

REPORT

**RAG/LAG Participation Event  
Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon**

**The Emerging Needs of Children & Young  
People**

*Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2019*

*Seagoe Youth Centre*



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report outlines a participative process with key stakeholders, including young people on the emerging needs of Children and Young People. The event was hosted in Seagoe Youth Centre in Portadown on 3rd June 2019 and engaged with 95 participants.

Throughout the event stakeholders identified emerging issues and associated challenges for children and young people. Stakeholders also identified approaches that they believe should be considered by Youth Service to support young people with these issues.

Young people stated that mental health, bullying, violence through arranged fights and social media are the main issues. Where social media provides many positive benefits it also affects and contributes to young people's negative emotional and mental health.

The event highlighted the need for more opportunities that encourage and enable young people to express their emotions and aspirations, through creative, sporting and challenging opportunities including Outdoor Learning. It also acknowledged the importance of the work of the youth service and what it can achieve and highlighted that it should be adequately resourced.

The Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon LAG members including young people have led, supported and engaged with youth service stakeholders for the RAG participation event in Seagoe Youth Centre, Portadown on the emerging needs of children and young people.

### 1.1 Aims

- To identify and inform the Education Authority (EA) and the Regional Advisory Group (RAG) on new or emerging needs of Children and Young People
- To support the development of key themes for the Regional Assessment of Need and the Regional Youth Development Plan 2020-2023
- To increase participation of young people and other key stakeholders at a local level to identify key themes and issues in relation to new and emerging needs.

### 1.2 Objectives

- To host a local event to increase the participation of young people and key stakeholders
- To provide opportunities for RAG members, LAG members and key stakeholders to network and to discuss and identify new or emerging issues for young people
- To develop recommendations on how youth services could best support young people to address their emerging needs.

- 2.1 LAG members including young people designed, supported, published and engaged in the delivery of this regional event hosted in Seagoe Youth Centre Kilicomaine Portadown.
- 2.2 LAG members held two pre - event planning meetings. Young people who provided inputs had a number of additional support meetings with their youth workers to prepare.
- 2.3 At the event a variety of methodologies were used to capture findings and evidence throughout the evening.
- 2.4 There was a powerpoint input on top three needs identified by young people within the 3 age bands 9-13, 14-18, 19-25 years as per current regional assessment of need research.
- 2.5 Mentimeter is a cloud-based tool that was used to encourage engagement and interaction with participants; questions were set and participants gave their input using their mobile phone or through the supply of iPads provided.
- 2.6 Round table café culture discussion workshops were facilitated with participants to provide an interactive supportive format to enable young people and stakeholders to identify and discuss emerging needs within the three age bands 9-13, 14-18, 19-25 years. Young people were also encouraged to draw and scribe thoughts and opinions on table cloths provided.
- 2.7 Guest speakers set the context with three young people (two of which were LAG members) from Portadown Craigavon and Banbridge providing inputs into their personal youth work journey from an Inclusion perspective, Youth Council / LAG perspective and a pathway reflection into further education and youth work employment.

## 3 ATTENDANCE

Participants in attendance included young people aged 9—25, Youth Workers from Local EA and Voluntary Youth Service, including Banbridge YC, ENP Banbridge, Brownlow YC, Drumgor YC, Tullygalley YC, Lurgan Youth Annexe, Taghnevan YC, Epi Centre Armagh, Seagoe YC, Seagoe Church Guides Brigade, Portadown YMCA, Oasis Youth Portadown, Youth Action Armagh and Newcastle YMCA. In total, 95 people attended the event.

Other key stakeholders included representatives from Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon Council (PCSP).

Representation from RAG included the Youth Work Alliance and the Department of Education.

### 3.1 Attendance Figures

Attendance Group	Number
Young People	64
Local Advisory Members	13 (7 Adults , 6 Young People)
Regional Advisory Members	2
Youth Work Staff / Other	22 (EA 10, Voluntary Sectors 8, Other 4)

### 3.2 Satisfaction

96% of evaluations stated that the event was very satisfactory or satisfactory.

## 4.1 New or Emerging Issues for Young People

The engagement event aimed to capture information on the new or emerging needs of children and young people and the challenges associated with these. A summary of those identified are outlined below:

### 4.1.1 Bullying

Young people reported that bullying continues to be a top issue and one of the biggest causes of unhappiness in young people aged between 9-13 years. Young people cited that it includes many different forms.

