

REPORT

**RAG/LAG Participation Event
Antrim & Newtownabbey**

Research and Innovation in Youth Work

Monday 4th November 2019

Parkhall Youth Centre



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides details of the Stakeholder Participation Event that took place on Monday 4th November 2019 in Parkhall Youth Centre, Antrim. The event was part of the Education Authority (EA) RAG participative processes and was led by the Regional Advisory Group (RAG) and Local Advisory Group (LAG) for Antrim and Newtownabbey.

The event engaged sixty two key stakeholders from across the statutory and voluntary youth sectors to consider 'Research and Innovation in Youth Work'.

Participants had the opportunity to contribute their views and opinions through discussions in workshops, to identify their passions and interests and identify possible youth research themes relating to these.

Discussions also took place regarding opportunities Youth Services can offer young people to help them live their dreams and be innovators in their local communities.

Young people identified many different passions, with some of the repeat themes including learning about culture and travelling, equality based issues, music, sport, volunteering, climate change and environmental issues.

Research topics identified were around outreach work, drugs, training for young people and how to prepare young people for their future.

The youth work opportunities that participants identified as supporting innovation included taking more risks, travel, ICT, leadership opportunities and more opportunities to work with people from different backgrounds and cultures.

Local Advisory Group

The Antrim & Newtownabbey LAG young people members have led, supported and engaged with youth service stakeholders for the RAG participation event in Parkhall Youth Centre on Research and Innovation in Youth Work.

Aims

To identify and inform the Education Authority (EA) and the Regional Advisor Group (RAG) on Research and Innovation in Youth Work.

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 innovative approaches to addressing key issues identified by young people.

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 analyse and discuss innovative approaches that may enhance youth work.

To develop recommendations on how youth services could use innovative approaches to best engage young people and address their needs.

2.1 Methodology

The event was hosted and facilitated by ten young people from the Antrim & Newtownabbey LAG.

The young people held three event planning meetings and allocated roles for the evening. One young person, Ryan Connolly hosted the event, group members greeted and signed in guests and all of the young people facilitated discussion groups with a youth worker scribing the discussion.

A variety of methodologies were used to enable the participants to engage fully, which are outlined below.

The Education Authority (EA) Outdoor Learning Service opened the event with an icebreaking activity and team building challenge, to help the young people and adults mix together.

In order to set the context for the event, Aimee Clint, Top Entrepreneur under 20 for Europe, discussed her journey of innovation, providing an inspiring motivational speech about how she used her passion to set up her business aged 17.

Participants were split into small discussion groups, which were named after various young people the planning group felt were inspirational, because they have helped or are trying to help change lives for the better. These workshops, engaged participants to identify their passions and interests and outline possible youth research themes relating to these. Discussions also took place regarding opportunities Youth Services can offer young people to help them live their dreams and be innovators in their local communities.

Finally, a representative from the Youth Work Alliance facilitated an interactive presentation on 'Learning Dreams', which incorporated Mentimeter and brought the evening to an inspiring end.

3 ATTENDANCE

A total of 62 people attended the event.

Participants in attendance included young people and full-time and part-time youth work staff from Local EA and Voluntary Youth Services, including St Comgalls Youth Centre, FLARE, Glengormley Youth Resource Centre, Rathcoole Youth Centre, Millgreen Youth Centre, Antrim & Newtownabbey Youth Projects, Bridge Youth Centre, Parkhall Youth Centre, Ballycraig Youth Centre and Crumlin Youth Centre.

Other key stakeholders included representatives from PlayBoard, Volunteer Now, and Bytes.

Representation from RAG included the Department of Education, the Youth Work Alliance, the Strategic Forum and the Head of Local Youth Service.

3.1 Attendance Figures

Attendance Group	Number
Young People	24
Local Advisory Members	12 (10 young people, 2 adults)
Regional Advisory Members	4
Youth Work Staff	18 (6 voluntary, 12 statutory)
Others	4 (PlayBoard 1, Volunteer Now 1, Bytes 2)

3.2 Satisfaction

100% of evaluations stated that the event was very satisfactory or satisfactory.

4.1 What are young people passionate about and where do they get information on their passions?

Music and sport were identified across the young people's discussion groups, these were seen as opportunities to release emotions and express themselves.

There were significant equality based issues raised particularly around disability and women's rights.

