

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

YOUNG PEOPLE'S OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

13th November 2009

Increasing the participation of children & young people in shaping services

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on developments in the active engagement of children and young people across the Children's Trust.

2.0 Overview

North Yorkshire County Council and members of the wider North Yorkshire's Children's Trust (the Trust) continue to be involved in a significant level of diverse and quality engagement work with children, young people and parents.

For a number of years this work has been the focus of the Voice, Influence and Participation (VIP) Group. Increasingly, participation is seen as a vital part of how services are delivered. We now routinely see participation as central to funding opportunities, inspection regimes and it is embedded in the array of legislation, guidance and national indicators which surround our daily lives.

3.0 Core areas

The VIP Group is a cross service and sector group of colleagues whose key role is to support and challenge the development of children and young people's active engagement in the services they receive. To accommodate a thriving, passionate and growing membership (including the Young People's Champion) the VIP Group has over the last year developed its focus around themed working groups. These core areas of work include:

a) Participation Strategy

A new integrated participation strategy, to be owned and approved by the Trust and all of its partners, is currently being developed. This strategy will map out the steps we all need to take to ensure children, young people and parents across North Yorkshire move a step change forward in how they are truly and effectively engaged in developing our work. It will be an overarching strategy and will need to influence all other strategies. We are on course to have the strategy approved by the Trust before April 2010.

b) HyBRid

HyBRid is North Yorkshire's participation self-assessment tool and is key to services understanding where they are with regard to their participation work and in setting their framework for change and development. The use of the tool is supported by the Children & Young People's Plan and a range of work is going on to support and develop the use of HyBRid. This includes, staff briefings, cross sector training resource development and school-based assessments through a Student Voice group.

c) Networks

As participation is becoming more embedded and impacts on more people there is a need to develop and coordinate VIP Networks across the County. Over the last couple of years a project in Harrogate, Actively Involving Children and Young People, has matured into a strong local network. They are now coordinating their own training needs assessments, delivering training locally, helping each other share good practice and using HyBRid as their driving force. This good practice is to be rolled out across North Yorkshire over the coming months.

d) Training

The key to participation is changing the hearts and minds of the adults who work with and around children and young people. As such, equipping staff with the relevant skills and knowledge to be able to effectively engage children and young people in participation activities and involving them in decision making is reflected as a priority in the One Children's Workforce Development Plan. Along with a developing range of specific participation training, participation has and continues to be picked up as a theme at a range of conferences – for example the forthcoming Children & Young People' Service Workforce Development event and the Voluntary and Community Sector's Annual Children and Young People's Conference.

e) Looked after Children

As part of the Care Matters: Children and Young People's Bill 2008, we have established a Young Person's Council. This group of looked after children develop their own agenda and meet regularly with elected members and senior officers to progress their issues. The approach taken to this in North Yorkshire has been flagged up as excellent practice by Ofsted in their recent inspection. To quote:

“The [Young People's] Council has excellent links with strategic groups such as the Multi-Agency Looked After Partnership, the Corporate Parenting Standing Group and the Children's Trust Board, ensuring that the voice of children is heard, and routinely informs strategic planning.”

f) Under 11's and Parents

We have a Participation Coordinator for young people, (aged 11 +), but currently do not have a coordinator to support work with younger children and their parents. The group is currently reviewing the participation support for under 11's and for parents and will be making recommendations to the Trust where appropriate.

g) Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (LDD)

There is a range of work being developed around increasing the voice and influence of children and young people with across the spectrum of need. This is specialist work frequently focused on developing communication aspects to enable children and young people's voices to be heard and then listened to and acted upon. Some examples include; the Flying High to See the Way group of ex-service users helping to develop the Short Breaks funding (national recognition), the Positive Activity Development Workers working on a one to one basis with young people to identify and support access to their positive activity wants and needs and soe great work in the schools at developing school councils. This work is complimenting the wider work around the development of the Trust's LDD Strategy

h) Youth Councils

Please refer to the accompanying, more detailed paper on the development, implementation and support of youth councils across North Yorkshire and how we looking to develop further links and opportunities for young peoples engagement in democracy and scrutiny.

i) Youth Charter

The Youth Charter was developed within Integrated Youth Support but this quality mark, awarded by young people to recognise effective young people friendly services, has been picked up by the VIP Group and work is underway to increase access to the award.

