

Children & Young People's Services Directorate

Stakeholder Participation Update – Supporting Children and Young People's Learning

Thursday 20th June 2019

RAG Group Meeting

Belvoir Youth Centre, Belfast



Why supporting children and young people's learning?

- Whilst the majority of young people in Northern Ireland achieve and succeed at school, other vulnerable young people are at risk of failing to fulfil their potential, either as a result of their social context, an additional educational need or their experiences and attitudes towards school
- Youth Work is designed to complement the formal education system and the Department of Education (DE) recognise that it plays an important role by encouraging learning in a non-formal setting and by developing young people's personal, social and other key life skills
- Priorities for Youth, DE's policy document placed a greater emphasis on the needs of young people for whom Youth Work can provide a valuable link with formal education to increase their life chances in areas such as future employment and training opportunities



Why supporting children and young people's learning?

Young People Aged 14-18 Regional Assessment of Need Results

In the top 5 activities young people would like youth service to deliver to address their concerns, these key themes of learning arose:

Qualifications, Life Skills Programmes and Careers/Employment Programmes



Event details

Monday 20th May 2019 – Saints Youth Centre, Belfast

- 153 people in attendance – 135 young people and 18 adults
- Key stakeholders included DE RAG member, EA and Voluntary Youth Service staff, including Head of Service, Youth Work Alliance representative and Start 360 representative

Attendance Group	Number
Young People	131
Local Advisory Members	8 (4 adults and 4 young people)
Regional Advisory Members	2
Youth Work Staff	11 (7 EA, 4 Voluntary Sector)
Regional Voluntary Youth Organisation	1



Event details

Monday 20th May 2019 – Longtower Youth Centre, Derry/Londonderry

- 201 people in attendance - 145 young people and 56 adults
- Key stakeholders included community and voluntary sector representatives, representatives from the Youth Work Alliance, local post-primary schools, Derry City and Strabane District Council and EA staff from both the local and regional services, including the Assistant Director.

Attendance Group	Number
Young People	145
Local Advisory Members	26 (14 adults and 12 young people)
Regional Advisory Members	3
Youth Work Staff (Local and Regional)	27 (15 EA, 12 Voluntary Sector)



Key Findings – Derry/Londonderry

- The formal education system does not always meet or is responsive to young people's learning needs and styles
- Young people are reluctant to participate in learning opportunities due to low self-esteem, low confidence and fear of failure or anxiety
- Young people felt that they learned best by doing rather than listening, watching or reading and writing
- Young people stated that learning was more enjoyable in a relaxed atmosphere, in sessions that were fun and interactive and sessions that used the outdoors and creative arts
- Respondents liked the idea of making friends through learning, the importance of learning being a social occasion and learning from each other through discussion, debate and peer leadership
- A sense of belonging and positive relationships with youth leaders, teachers and their peers forms the cornerstone of young people's learning.
- The majority of respondents valued the opportunity the Youth Service provides; developing qualifications that were accessible and meaningful and would enhance their life opportunities
- 93% of participants believed that their youth worker understood them and how they learn best



Key Findings – Belfast

- Barriers to learning included a number of issues which relate directly to poor mental health having an impact on how young people learn
- Issues arising from the school environment itself were also identified as being a barrier to learning. These include exam stress, teachers not giving the students the support and attention they require in order to be successful, teachers focussing on pupils who do well and not helping those who struggle and too much homework
- Peer pressure, social media and antisocial behaviour were examples of the social issues which were cited as creating a barrier to learning
- Many respondents felt that youth service supports their learning by being supportive, helping when they fail in school, providing opportunities for experiential learning, like international programmes and by helping them to understand better
- Young people recognised that their youth centres/ projects ensured that their opinion mattered by being inclusive, treating them as adults, asking their opinion, consulting with them and involving them in planning



Recommendations – Derry/Londonderry

- Young people should be involved in the co-design of programmes, review progress and report on their learning themselves
- The youth service should design and develop qualifications based on the needs of young people in their youth club settings, using a co-creation model
- A strength-based model of delivery and relationships that support young people is crucial
- Young People with disabilities should lead, be mentors and provide a volunteer base to be role models, youth workers and teachers
- Creative arts should be used to enhance learning through staff development and partnership approaches within and outside of EA
- Outdoor learning should be utilised to offer a platform for challenge, to build personal strengths and resilience, to explore feelings and to experience safe spaces to grow



Recommendations – Belfast

- There is a requirement for additional opportunities for educational and international trips
- There should be greater consultation between schools and youth service to determine how they can best work together to support Children and Young People's learning
- There should be opportunities for meaningful conversations, including discussions about mental health
- There should be provision of more positive qualifications that are not in the formal curriculum
- Young people would like the opportunity for paid work experience in youth centres, such as the trainee youth support worker scheme
- Several young people highlighted the need for additional and better funded youth services for young people who learn through the medium of Irish
- Whilst extended provision funding is available to increase services, feedback indicated that there was a need for further youth provision, particularly at the weekend
- Youth centre environments are positive but can be improved by young people feeling welcomed, listened to, having less rules and by being integrated



Voice of Young People

- Derry and Strabane Event Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xqJ17J6Pnoc>

- Presentation by young people who supported the organisation of the South and West Belfast Event



Further Events

The Emerging Needs of Children & Young People

Monday 03rd June 2019 (19:00 – 21:00)

Venue 1: Seagoe Youth Centre

Area 1: Armagh Banbridge & Craigavon

Venue 2: Resurgum Youth Initiative

Area 2: Lisburn & Castlereagh

The Health & Wellbeing of Children & Young People

Monday 07th October 2019 (19:00 – 21:00)

- Venue 1: Ards Arena
- Area 1: North Down & Ards
- Venue 2: Patrician Youth Centre
- Area 2: Newry, Mourne & Down

Research & Innovation within Youth Services

Monday 04th November 2019 (19:00 – 21:00)

- Venue 1: Carrickfergus YMCA
- Area 1: Mid & East Antrim
- Venue 2: Rathcoole Youth Centre
- Area 2: Antrim & Newtownabbey

Young People & Inclusion

Monday 02nd December 2019 (19:00 – 21:00)

- Venue 1: Hammer Youth Club
- Area 1: Belfast (North)
- Venue 2: Cookstown Youth Resource Centre
- Area 2: Mid Ulster



Questions

