

REPORT

RAG/LAG Participation Event

Derry and Strabane

Supporting Young People's Learning

Monday 20th May 2019

Long Tower Youth and Community Centre



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report outlines a participative process with key stakeholders and young people on how the Youth Service can support young people's learning. The event was hosted in Long Tower Youth and Community Centre on 20th May with 201 participants.

Throughout the event stakeholders identified the processes and approaches that they believe best supported young people's learning whilst outlining some of the key challenges and barriers that they face in their own learning.

Young people stated that they were aware of their learning needs and that they do not want to be restricted as recipients of learning but to be co-creators of the programmes that they participate in.

The event highlighted that there is a growing demand to invest in creative arts, outdoor learning and music and dance to engage young people; particularly targeting those young people who are either excluded or have become disengaged from formal education.

1.1 Supporting Young People's Learning

- 1.1.1 The aim of this engagement event was to inform the Education Authority (EA) and the Regional Advisory Group (RAG) on how EA can best deliver Youth Services, the types of services we should be delivering, how we should deliver them and who this delivery should be aimed at.
- 1.1.2 Members of the Local Advisory Group (LAG) for Derry and Strabane hosted the engagement event. An invitation was extended to all local stakeholders, registered units and RAG members.
- 1.1.3 Young people have communicated that they want the Youth Service to work with them to support their learning both in school and in youth settings and to offer opportunities that are fun, valuable and interactive.
- 1.1.4 Involving young people in the design and delivery of engagement events throughout the region and in ongoing consultations will lead to the development of key themes for consideration and inclusion in the Regional Assessment of Need and the Regional Youth Development Plan 2020-2023.

2.1 Methodology

- 2.1.1 LAG members (more than half of this group are young people) have led, supported, publicised, engaged and delivered the event.
- 2.1.2 The Derry and Strabane area has a vibrant voluntary youth sector with well-established networks and structures, especially in the city side. The Youth Work Alliance has been supporting independent voluntary youth providers in a pilot programme along with the LAG to ensure representation and communication with colleagues.

2.2 Co-Creation

- 2.2.1 The LAG and the Youth Work Alliance participated in ‘co-creation’ training leading to a co-creation model used to plan activities and programmes including the engagement event on supporting young people’s learning.
- 2.2.2 Co-creation is a participatory approach whereby beneficiaries and stakeholders co-design and implement a project/product/service. It acknowledges everyone’s expertise and assets. Relationships and resources are valued meaning that power and responsibility are shared equally.
- 2.2.3 The co-creation model ensures we are working and doing “with” instead of “to”. This means that our stakeholders and our young people are more likely to engage in services by offering valuable insights, experiences and expertise.

2.3 Shared Practice and Workshops

- 2.3.1 At the event young people were informed of the role of Youth Services and were asked to give their thoughts and opinions through a range of approaches including some of the following: inputs from young people on how Youth Work supports their learning, a demonstration from Project Sparks on how young people with learning disabilities can act as peer educators, interactive workshops demonstrating the advantages of learning through the medium of Outdoor Education, walking debates on the approaches Youth Services employ to support learning, consultations on learning styles, barriers to learning and what Youth Services can do better to meet these challenges, workshops on the value and

learning in volunteering and interactive workshops with music and singing demonstrating the value of creative arts and young people as peer educators.



3 ATTENDANCE

3.1 Attendance

3.1.1 Participants in attendance included young people aged 13-19, Youth Workers and key stakeholders from the statutory, voluntary and community sectors.

3.1.2 Key stakeholders included community and voluntary sector representatives, local post-primary schools, Derry City and Strabane District Council and EA staff from both the local and regional services.

3.2 Attendance Figures

| 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) |

4.1 Introduction

The engagement event aimed to gather information relating to how EA can support young people's learning, the challenges they face in their learning and what would make learning more enjoyable for them. The results of this are found below.

4.2 Learning Styles

- 4.2.1 Young people felt that the learning styles used by youth workers and teachers had a negative impact on their learning. Over 60% of young people felt that they learned best by doing rather than listening, watching or reading and writing.

4.3 What Makes Learning Enjoyable?

- 4.3.1 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.
- 4.3.2 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.

