

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

27 June 2014

The Promise (Draft) - Covering Report

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 This report asks the Committee to:

- a. Note the information in this report.
- b. Comment on the draft document 'The Promise' attached as Annex A

2.0 About 'The Promise'

The Promise is a tool to encourage organisations and services to involve children and young people in every aspect of their planning and decision making where appropriate.

The Promise is made up of 5 separate principles, each one covering a different aspect of participation. Children and young people from across the county, representing their areas on the North Yorkshire Youth Council, have informed the County Council of what they think of these principles and have expressed the importance of them for participation to be possible.

North Yorkshire County Council will:

Principle 1

Involve children and young people in designing, developing and reviewing services which are provided for them.

Principle 2

Involve children and young people when making decisions on services which affect them.

Principle 3

Provide children and young people with opportunities to raise issues which are important to them, and to ensure they are listened to.

Principle 4

Feedback to children and young people on what has been said and what we are going to do as a result.

Principle 5

Provide information which may be used by children and young people in accessible and appropriate formats.

3.0 How will The Promise be used?

Services should discuss the Promise with any children and young people they work with to ensure each young person understands their right to express their views and have those views considered across the county.

This is a promise that belongs to the children and young people of North Yorkshire and so they should be made to feel comfortable in exercising the rights which it has outlined.

Services within North Yorkshire County Council should ensure all staff are aware of the Promise and ensure that they are able to adhere to it.

When services are satisfied that they understand their duties as outlined in the Promise they will be required to assess their current compliance by filling in a participation evaluation (Evaluation

section). Once an evaluation has been completed the service will then be expected to fulfil any requirements highlighted to improve the participation of children and young people.

4.0 What can County Councillors do to encourage the use of The Promise by services?

In the first instance comments from the Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the draft version of 'The Promise' attached at Annex A would be welcomed.

Members might also like to consider constructive challenge for any future reports to the Committee in light of the 5 principles outlined above.

5.0 Recommendations

5.1 The Committee is recommended to:

- a. Note the information in this report.
- b. Comment on the draft document 'The Promise' attached as Annex A

**Pete Dwyer Corporate Director Children and Young People's Service
County Hall, Northallerton**

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Date: June 2014
Background Documents: None
Annex: Annex A – The Promise (Draft)

The Promise

North Yorkshire County Council's commitment to
the participation of children and young people



FOREWORD



In recent years there has been a significant move towards giving children and young people more opportunities to become involved in the design, development and evaluation of policies that affect them or services they use. The 'Every Child Matters: Change for Children'¹ programme, for example, aimed to ensure that policies and services were designed around the needs of children and young people, and that they were involved in decision making at every level. More recently, 'Positive for Youth', the current cross-government policy for young people aged 13-19, has emphasised the need "for young people's voice and involvement in decision making at both local and national level"² and statutory guidance on the requirement to capture "pupil voice" in schools has been issued by the Department for Education³.

In North Yorkshire the importance of involving children and young people in decision making is recognised in 'Children and Young People's Plan 2014-17' with 'Involve children, young people and families at all stages of planning, delivering and evaluating services' being one of the key principles underpinning all of the work we do.

We believe there are huge benefits to be gained from the participation of children and young people within our decision making

processes and organisational planning. We aim to make the most of these benefits through true participation. This obviously takes a great deal of commitment, planning and investment on both sides. Our commitment is to create the opportunities for children and young people to participate, to facilitate this participation and to feedback the outcome of any decisions or planning which they have been involved in. What we ask in return is for as many children and young people to engage with us as possible to help us develop a council that meets their needs and the needs of all children and young people across the county.

The Promise has been developed locally to support this process and to help ensure that children and young people play an increasingly important role in North Yorkshire County Council.

We understand that our various departments and services will be at different stages with regard to children and young people's participation. However, through supporting and adhering to the 5 principles and the guidance accompanying them in this document, we hope that the council will be able to more effectively meet the needs of the children and young people who live within its boundaries.

Pete Dywer

Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services, North Yorkshire County Council.

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

² 'Positive for Youth: A new approach to cross-government policy for young people aged 13 to 19' (DfE, 2011) p 77

³ 'Listening to and Involving Children and Young People' (DfE, 2012)

“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)

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THE PROMISE

The Promise is made up of 5 separate principles, each one covering a different aspect of participation. Children and young people from across the county, representing their areas on the North Yorkshire Youth Council, have informed us of what they think of these principles and have expressed the importance of them for participation to be possible.

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How to use the Promise

Services should discuss the Promise with any children and young people they work with to ensure each young person understands their right to express their views and have those views considered across the county.

This is a promise that belongs to the children and young people of North Yorkshire and so they should be made to feel comfortable in exercising the rights which it has outlined.

Services within North Yorkshire County Council should ensure all staff are aware of the Promise and ensure that they are able to adhere to it.

When services are satisfied that they understand their duties as outlined in the Promise they will be required to assess their current compliance by filling in a participation evaluation (Evaluation section). Once an evaluation has been completed the service will be expected to fulfil any requirements highlighted through the evaluation to improve their participation.