Environmental issues were a key topic, as many young people had taken part in the climate change strikes.

Culture and travelling was another passion, with young people wanting to interact more with others from different backgrounds and visit different areas in order to experience new cultures.

Young people were very keen to engage in their passions in an active participative and interactive way, to live their passion rather than be a passive observer or to have it taught to them.

The internet and Social Media were the main source of information for young people to get information on their passions.

Youth services and school also featured highly as sources of information. Young people clearly appreciated the personal touch of getting information first hand.

Some feedback from adult stakeholders highlighted that they felt passionate about creating and giving opportunities to young people, and delivering this in a fun way.

Adult stakeholders also felt that they could make a difference and share their experiences with young people but were equally keen to listen to young people and learn about their passions.

Adults, like the young people, acknowledged the importance of engaging with young people on equality issues, particularly around disability and perceived background.

The use of ICT to research and increase knowledge on issues was seen as key by the majority of participants to support young people's passions.

4.2 What research can Youth Service undertake to inform young people?

Participants discussed both topics and the best way for Youth Service to undertake research with young people.

The primary examples which were identified regarding how to engage young people in research, was online surveys, group discussions and educational visits to provision related to the research in order to learn from good practice examples.

Research topics identified through discussions included research into the effects of drugs on mental health, research into perspectives on different cultures, research into the provision of outreach work and research into how best to support young people to prepare for their future.

4.3 What helps young people to live their dreams and innovate?

These discussions were focussed around people, places and experiences and provided an excellent insight into how young people feel supported and should be further supported.

Many participants stated that they feel a sense of belonging and gain confidence in their youth projects and youth clubs, which help them to undertake new experiences. Youth Services also have an important role to play in signposting young people to additional opportunities.

Participants highlighted the importance of having supportive people around you, particularly friends and family, but they also identified youth workers and teachers as people who believe in them and encourage them to live their dreams.

Finally, participants identified some of the characteristics of people who live their dreams, which included being resilient, confident, determined and motivated, which were recognised as outcomes of youth work interventions.

4.4 What opportunities can Youth Services develop to support young people to live their dreams and be innovative?

A wide range of examples were identified by participants as to how Youth Services can support young people to live their dreams and to encourage innovation. This included programmes, activities and themes, the most prevalent of which are outlined below.

Opportunities for travel to experience different cultures and identities was a key recommendation for programmes that should be offered by youth services, with many of the groups identifying this during discussion.

Leadership programmes and development were also seen as an important opportunities for many of the participants.

Links with other services in the community were identified to allow for signposting young people to additional opportunities and discussions also focussed on the need for collaborative programmes across youth services.

There was positive discussion on the need to allow young people to take risks, which will develop their resilience and confidence to work to achieve their dreams.

Finally, it was outlined by a number of participants that youth services should engage with more young people through the promotion of the opportunities on offer through increased social media presence.

5.1 Recommendations

A number of recommendations have been identified through this participation event in relation to support for young people and development of the service as follows:

The use of IT is a key recommendation in relation to supporting young people with information, research and the use of online solutions to identify young people's interests, dreams and passions. IT was also identified as the best way to improve promotion and advertising of Youth Services, which should include the positive impact of youth work.

Many of the participants felt that young people need more information on the positive outcomes of youth services and that there should be more sharing of practice and celebrating achievements within and about youth services.

The event was identified as an excellent opportunity to hear the voice of young people and a key recommendation is that there should be more engagement events where young people can express their views on their needs and dreams in order to support the design youth programmes where young people can focus on topics they care about.

The two most identified opportunities young people would like more of were travel and leadership. Whilst youth services already offer many of these programmes, there needs to be greater promotion of these and further opportunities provided.

Finally, consideration should be given as to how we better identify and promote the link between youth work participation with qualifications and the development of young people's employability.

5.2 Future considerations

The key themes identified through the stakeholder event should be considered further by the EA Information and Planning team in preparation for the Regional Assessment of Need and will be shared with all local Senior Youth Officers for development of the upcoming three year plans.

The LAG should take account of the recommended youth service responses to identify issues for future area planning purposes and future service delivery.

List of evidence sources available on request

- I. Agenda
- II. PowerPoint presentations
- III. Notes from discussion groups
- IV. Mentimeter Findings
- V. Programme Invite
- VI. Attendance Record
- VII. Evaluation Feedback