j) Health

Young people are being supported to assess local young people's sexual health services against the Department of Health's 'You're Welcome' quality criteria. The Undercover Project involves training groups of young people to mystery shop, assess and provide feedback to a range of services including GPs, health drop-ins and pharmacies. The project is currently being piloted in Richmondshire and Hambleton and will be rolled out across the county in 2010

j) Other Directorates within North Yorkshire County Council

Within North Yorkshire County Council, the participation and engagement of children and young people is not restricted to the Children and Young People's Service and a there is an increasing role being played by other Directorates. Examples include; Use of HyBRid by the Libraries Service and their development of "New Look – No Shush", Highways engagement in the delivery of the Playbuilder funding which has a central theme of children and young peoples participation in the design and delivery of 22 play spaces and the work of the Corporate Community Engagement Group which looks to coordinate VIP type activity for all age groups accessing County Council services. The latter has been involved in the development of North Yorkshire Strategic Partnership's Framework for Community Engagement and Neighbourhood Management and the coordination of the County Councils' approach to obligations under the new Duty to Involve.

4.0 Some of the challenges ahead

4.1 We are not complacent and it is recognised there are a range of challenges ahead, especially if we are to become a leading authority nationally on the engagement of children and young people. Some of these challenges include:

- Further cultural change with the adults who work around children and young people – focused on workforce development
- Children and young people having a greater engagement in governance and high level decision making
- Harnessing the developing digital and technological communication methods available to engage with young people
- Developing engagement skills with regard to targeted groups of children and young people, such as; LDD, Travellers, Looked After Children and Home Educated Children
- Further embedding HyBRid as the driver for participation
- Getting better at feeding back to children and young people and demonstrating that account has been taken of their views

- Satisfying the increasing demand for 'specialist' participation support
- Developing an accessible and useable participation database
- Drawing effective parallel links between the Youth Councils and the Overview and Scrutiny Panels

4.2 The Children and Young People's Plan and the effective support and challenge role being played by the Performance and Outcomes Team is and will continue to play a major part in the future development of the active engagement of children and young people across the Children's Trust.

5.0 Recommendations

Members are asked:

- a) To note the current position and planned activities.
- b) To comment on how elected members and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee can further engage with children and young people.

Report Submitted by

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NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
YOUNG PEOPLE'S OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

13th November 2009

**The Development of Youth Councils in North Yorkshire:
Background and State of Play Update (October 2009)**

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the development of Youth Councils across North Yorkshire.

2.0 Background

2.1 *"Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child".*

Article 12: UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

2.2 *"They (young people) are valuable not only as future adults but people who have a place in society now... Not involving children and young people has its consequences. It breeds discontent and resentment... It is only through having rights that young people learn to respect other people's rights"*

C. Willow 'Hear! Hear! Promoting Children and Young People's Democratic Participation in Local Government', LGIU (1997)

2.3 In recent years there has been a significant move towards giving young people more opportunities to get involved in the design, provision and evaluation of policies and services that affect them or which they use. The 'Every Child Matters: Change for Children'¹ programme, for example, aims to ensure that policies and services are designed around the needs of children and young people, and that they are involved in decision making at a local and national level. Similarly, 'Aiming High: A Ten Year Strategy for Positive Activities' commits to placing 25% of funding for youth activities and facilities in the hands of young people by 2018².

2.4 The background to this is the weight of evidence that involving young people in the planning, delivery and evaluation of services brings benefits:

¹ 'Every Child Matters: Change for Children' (DfES, 2004)

² 'Aiming High: A Ten Year Strategy for Positive Activities (DfES, July 2007)

- 2.4.1 Better services. It is accepted that the effectiveness of services depends on listening and responding to customers. Giving young people an active say in how policies and services are developed, provided, evaluated and improved should ensure that policies and services more genuinely meet their needs.
- 2.4.2 Promoting citizenship and social inclusion. Promoting early engagement in public and community life is crucial to sustaining and building a healthy society. As successive reports from the Social Exclusion Unit have shown, listening to young people is a powerful means of persuading disadvantaged young people that they count and can contribute.
- 2.4.3 Personal and social education and development. Good participation opportunities produce more confident and resilient young people. Promoting citizenship is already an important part of the Government's education agenda.

2.5 In North Yorkshire the importance of involving young people in decision making is recognised in 'Children and Young People's Plan 2008-11' which lists 'Increase children and young people's participation in shaping services' as one of the 'Priorities for Improvement'.

3.0 Youth Councils

3.1 There are many ways of actively involving you people in decision making, but one method which has gained in recognition, popularity and influence during the last decade is the Youth Council, with large numbers of such bodies now existing across the country.

3.2 The National Association of Local Councils³ highlights the following benefits of Youth Councils:

Youth Councils enable young people to;

- Voice their concerns
- Participate in local government
- Be empowered to take decisions and action to improve their local community.

