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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report outlines a consultation facilitated by the Regional Advisory Group (RAG) for key stakeholders including young people on the topic of Inclusion. The event, hosted in Hammer Youth Centre in Belfast engaged over 286 key stakeholders and explored the strengths of young people from various backgrounds, experiences of exclusion and its impact on wellbeing and barriers to Inclusion. However, the focus of the event was to create positive change driven by young people and to achieve this, participants were encouraged to make recommendations to direct future Youth Service provision.

The consultation event acknowledged that Inclusion is much broader than Section 75, although some of these communities featured heavily. There were 12 subthemes for discussion and these were:

- Community politics
- Rurality
- Young People with Caring Responsibilities
- Mental Health
- Newcomer Young People
- Travelling Community
- Education & Employment
- Differently Able
- Young People in Care
- LGBTQ+
- Young People and the Justice System
- Inclusion through Sport and Outdoor Learning

Stakeholders highlighted a number of strengths of the young people from section 75 communities, and other young people who often feel excluded. These included:

- Additional skills
- Alternative ways of learning through process
- Resilience
- Optimism
- Gratefulness & appreciation
- Aspirations and inspiring others
- Awareness of support structures
- Personal experiences
- Diversity (in various forms)
- Determination & willingness to work for change
- Self-assurance
- Creativity

Stakeholders also highlighted a number of current barriers to Inclusion for young people. These included:

- Transport
- Stigma
- Lack of facilities (rural areas)
- Access to centres
- Language & Communications
- Basic skills (Newcomers – literacy)
- Misunderstanding (LGBTQ+)
- Difficulties transitioning between schools
- Safety
- Confidentiality
- Fear of judgement & discrimination
- Isolation
- Restrictive environments
- Exclusion (Justice – bail restrictions)
- Criminal records
- No clothes or money
- Caring responsibilities
- Lack of engagement with political reps

Key recommendations to promote Inclusion highlighted by stakeholders were:

- Service provision to cater specifically for SEN
- Integration between user groups and generalist provision
- Increased availability of transport
- Enhanced communication with non-service users
- Small group and 1:1 support
- More partnership work with specialist agencies
- Translation of all documents and signage
- More accessible buildings
- Social media presence
- Increased regularity of stakeholder engagement events
- More opportunities for international work

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aims of the Event

- 1.1.1 Increased participation of children & young people and other Youth Service Stakeholders on key themes relating to Inclusion
- 1.1.2 To identify the issues for young people around Inclusion
- 1.1.3 To explore how these can be addressed by Youth Services
- 1.1.4 Engagement on the development of the key themes for the Regional Assessment of Need and the Regional Youth Development Plan 2020-2023

1.2 Objectives

- 1.2.1 To host a Participative Stakeholder Engagement Event in the Hammer Youth Centre.
- 1.2.2 To adopt a strength based approach to promote Inclusion.
- 1.2.3 To create branding materials embedding Inclusiveness as a prerequisite in future EA Youth Service events and programmes.
- 1.2.4 To provide a platform for the voice of young people.
- 1.2.5 To showcase examples of Inclusive practices.
- 1.2.6 To facilitate 12 themed discussions on the theme of Inclusion.
- 1.2.7 To provide opportunities for RAG, LAG and Key Stakeholders to network.

2 METHODOLOGY

Methodology

- 2.1.1 In an attempt to capture as many youth voices as possible, a Living Libraries media piece was created and screened at the event. This was a series of interviews with young people who engage in various Youth Services across a range of settings. The video can be shared along with this report.
- 2.1.2 To highlight the strengths based approach, a poster campaign was created to set the scene. The attitudinal approach to promoting Inclusion at this event was “I need to be Included”, not for me, but because I have something to offer. (Appendix 1)
- 2.1.3 The logo for the event was transformed into a 12 piece jigsaw puzzle and one piece was given to a note taker at each table. On the back of that jigsaw piece, they were to record the strengths associated with the thematic group/topic as well as suggestions for promoting Inclusion moving forward. (Appendix 2)
- 2.1.4 The central methodology was Open Space Discussions, which involved 12 themed discussions which followed a semi-scripted format.
- 2.1.5 12 young people were involved in the organisation and planning of the event. On the evening they were instrumental as they opened the event on stage and facilitated all 12 discussion tables. Notes were collated from these discussion tables.
- 2.1.6 To promote partnerships moving forward, we invited specialist guests for each theme who were present to add value to discussion. (Appendix 3)
- 2.1.7 Mentimeter was used to engage the audience and record responses to 6 key questions. 3 questions were posed prior to the Open Space Discussions to gauge opinion before the discussions. In addition, 3 evaluative questions were posed after the Open Space Discussions.

3 ATTENDANCE

3.1 Attendance Figures

<u>Attendance Group</u>	<u>Number</u>
Young People	220
Local Advisory Members	3
Regional Advisory Members	5
Youth Work Staff	42
Other	16
Total	286

3.1.1 Invitations for the event were circulated to Regional and Local Advisory Group members and all core funded youth groups in the North and East Belfast area. Further invitations were openly circulated across local community contacts. A total of 286 people attended, the majority of whom were young people aged 14-18 years.