HOW IT WORKS

This section outlines in more detail what each principle will mean to a service, child or young person, and will provide suggestions on what could be done in order to better fulfil the promise.

Principle 1

North Yorkshire County Council will involve children and young people in designing, developing and reviewing services which are provided for them.

When making designing, developing and reviewing a service children and young people should be involved at every stage. Whether it is during the initial consultations around how a new service will look, through their involvement on interview panels for new staff, or working alongside members of staff to review service performance.

A young person's interview panel is a great way to find a member of staff who can positively interact with young people and therefore be of greater benefit to a service.

Case study

The Growing up in North Yorkshire is a questionnaire completed in schools on a biennial basis. This important survey captures reliable information about the lifestyles of over 15,000 children and young people in the county. It also allows comparisons to be made between the experiences of children in North Yorkshire with those who live in other local authority areas. The results of this survey provide valuable information which is used ensure

services are meeting the needs of children and young people.

Principle 2

North Yorkshire County Council will involve children and young people when making decisions on services which affect them.

Any decisions made regarding services that will have an impact on children or young people, no matter the size of that impact, must involve taking the views of the children and young people it affects into consideration.

Involving young people in decision making can ensure that the resulting decisions are more encompassing of children and young people's needs thus ensuring the service is more efficient and effective.

Case study

During 'Team Around the Child' meetings a child or young person always has the opportunity to have their say on issues that are being discussed. This allows the child or young person the opportunity to contribute to plans that are being made in the meeting and also ensures that any actions involving them are more likely to be followed through.

Principle 3

North Yorkshire County Council will provide children and young people with opportunities to raise issues which are important to them, and to ensure they are listened to.

All services must have appropriate means for children and young people to provide their own feedback and insight about the service. Most importantly, once views are expressed by

young people they must be shown to have been genuinely considered and, where appropriate, acted upon.

Case Study

The North Yorkshire Youth Council provides a platform for young people to discuss and campaign on issues that they feel need addressing across the county. They feed their opinions and ideas back to managers and councillors within the council and also link in with national campaigns through the British Youth Council.

Principle 4

North Yorkshire County Council will feedback to children and young people on what has been said and what we are going to do as a result.

Once one of the first three promises has been fulfilled, a service must feedback to children and young people how their views or suggestions have been taken into consideration. In many cases this will not mean only feeding back to the individual young person who raised the issue, but all young people involved in the service.

Through spreading the feedback wider, children and young people will see that the service is taking their views and opinions seriously and will therefore be more keen to offer them. This will provide the service with a great opportunity to become more effective and efficient through a greater understanding of the children and young people using them.

Case Study

The Children and Young People's Plan for North Yorkshire was produced, taking into consideration feedback gained from children

and young people. Initiatives such as 'Pete's Postcards' allowed children and young people an opportunity to express their ideas directly to those writing the plan. These ideas were all considered during the drafting of the plan.

Principle 5

North Yorkshire County Council will provide information which may be used by children and young people in accessible and appropriate formats.

All information provided by a service that may be required to be understood by children or young people must be in an age or ability appropriate format. If this is not possible immediately the child or young person must be informed how quickly a copy could be produced that meets their needs.

For formats such as those to support a child or young person with a disability or who speaks another language, it would be advised that a service ensure they know in advance where they would need to go to source the formatting required.

Case Study

The Flying High group is a children and young people's group that works to represent the views and opinions of disabled young people across the county. They are funded by the council to ensure that the voices of disabled young people are heard when it comes to decision making and planning. Through their own experiences, the experiences of other disabled young people whom they consult and the expertise of the staff involved in ensuring information is appropriate this group is able to make a real difference to the lives of disabled young people in North Yorkshire.

PARTICIPATION

What is participation?

Youth participation is about children and young people having a say in decisions that affect their lives, organisations and communities. In particular it means that:

- children and young people have an important contribution to make in decisions that impact on their lives, organisations and communities;
- children and young people have the skills, knowledge and confidence to get involved with decision making; and
- a culture exists within which children's and young people's opinions and contributions are recognised, valued and acted upon by wider society.

The following ideologies⁴ should underpin all of participation undertaken by services within North Yorkshire County Council.

1. Children and young people are involved because they want to be

The involvement and participation of children and young people is on a voluntary basis because they believe in the importance of the issue and that their participation will make a difference.

2. Children and young people have a choice about how they get involved and at what level

Children and young people have the opportunity and choice to get involved at any and all levels of decision making, through activities that are fun and creative and that suit their skills, abilities and interests.

3. The diversity of children and young people is valued

Children's and young people's diversity of experience, background, belief and talent offers a unique resource for organisations, communities and society. Celebration of diversity is a key part of participation and increased understanding and acceptance should be an outcome.

4. Participation is accessible to all children and young people

All children and young people should be valued equally and opportunities offered fairly. Children/ young people who need extra support to take up these opportunities should be given it. Anyone who discriminates against a child or young person should be challenged. This also means that decision-making processes should be accessible and welcoming to children and young people, whether in terms of language, location, timing, costs or other factors.