These include verbal abuse, such as name calling and gossiping; non-verbal abuse such as hand signs or on line cyber bullying messages; emotional abuse, such as threatening or humiliating someone, ignoring or isolating someone, spreading rumours and physical assaults such as hitting and pushing.

### 4.1.2 Social media

The effect of social media was also a concern among young people. They outlined that it's the more hidden aspects of the online world that have the potential to affect young people's mental health. Young people discussed that they are constantly connected, which comes with a feeling that you're constantly visible, and by extension judged, which creates feelings of stress.

The impact that social media can have on mental health combined with bullying was a major concern for young people in terms of body image, sleep and the fear of missing out.

Participants stated that whilst it provides many positive benefits for interactions between young people it also can highlight difficulties, such as the pressure to fit in, conform and the need to belong.

#### 4.1.3 Arranged fights

Young people reported increasing concerns in relation to arranged fights being organised using social media, with young people being invited to attend and spectate.

Young people reported a sense of belonging associated with the interlocking of friendships and identities taking place at an early age, that membership was sought for self-protection, and entailed backing up your friends, and that fighting was seen as a way of developing a reputation and gaining respect. Territorial fighting was also discussed with traditions and historical arguments mentioned as precursors to these.

#### 4.1.4 Mental health and future employment

Respondents stated that mental health and unemployment are major issues faced by young people and outlined that the impact of mental health problems on young people's lives can be significant. Challenges included disruption to their education via time off school and further education, which means they are more likely to experience problems in their future employment.

#### 4.1.5 Drugs and alcohol

The use of drugs and alcohol was commonly identified as a past time and recognised as a precursor to engaging in risk taking behaviours

#### 4.1.6 Gambling and online gaming

Respondents stated that gambling and online gaming can provide an escape or distraction from real life which can be difficult and complex, and it may be the only time that young people feel connected to the world. It was felt that Individuals may be socially isolated, not doing well in school or suffering from low self-esteem and confidence.



#### 4.1.7 **Brexit**

The consequence of Brexit for young people in Border regions was a noted concern. This included young people who live with one parent but cross the border to enjoy family contact with the other, young people who live in one jurisdiction and go to school, enjoy sporting and leisure activities or access health care or other services in the other. It was felt that these young people will have their lives seriously disrupted by Brexit even if the full extent of the impact is as yet unclear.

## 5.1 Recommendations

- 5.1.1 Provide one to one mentoring opportunities for young people to talk openly about their problems in a safe environment.
- 5.1.2 Young people need more opportunities that encourage and enable them to express their emotions and aspirations, through creative, sporting and challenging opportunities including Outdoor Learning.
- 5.1.3 Discourage young people from becoming involved in risk taking behaviours (arranged fights) by engaging them with street based outreach / detached teams of youth workers.
- 5.1.4 Provide positive, engaging activities and continue to create opportunities for exploring, addressing and tackling issues which affect young people and create safe spaces that young people want to go to.
- 5.1.5 Develop age appropriate youth work resources.
- 5.1.6 Create new digital well-being resources and programmes to help young people to develop virtual resilience, including good digital habits and a better understanding their tech usage.
- 5.1.7 Expand the perspectives of young people through travel.
- 5.1.8 There is an important role for generalist services in improving the quality of young people's lives. There is a need to acknowledge the importance of youth work and what it can achieve and therefore it should be resourced adequately.
- 5.1.9 There should be increased effective multi-agency working across statutory and voluntary sector organisations to tackle the issues raised.
- 5.1.10 Programmes need to be challenging and educational and young people must be involved in the planning and management of initiatives.

## 5.2 Future considerations

Youth workers need to be encouraged to take more risks with their youth work practice and be more responsive to young people's needs, reacting quicker to emerging issues and be more open to engaging with families and other voluntary and statutory agencies.

Training and support should be provided for youth service staff on the emerging issues that have been identified during this event.

Index of appendices: [list of evidence sources available on request]

- i Mentimeter Findings 9-13 years
- ii Mentimeter Findings 14-18 years
- iii Mentimeter Findings 19-25 years
- iv Mentimeter Findings Other Stakeholders
- v Programme Invite
- vi Attendance Record
- vii Evaluation Feedback