4.4 What Would Encourage Young People To Learn Through The Youth Service?

- 4.4.1 The majority of respondents wanted the Youth Service to provide qualifications that were accessible and meaningful and would enhance their life opportunities.
- 4.4.2 Young People see residential opportunities as an important aspect of their learning not as a reward for learning.

4.5 Barriers to Learning

- 4.5.1 The formal education system does not always meet or is responsive to all their learning needs and styles.
- 4.5.2 Teachers and Youth Workers who are not supportive, engaging or lack enthusiasm.
- 4.5.3 Young people are reluctant to participate in learning opportunities due to low self-esteem, low confidence and fear of failure or anxiety.

4.6 Is the Youth Service Supporting Your Learning?

- 4.6.1 87% of participants felt that the youth service catered for all learning types.

- 4.6.2 75% of participants felt that sessions delivered by youth service were long enough to encourage learning but not too long to be boring.
- 4.6.3 93% of participants informed us that the programmes offered by the youth service were fun, interactive, enjoyable and interesting.
- 4.6.4 93% of participants believed that their youth worker understood them and how they learn best.

5.1 Recommendations

- 5.1.1 It was clear from the presentations and feedback from young people who participated, youth workers and other stakeholders who attended that young people are aware of what their learning needs are and that they want to co-design programmes, review progress and report on their learning themselves.
- 5.1.2 The young people made it clear that a sense of belonging and positive relationships with youth leaders, teachers and their peers forms the cornerstone of their learning.
- 5.1.3 A strength-based model of delivery and relationships that support young people is crucial.
- 5.1.4 Young people want to problem solve and to do things for themselves with our support and guidance.
- 5.1.5 Young People with disabilities can lead, be mentors and provide a valuable volunteer base to be role models, youth workers and teachers.
- 5.1.6 Outdoor learning offers a platform for challenge, to build personal strengths and resilience, to explore feelings and to experience safe spaces to grow.
- 5.1.7 Being part of a team to support the learning of others is important for young people.
- 5.1.8 Young people like to engage in creative arts; particularly those excluded or disengaged from formal education: Investment in creative arts, music and dance is important for future youth service delivery models.
- 5.1.9 Youth workers should have more staff development focused on working with those who have learning difficulties; capacity needs to be built to address barriers to learning.
- 5.1.10 Youth workers should have more staff development focused on the delivery of creative arts.
- 5.1.11 Youth service should explore partnerships for the development of creative arts.
- 5.1.12 Young people noted that they were keen to obtain qualifications through non-formal education programmes in the youth service. The youth service should design and develop through a co-creation model, qualifications based on the needs of young people in their youth club settings.

5.1.13 A survey will be developed to ascertain the thoughts of young people based on the key findings from this report. This will ensure a bigger sample size that may inform future planning and delivery of youth services.

5.2 Future considerations

5.2.1 The engagement event was extremely valuable in gaining an insight into the needs and aspirations of young people and how youth service can inspire, support and challenge them to be the best that they can be.

5.2.2 Co-creation was at the heart of the engagement event and central to the programmes that young people felt were best suited to their needs; the co-creation model should be explored further and promoted in all aspects of service delivery, it enhances learning, develops skills, creates ownership and creates buy in from participants.

5.2.3 The evidence gathered illustrated that young people felt that the Youth Service was engaging them in learning in ways that were relevant to them. EA should commission the Information and Planning Unit to research, analyse and disseminate good practice based on a co-creation model of programme design.

5.2.4 The youth service needs to develop qualifications that can be delivered by EA for young people who attend our youth services.

5.2.5 The possibility of using the creative arts to enhance learning should be explored through staff development, partnership approaches within and outside of EA and the recruitment of staff with a background in creative arts, music, dance, technology and outdoor learning should be considered.

5.2.6 The youth service should target its delivery through partnerships, staff development opportunities and funding schemes to engage with young people with learning disabilities as young people who may use our services but also as people who can lead and transform our service.

List of evidence sources available on request

- i Video of event including feedback from young people, workshops and inputs from guest speakers:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rXTplBvXJmc&t=8s>
- ii Project Sparks introduction video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LRRWyORcgNM>
- iii The impact of Project Sparks: Case Study:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xqJ17J6Pnoc>
- iv Programme and Invites
- v Attendance record
- vi Session plans for workshops and evidence gathered
- vii Draft consultation to disseminate throughout Northern Ireland

