

# METROPOLITAN BOROUGH OF WIRRAL

## YOUTH SERVICE ADVISORY REPORT

21 September 2006

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### Youth Participation Next Steps

#### Executive Summary

- 1.0 This report aims to update the Committee about developments in Youth Participation since the last meeting. The committee is asked to note the report.

#### Background

- 2.0 Youth participation has been on the Youth Service agenda for a number of years. Since the launch of Transforming Youth Work, a government policy that puts participation by young people at the heart of the agenda for young people's services, Wirral has worked to ensure positive outcomes for young people in this area.
- 2.1 Developments in this area have included the creation of four area Youth Forums. They are Wallasey, Deeside, South Wirral and Birkenhead. In parallel with this and driven by the Citizenship Agenda in schools, has been the establishment of Schools Councils, the School Parliament on the Environment, ECO schools, and the Flaybrick Project. The work delivered by the Health Promoting Schools Agenda is underpinned by the involvement of pupil panels in which young people are key in the decision-making process.
- 2.2 The Youth & Play Service and schools co-ordinate the elections for the United Kingdom Youth Parliament (UKYP). The Youth & Play Service provides the ongoing support for the UKYP representatives as they carry out their duties during their year of office.
- 2.3 In 2004 an analysis of the opportunities for Participation was carried out. A Participation Strategy emerged from this analysis and this has been adopted by the Children and Young Peoples Strategic Partnership. A key outcome of the strategy has been the development of the Charter of Participation. The Charter outlines the principles underpinning participation in Wirral. In November 2005, Wirral Council adopted the Charter of Participation and work is underway to develop an action plan for the implementation of the Charter across the Authority.
- 2.4 In March this year, Wirral was recognised for this work when it was a warded Beacon status for Positive Youth Engagement in the Community and Democratic Process.

- 2.5 More recently young people were directly involved in delivering training to Elected Members on the theme – Engaging Young People. This involved the young people in one to one discussions and in mock committees.
- 2.6 Much has been achieved but there is more to be done. With the Beacon status comes the responsibility for organising an ‘Open Day’ and other learning opportunities for colleagues in other local authorities. However the work with young people is moving at a pace.

### **Next Steps**

- 2.7 We have recently consulted with over 460 young people either through Youth Forums and Schools. We have asked young people about the future approach to consultation. As part of the Participation Strategy, we have consulted with the young people about an Executive Youth Board. Young people are broadly in agreement with Youth Forums and the Executive Youth Board. What is important is that we establish robust links between the Youth Forums and schools. At the recent Citizenship Conference, secondary schools indicated a willingness to be involved in the next steps.
- 2.8 To build on this interest, I will be writing to Headteachers in early September to alert them to the Youth Forums, the Forum agenda and to seek their support in advertising the Forums and in having representatives from schools on the local Forum. Youth workers will be invited to visit the schools to promote the Forums and develop links with the schools.
- 2.9 Other developments planned for Participation are the Youth Voice Conference and the Youth Parliament. Both events will take place on the 16 October. The Youth Voice Conference will take place 10.00am – 3.00pm and the Parliament will start at 6.15pm. A planning group of young people from Primary and secondary schools have met to plan for both events.
- 2.10 Later in the year work will need to be undertaken with Youth Forums to agree representation at Executive Youth Board level. What is needed at Forums and Board level is training to understand the roles and responsibilities attached to involvement at any stage. The intention is for young people to lead on this, and we can draw on our pool of peer educators to assist with this. What is essential is that young people are fully involved in the process.
- 2.11 In September, the Youth Forum will be involved in the allocation of the Youth Opportunity and Youth Capital Funds. At the June Youth Forums and from the schools consultation, a number of young people volunteered to be involved in the allocation of the Funds. In August training was provided for these volunteers to help them in setting priorities and criteria for the fund allocations. The Funds will be allocated to Wirral next year and the work with the Forums and schools will provide a sound basis from which to progress.

- 2.12 The work on participation would not have been achieved without the help of schools, Connexions, Forum Housing, Advisory Teachers, Staff from the Children's Division of former Social Services, staff from Health Promoting Schools, Children's Fund, On-Track and staff from Wirral Multicultural Organisations. I would like to record my thanks for all their help in this area.

### **Outcomes**

- 3.0 The ongoing commitment to participation by all parties was recently recognised in the annual Performance Assessment of Children's Services. This assessment was undertaken by Ofsted and other inspectorates. The previous judgement from the JAR for the work undertaken to promote Making a Positive Contribution was upgraded from a '3' which is good to '4' which is 'outstanding'. This would not have been achieved without a joint effort by all partners. It is a sound basis from which this work will move into the next stage as outlined in Section Two.

### **Financial & Staffing Implications**

- 4.0 Currently the Youth Service funds the majority of the costs for Participation activities. (Connexions contributes to the funding of the Youth Voice Conference and supplies the secretariat for the Children & Youth Voice sub group).

As the agenda for Participation develops consideration will need to be given to resource implications.

### **Equal Opportunities Implication**

- 5.0 The work planned for participation aims to increase the involvement by vulnerable and hard to reach young people.

### **Human Rights Implication**

- 6.0 There are none.

### **Community Safety Implication**

- 7.0 There are none.

### **Planning Implication**

- 8.0 There may be planning implication arising from decisions made in relation to the Youth Capital Fund.

### **Local Member Support Implication**

9.0 This report affects all wards.

### **Background Papers**

10.0 Transferring Youth Work 2001  
Youth Matters 2005

### **Recommendation**

11.0 The Committee notes the positive progress that has been made in the area of Participation.

Howard Cooper  
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