5. Everyone is honest and open about process

Adults and staff should be open and honest with young people about what they are trying to do, why they are doing it and how much influence or power children and young people will have.

6. There is equal partnership between adults and children and young people

Children and young people and adults can learn a lot from working together. Opportunities for adults and children and young people to work and learn together should be created and valued.

⁴ Adapted from 'Principles of Youth Participation' (National Council for Voluntary Youth Services): www.ncvys.org.uk/UserFiles/File/Youth%20Participation/Principles%20of%20youth%20participation.pdf

7. Children and young people are encouraged to come up with their own ideas and solutions

Children/young people-led approaches enable children and young people to take action themselves on issues they want to address or things they want to achieve, in a way they feel happy with. This brings enormous benefits for children and young people and should be encouraged.

8. Barriers that stop children and young people from getting involved challenged

If the way decisions are made or the way an organisation is set up prevents children and young people from getting involved and having a say, it should be challenged and where possible changed.

9. The value of children's and young people's work, ideas and skills is recognised

It is important to recognise the contribution of young people, value it, use it and ensure that there are real outcomes for children and young people, both as a group through their impact and individually through their empowerment.

10. Children's and young people's involvement makes a difference

Ultimately children and young people should have made a difference through their involvement and they should know it. Children and young people should receive feedback, be involved in monitoring, evaluation and deciding what happens next.

How will The Promise help?

The Promise is a tool to encourage organisations and services to involve children and young people in every aspect of their planning and decision making where appropriate.

Using the evaluation toolkit within this document organisations and service will be able to evaluate their current level of participation and build upon what they have learnt through completing the self-evaluation.

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Evaluation

This Action Plan will provide information for you and your organisation so that you know:

- what participation activities are already happening
- what needs to be done to advance children and young people's participation.

It may give ideas for future participation activities with children and young people. Do not feel that you have to fill every box, but you may find it useful to address at least one activity for each Principle.

It is a good idea to read it through first, before beginning to fill it in. Try to write specific actions into the action plan rather than ideas or general intentions. You may wish to revise this action plan each year to celebrate good practice... and plan for the future.

Participation activity	Do we do this? (details)	What needs to be done?	By whom?	By when?
<u>PRINCIPLE 1</u>				
Children and young people's views are sought and they influence planning				
Children and young people's views are sought when monitoring and evaluating the service				
Children and young people are involved in the delivery of our service and are encouraged to take on responsibility (eg peer mentoring / welcoming / other helping roles)				
Children and young people are involved in recruiting new staff (eg short-listing, interviewing and choosing new staff)				
Adults encourage, value and appreciate young people's views and are prepared to change the way they work if necessary				

A senior member of staff is responsible for meeting with children and young people to ensure that their views influence planning, policy and procedures				
<u>PRINCIPLE 2</u>				
Children and young people influence decision-making in a variety of different ways and our organisation ensures that they receive feedback about their influence on decisions made				
Children and young people's views are sought when deciding how they will participate and they know how much influence they have				
<u>PRINCIPLE 3</u>				
There are participation opportunities for children with different abilities, needs, cultural and social backgrounds (eg children with learning difficulties and disabilities, looked After, hard-to-reach, black and minority ethnic)				
Our staff encourage each other and children and young people to avoid prejudice and stereotyping. All young people are encouraged to develop self-confidence and self-esteem				
We ensure that children and young people in our organisation are made aware of their right to have a say in decisions that affect them				

Staff are regularly updated regarding relevant guidance about participation via induction, training and appraisals				
The organisation has standards of good practice and a robust complaints procedure				
We have a policy for young people's payment and expenses for participation				
Staff actively encourage children and young people to participate outside our organisation in local, regional and national settings				
Our staff receive training so that they can support children's participation at all levels (eg in equal opportunities, young people-centred attitudes, motivational skills, communication skills)				
Children and young people receive training so that they can develop skills that enable them to participate at all levels in our organisation (meetings, communication skills, interviewing skills, prioritising)				
Children and young people are involved in helping each other learn new skills and are helped to identify their own learning needs				
Children and young people have access to opportunities to raise issues which are important to them.				

<u>PRINCIPLE 4</u>				
Our staff recognise and celebrate the achievements of children and young people				
<u>PRINCIPLE 5</u>				
Children and young people benefit from sufficient resources allocated to them to support their participation (eg training, consultation and feedback, expenses, equipment, staffing, space, refreshments)				
Children and young people have access to enough information so that they can be fully involved in our organisation				
Children and young people are involved in producing information about our organisation				
Children and young people have access to information in a variety of visual (pictures, videos) and language-based media. Language is informal and jargon-free				
<u>Any other activities?</u>				

How has participation improved your organisation during the last year?

What will be your three key priorities for next year so that Children and Young People's participation is more influential in the planning and evaluating of services in your organisation?

Priority One

Priority Two

Priority Three

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USEFUL RESOURCES

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