

YOUTH SERVICE UPDATE

Introduction

The following information covers the service delivered by the Council's youth work team with and for young people and their communities during the last 12 months. This update relates to the current SDC youth work strategy (2020-2024) and includes our response to the covid-19 pandemic. It refers to young people (as our clients), who act as voluntary participants in their role as youth voice representatives.

Progress During 2021

The youth work team, comprising of Jemma Grieve, Seb Williams and myself (Steve Miles). We have adjusted service delivery in accordance with the changing restrictions caused by the covid-19 pandemic. Continued limitation (from that in 2020) and reduction of the provision normally expected, has been evident. Youth work sessions in groups have been offered online when restrictions have applied, but this has generally meant lower and / or shorter attendance of youth voice representatives. Face-to-face work with young people has been challenging; this is mainly due to the inconsistency of covid isolation requirements brought about by the pandemic.

Many youth voice representatives have needed one-to-one support from us, in respect of personal circumstances and challenges. Some have particular difficulties and / or disabilities, that could be considered by some observers, as them being disadvantaged. The pandemic has accentuated pre-pandemic challenges, including the negative impact on their mental health and emotional wellbeing.

Our inclusive approach to youth work, means that whilst we consider the aforementioned aspects, we focus on their abilities and their potential to further develop skills and attributes - both as individuals and as groups in their community.

Outcomes for Young People:

We asked youth voice representatives in 2020 to complete a self-assessment of how they felt their personal and social development over the previous 2 years had evolved. We used a 0-5 rating scale* against the 7 capabilities from the Catalyst Outcomes Framework. Here's a snap-shot of what they said:

Communication: 10% increase in those saying it had improved 'A Huge Amount' (*5); 28% increase in those saying it had improved 'A Lot' (*4).

Manage Feelings: 10% increase in those saying it had improved 'A Lot' (*4); 12% increase in those saying it had improved 'Quite a bit' (*3).

Resilience and Determination: 18% increase in those saying it had improved 'A Huge Amount' (*5); 23% increase in those saying it had improved 'Quite a bit' (*3).

Creativity: 18% increase in those saying it had improved 'A Lot' (*4); 10% increase in those saying it had improved 'Quite a bit' (*3).

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Relationships and Leadership: 25% increase in those saying it had improved 'A lot' (*4); 20% increase in those saying it had improved 'Quite a bit' (*3).

Planning and Problem Solving: 5% increase in those saying it had improved 'A Huge Amount' (*5); 50% increase in those saying it had improved 'A lot' (*4).

Confidence and Agency: 10% increase in those saying it had improved 'A Huge Amount' (*5); 22% increase in those saying it had improved 'A lot' (*4).

No youth voice representative gave themselves either a 'No Improvement' (*0) or 'Very Little' (*1) rating.

We asked; '**How do you rate the service received over the previous 2 years?**': 67.5% rated it as 'Excellent' (*5); 30% rated it as 'Very Good' (*4).

We asked; '**Does the Council recognise your work as youth voice representatives?**' 77.5% said 'Yes'.

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. The following has been evident this last year:

SDYC at Full Council: The Stroud District Youth Council (SDYC) Chairperson and the Principal Member of Environment both spoke at Full Council in March 2021 in support of a new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy and the Councils 2030 Strategy; this followed previous consultation work with SDYC. This was the first time ever SDYC had been actively involved at this level of decision-making. Further consultancy work with SDYC has since evolved for both strands.

Hear by Right: Reports went to Community Services and Licensing Committee and Full Council regarding next steps for the national Hear by Right Participation Pledge and award programme – both were resolved, with subsequent work now underway.

Youth Work Champions: To coincide with National Youth Work Week (run by the National Youth Agency, 1-7 November), the SDYC Leader nominated the Council as Youth Work Champions. This gave acknowledgement and profile to the commitment of the Council over the last 21 years.

Engagement with young people and recruitment to locality groups:

Whilst promotion and recruitment has been negatively affected by the pandemic, our client base has remained very diverse and impactful. The restrictions of not being able to visit schools and youth groups / community events to promote our youth voice offer, has meant the usual turn-over of new representatives has been very limited. Online engagement and promotion has had mixed results.

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

Local consultations: Berkeley Vale Youth Forum designed and promoted a local youth survey. The results highlighted what young people need by way of local

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universal youth provision – this informed Berkeley Town Councils commissioning plans. Chalford Cubed Youth Forum began a consultation project, seeking the wider needs of young people in the parish and surrounding area.

Chat Bench project: Driven by Stroud Town Five Valleys Youth Forum in partnership with Stroud Town Council, a chat bench project emerged to help tackle isolation and social disconnection – it will be installed in the town to encourage those who wish to ‘chat’ with others, whom they may not already know.

Youth Provision Building in Hardwicke: Hardwicke Youth Forum continued their efforts to bring about a dedicated building for youth provision in the area. The local parish council are considering the options.

Participation on Polling Day: Youth voice representatives from the following local youth forum groups; Cam and Dursley, Nailsworth and Minchinhampton, Stroud Town and Wotton under Edge, assisted at polling stations across the district for local elections in May. This youth participation was another ‘first’ of its kind in the district.

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

Input into Council Plan: As the ‘corporate development’ title vanished from the Council’s Plan, the new format had input from SDYC through a bespoke consultative process. Another ‘first ever’ opportunity was enjoyed by SDYC’s Leadership Team.

Input into Leisure and Wellbeing Strategy: A bespoke consultation event was held online, to enable youth voice representatives from across the district to have a say in the initial consultation for this strategy. SDYC will receive a presentation on the approved strategy early in 2022.

Input into 2030 Strategy: SDYC have been (and will continue to be) actively involved in the formation and delivery of this strategy – this stems from their formal statement of commitment included in the published master plan.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy Consultation: SDYC made a formal statement on racial equality a couple of years ago – this formed the basis of their willingness to be consulted on this draft strategy in 2021.

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

Safeguarding Audit Panel: Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children’s Partnership invited five SDYC members to sit alongside the adult panellists for the annual Section 11 audit reporting day. Our youth voice representatives did a thorough job of listening and questioning all agencies presenting reports during the day’s proceedings. This was another ‘first’ of its kind and will lead onto further involvement in shaping such statutory work in the future. In particular, ensuring the voice of children and young people in Gloucestershire are heard from a safeguarding perspective at all levels of engagement.

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