Youth Councils enable local councils to;

- Truly represent the whole of the community they live in become more vibrant, modern and dynamic
- Encourage young people to vote and become councillors when they are old enough
- Improve services to young people

³ http://www.nalc.gov.uk/Toolkits/Create_a_Youth_Council/Create_a_youth_council.aspx

Youth Councils enable the local community to;

- Become safer and more sustainable
- Become more vibrant and progressive
- Improve services and be more representative

3.3 Although there are many different formats for the operation of youth councils, the National Youth Agency⁴ has identified three features that a council should have:

- it has to be democratic - young people representing others and not just voicing their own concerns;
- it has to have access to power - to the committees and structures which make the decisions;
- it has to be able to act on things which matter to young people and get results at its own pace.

4.0 Youth Councils in North Yorkshire

4.1 The development and implementation of youth councils across North Yorkshire is identified as an action under priority 4.2, (Increase children and young people's participation in shaping services) of the 'Children and Young People's Plan 2008-11' and is one of the key priorities of the Voice, Influence and Participation (VIP) Group. The lead on this is being taken by the County Council's Youth Service, 4Youth who, working with a number of other organisations including District and Borough Councils, have successfully facilitated the development of youth councils in a number of areas across the county.

4.2 In April 2008 4Youth facilitated a Youth Council Development Day which was attended by representatives from a number of agencies and young people from existing youth councils in Craven and Selby. The decision was taken at this event to work towards the development of youth councils centred around 20 locations based on meeting young people's needs in terms of access and providing the opportunity to influence decision making in their local area. It is these areas which 4Youth has focussed on over the past 18 months and the current 'state of play' of each youth council is detailed in Appendix Two. In all cases 4Youth is working to ensure that the principles set out by the National Youth Agency are adhered to.

⁴ <http://www.youthinformation.com/templates/internal.asp?nodeid=90866>

- 4.3 The developing youth councils are playing an increasingly important role in local decision making with groups being recognised as a valid and effective means of consulting with young people. In addition, each council has been granted control of £5000 of Youth Opportunities Fund money to allocate to young people's groups and to develop activities in their local area.
- 4.4 To further enable the involvement of young people in decision making at all levels of the political structure a County Youth Council (NYYC) comprised of representatives of the 20 local youth councils has now been established with the first meeting taking place on 28th October.
- 4.5 NYYC will, by March 2010, feed into the UK Youth Parliament with 3 NYYC Councillors taking up seats as Members of the Youth Parliament (MYPs). Previously, North Yorkshire has not engaged with the UK Youth Parliament due to concerns regarding the lack of a process for identifying potential representatives: the model now being adopted addresses this concern and offers the opportunity for young people to genuinely represent their peers.
- 4.6 At a meeting of the VIP Youth Council Steering Group in January 2009 it was proposed that funding be sought to create a specific post(s) with countywide responsibility for the development of youth councils. Resources were subsequently identified via the 4Youth budget to establish two fixed term posts; a full-time post responsible overseeing Youth Councils and Keyfund with specific responsibilities for the north and east of the county, and a 0.5 post supporting Youth Councils in the south west. An appointment was made to the full-time position and they took up the post in October but, despite two recruitment rounds, the 0.5 position remains vacant.

5.0 The Future: Issues to Address

- 5.1 **Access to Power:** As specified in the NYA recommendations, it is essential that Youth Councils have genuine access to the structures and committees which make decisions otherwise they become merely tokenistic bodies. It is vital therefore that the County Council, as well as second tier authorities, work with Youth Councils to ensure that such access exists. There are a number of ways this could happen e.g. the East Riding Youth Assembly has seats on the local authority's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, but dialogue is required to ensure the most appropriate method is identified.
- 5.2 **Funding:** Although involving young people in decision making is more than just a youth service issue, at present all funding for the support and development of Youth Councils in

North Yorkshire is provided through the 4Youth core budget. If the councils are to be continued to be supported properly, this will create a significant pressure on resources.

5.3 **Logistics:** The geography of North Yorkshire presents real challenges with regard to holding County Youth Council meetings. It is essential, therefore, that consideration is given to developing alternative methods of operation.

5.4 **Publicity:** In order to ensure that Youth Councils genuinely represent the county's young people it is crucial that the existence, purpose and work of the councils is promoted using appropriate mediums.

6.0 Recommendations

Members are asked:

- a) To note the current position and planned activities.
- b) To comment on possible responses to issues highlighted in section 5.

