved 'A Lot' (*4); 5% increase in those saying it had improved 'Quite a bit' (*3).

Relationships and Leadership: 10% increase in those saying it had improved 'A Huge Amount' (*5); 30% increase in those saying it had improved 'A lot' (*4).

Planning and Problem Solving: 10% increase in those saying it had improved 'A Huge Amount' (*5); 15% increase in those saying it had improved 'A lot' (*4). 25% decrease in those saying it had improved 'Very Little' (*1).

Confidence and Agency: 5% increase in those saying it had improved 'A Huge Amount' (*5); 15% increase in those saying it had improved 'A lot' (*4). 10% increase in those saying it had improved 'Quite a bit' (*3).

The vast majority of youth voice representative felt they had improved in all capability categories. We asked; **'How do you rate the service received over the previous 2 years?'** 55% rated it as 'Excellent' (*5); 45% rated it as 'Very Good' (*4).

We also asked; **'Does the Council recognise your work as youth voice representatives?'** 90% said 'Yes'. The results represented an increase from two years ago.

2) Increasing Youth Voice in Council Decision-Making:

The current youth work strategy seeks an increase to youth voice representative's involvement in Council decision-making. Whilst building on the success of the previous year (2021) the following has been evident in 2022:

Recognition - SDYC at Full Council: Retiring and past members of Stroud District Youth Council (SDYC) were recognised in October for serving as youth voice representatives for between 5 and 6 years' each. Charlotte Bignell, Lily Haines, and Tom Wickham-Bassett received long service awards and commendations led by Chair of Council, Cllr Steve Robinson.

Hear by Right: Work to gain the national Hear by Right Participation award is underway and officers including the Director of Communities have completed the Insight Training Programme – an action plan has been created and SDYC members will be involved in our first submission.

Policy Development – 2030 Strategy: SDYC's commitment to the SDC 2030 Strategy has evolved from their combined statement that features in the 2030 Masterplan and their own 2022 Manifesto document. Whilst representatives have been active on the 2030 Community Engagement Board, a joint workshop has also

taken place to explore outcomes from COP27 with view to planning an environmental theme youth event in 2023.

Performance Monitoring: A significant leap forward has been evident regarding the involvement of SDYC members in the performance monitoring of council services. Almost every committee's monitoring meetings has been attended by youth voice representatives, who have made recommendations as well as observing and questioning matters being discussed.

Involvement in Recruitment of Head of Service: January 2023 featured the current SDYC Leader (Cate James-Hodges) being involved with the 'partner panel' interviews, to recruit a new Head of Community Services. Whilst enabling the diversity to grow in such processes, it represented a huge step forward for the inclusion of youth voice within the important business of staff recruitment.

3) Initial engagement - recruitment to locality groups and from schools:

Whilst promotion and recruitment has also been negatively affected by the pandemic hangover, our client base has remained diverse and impactful. Visits to youth groups / community events to promote our youth voice offer have featured less than hoped for, but new representatives have emerged and are regularly active. Schools have been less than enthusiastic in either facilitating representatives to SDYC or enabling us to visit and promote our service – thankfully, the latter has begun to change more recently.

4) Projects and programmes informed or led by local youth forum groups:

Commissioning Local Youth Provision: Having previously designed and promoted their local youth survey, then presented its findings, Berkeley Vale Youth Forum (BVYF) worked with Berkeley Town Council (BTC) to help commission a local universal youth provision – involvement with decision-making and the design of a scoring matrix became fruitful in selecting a provider. BVYF are now working with Krunch Southwest and BTC to ensure youth voice remains heard in further developments.

Community Events: Involvement with designing and facilitating activities at local community events has featured for some local youth forum groups. Cam and Dursley Youth Forum have continued to support seasonal festivals and were again judges at the Christmas Window Competition. Efforts to bring youth related activities to Cainscross were boosted by art-based programmes at Cashes Green Community Centre, whereby we ran a youth consultation project to seek what those aged 11 to 18 wanted and needed from this facility.

Youth Provision Building in Hardwicke: Unfortunately, despite the years of arduous work by Hardwicke Youth Forum in consulting the community and collaborating with various stakeholders to bring about a dedicated building for youth provision in the area, the parish council declined the opportunity to bring this to realisation despite funding being available.

5) Projects and programmes informed or led by Stroud District Youth Council (SDYC):

Assessment of Committee Work Plans: SDYC's Leadership Team again assessed each committee's work plans and highlighted aspects which they felt were applicable to young people. Some of the projects and programmes referred to in this document relate to this assessment.

Input into 2030 Strategy: SDYC have continued to be actively involved in the delivery of this strategy (see policy development item above) – this stems from their formal statement of commitment included in the published master plan.

Safeguarding Audit Panel: Following the success of working with Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children's Partnership (GSCP) in 2021, SDYC reviewed and re-wrote Standard 4 of the Section 11 audit framework. They subsequently agreed its inclusion as an audit consultancy feature for the Section 11 audit panel day in November. SDYC members again sat alongside the adult panellists for the annual audit reporting day for partners. Our youth voice representatives did a thorough job of listening and questioning all agencies presenting reports during the day's proceedings. This will lead onto further involvement in shaping such statutory work in the future, ensuring the voice of children and young people in Gloucestershire are heard from a safeguarding perspective at all levels of engagement.

Manifesto 2022/23: SDYC launched their first public manifesto in 2022, containing 14 themed statements that are backed by social action projects and campaigns. A weekly social media campaign, titled *#ManifestoMondays*; features one of the statements on a rotational basis, giving support to other local and national promotions as well as creating their own coverage.

New Policy for the British Youth Council (BYC): Whilst successfully promoting their own manifesto, SDYC continued to influence regional and national youth issues through the BYC. One major introduction by SDYC in 2022 was the creation and successful proposal of a new policy into the BYC manifesto, titled '*Youth Rights, Youth Voice and Safeguarding*'. This was a re-work of their own statement on youth voice and safeguarding, with the inclusion of young people's rights as a pivotal reference. It makes the call to the education sector and local authority safeguarding partnerships, to reform policies and practice.