3.1.2 Representation from Youth Work Alliance, DE, ETI and BHSC was welcomed and all representatives participated throughout the session.

3.1.3 The attendance sheets are enclosed as Appendix 5.

4 ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE

4.1 Feedback from Discussion Tables

Feedback from the discussion tables, presented in the executive summary, was extremely fruitful. While analysing the evidence it became clear that young people are passionate about the concept of Inclusion. As well as the engagement levels at the discussion tables, we had groups travel to the event from Derry, Craigavon and South Armagh which shows the determination of young people and staff to have their voice represented at this event.

The preparation for the event was key in making the discussions relevant to every young person in attendance as well as an opportunity to explore the Inclusion of others. This is also evident in the Living Libraries media piece (appendix 4).

There were a number of strengths highlighted at the discussion tables which shows the value of a strength based approach to stakeholder engagement on the theme of Inclusion. The summative conclusion is that young people who are often excluded should be included, not only from a rights base, but because they bring vibrancy and strengths which create a more beneficial experience for all.

There were various barriers to Inclusion highlighted at the tables which shows that, despite significant work and funding invested in promoting Inclusion, there is still progress to be made. The barriers can be split into 3 categories; Facilities, Attitudes and Knowledge & Skills. The key barriers within the Facilities category are; transport and available centres which are accessible. Within Attitudes, the key barriers are stigma and judgement. Within the Knowledge & Skills category, the key barriers are language (including Irish language), awareness of services and misunderstanding particularly around the LGBTQ+ community.

4.2 Feedback from Mentimeter

Mentimeter was used to engage the audience and record responses to 6 key questions. 3 questions were posed prior to the Open Space Discussions to gauge opinion before the discussions. In addition, 3 evaluative questions were posed after the Open Space Discussions. The responses to each question highlighted:

Prior to Open Space Discussions

- What is Inclusion?
 - “Acceptance”; “Togetherness”; “Belonging”; “Valuing Difference”
- Who needs to be Included (Specific Groups)?
 - “Homeless”; “Travellers”; “Me”; “Kids in Care”; “Young People”; “Bedroom Kids”; “Young Parents”; “LGBTQ+”; “Irish Language”; “People Who Can Contribute”
- What strengths can they bring?
 - “Diversity”; “Knowledge”; “Friendship”; “New Skills”; “Resilience”; “Determination”; “Courage”; “New Perspectives”

After Open Space Discussions

- One thing you have learned tonight?
 - “We are ready to be more inclusive”; “There is a willingness from young people to get involved and engage”; “There are people that need to be included that I didn’t think about”; “The full potential for ‘Inclusion’”; “Ask, start a conversation, don’t assume”; “There are people out there willing to help you and that we need to campaign to make these things happen”; “We need equality”; “Inclusion can beat discrimination”; “How to break down barriers”; “The people who are often excluded are the experts on Inclusion”; “Young people have limits put on them by adults”; “The voice of young people is important”; “Everyone should be treated fairly”; “Issues affecting young people in care”
- One thing you will change?
 - “Way I think about things”; “My perspective”; “I can be more welcoming”; “Not assume”; “Plan similar event”; “My view of others”; “How I treat people”

(This question also received some responses about the “Sound System” and “Acoustics” of the venue as well as the limited “Seating”. These responses were interpreted as one thing you would change about the event.)

- Who needs to be involved moving forward?
 - “Young People”; “Youth Workers”; “Police”; “Schools”; “Council”; “Parents”; “Funders”; “Policy/Decision Makers”; “Politicians”

4.3 Feedback from Specialist Guests

Additional feedback was sought from specialist guests post event, the feedback was almost exclusively positive. Many invited guests reflected on how impressed they were with the young people and their level of meaningful engagement at their discussion tables. They expressed an eagerness to be involved in future events like this and stated that they would like to bring more staff and young people from their service. There was high praise for the young people who facilitated the themed discussions. They also highlighted the high attendance levels (286) as a positive. The only undesirable feedback was the venues acoustics which caused difficulty.

5 OUTCOMES

5.1 Recommendations

5.1.1 Participants listed a range of methods which they felt that Youth Service currently does and could continue to do, or introduce, to promote Inclusion. These comprised of:

- Service provision to cater specifically for SEN; purpose built facilities or considered as part of any refurbishment plans
- Integration between user groups and controlled youth service provision
- Increased availability of transport
- Enhanced communication with non-service users
- Small group and 1:1 support made more available with youth workers
- Additional funding to support educational and international trips
- More partnership work with specialist agencies
- Translation of all documents (particularly registration & consent forms)
- Current buildings to be made more accessible and welcoming
- Enhanced social media presence at local level
- Increased regularity of stakeholder engagement events

6 Appendices

Appendix 1 Poster campaign – *“I need to be included”*

Appendix 2 Feedback on jigsaw pieces

Appendix 3 Specialist guest list

Appendix 4

Appendix 5 Attendance list