Report submitted by

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Report written by

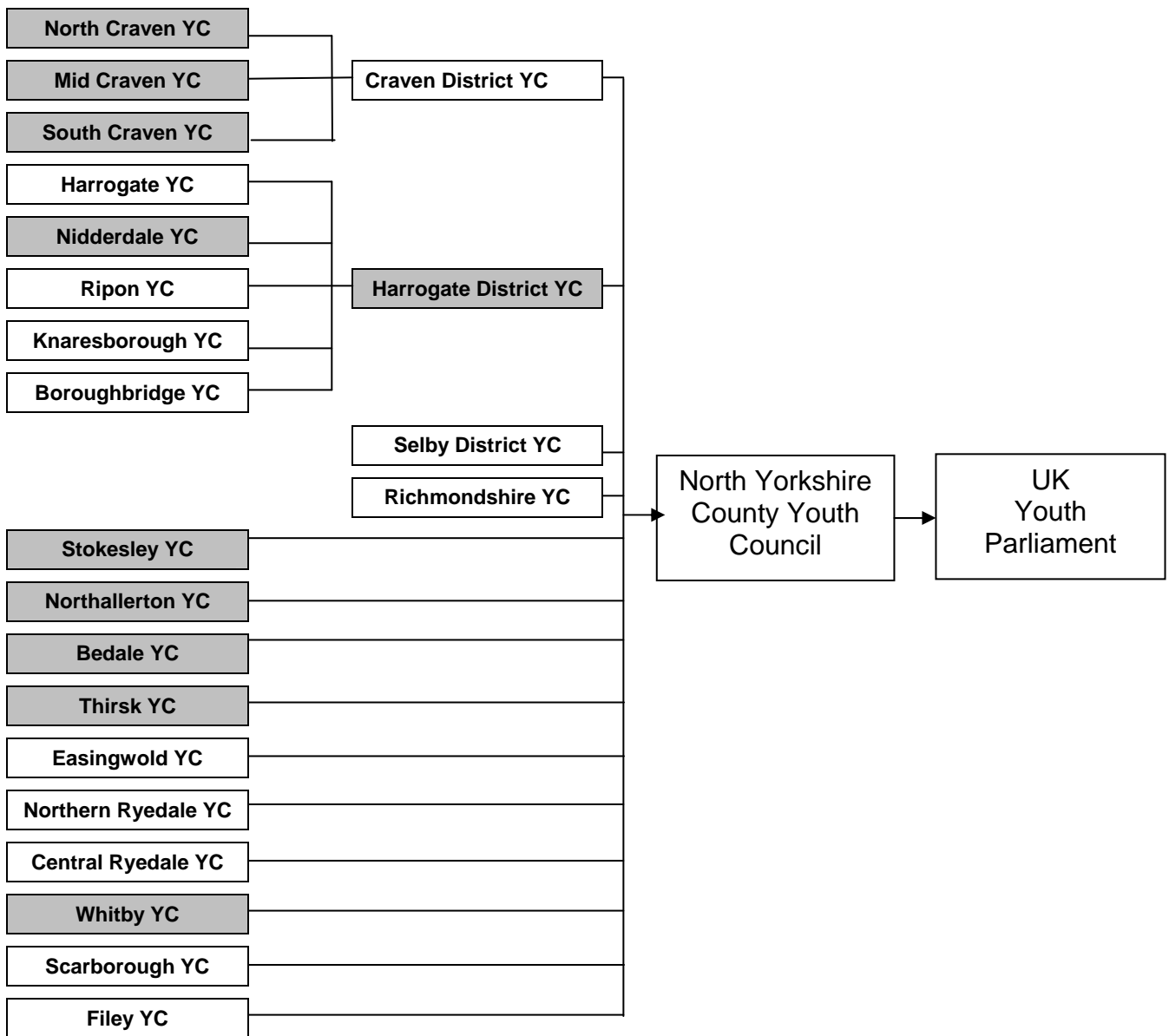
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Date: 3rd November 2009

Background Documents: None

Annexes: Appendices One and Two

Appendix One: Youth Council Structure in North Yorkshire



Key

- Thirsk YC Council planned but not yet established
- Selby YC Youth Council in operation

APPENDIX TWO

**YOUTH COUNCILS IN NORTH YORKSHIRE
STATE OF PLAY (OCTOBER 2009)**

District	Youth Councils	State of Play	Achievements to Date	Representation on NYYC
Craven	North Craven		•	
	Mid Craven		•	
	South Craven			
Harrogate	Harrogate		•	Yes
	Nidderdale		•	No
	Ripon		•	No
	Boroughbridge		•	Yes
	Knaresborough			Yes
Selby	Selby District			Yes
Richmondshire	Richmondshire District			Yes

Hambleton	Northallerton		•	No
	Thirsk			No
	Easingwold			Yes
	Bedale			No
	Stokesley			No

Ryedale	Central Ryedale (Malton)		•	Yes
	Northern Ryedale (Pickering)		•	No

Scarborough	Whitby			No
	Scarborough			Yes
	Filey			Yes