

London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

Report to: Children and Education Policy & Accountability Committee

Date: 22/09/2020

Subject: Youth Council Engagement

Report of: Helen Green, Interim Head of Local Offer

Responsible Director: Jacqui McShannon, Director of Children's Services

Summary

This paper summarises the engagement work with the Youth Council during the period of COVID-19, touching on the partnerships and future plans this will inform going forward.

Recommendations

'For the Committee to note and comment on the report'.

Wards Affected: all

H&F Values

Please state how the subject of the report relates to our values – delete those values which are not appropriate

Our Values	Summary of how this report aligns to the H&F Priorities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Doing things with local residents, not to them	Co-production with children and young people to understand and capture the voice of the young people in the borough.

Contact Officer(s):

Name: Brenda Whinnett

Position: Youth Voice Coordinator

Email: brenda.whinnett@lbhf.gov.uk

Background Papers Used in Preparing This Report

None

1. The Youth Council are a group of youth representatives (aged 13-19) who live, go to school in, or are looked after by Hammersmith & Fulham. As the voice of the young people in the borough, the Youth Council create innovative ways to get their views and present them to decision makers. They also give their opinion on policies, activities and services and are involved in the recruitment of professionals that work with young people.
2. During COVID -19, the Youth Council have hosted a variety of provision to understand the effects of the pandemic on young people and how to engage their views in future delivery.

Inclusive youth council and comms

3. The Youth Council have held weekly virtual meetings since the outset of the pandemic. With packed agendas and guest speakers attending to address young people. Discussions have focused on the 14-15 strategy, the Black Lives Matter movement, the impact of COVID-19 on young people, under 18s travel, peer abuse and the PHSE curriculum. These weekly virtual meetings have resumed again from September following a summer break.
4. During this period, there has been a large amount of guidance and advice released to the public. This guidance can be confusing, lengthy and difficult to engage with. Recognising this barrier and seeking to overcome it to ensure effective communication to young residents, the Youth Council have published a total of five youth focused comms during this period. Editions have focused on relaying crucial guidance and updated advice in clear and accessible language and relaying the importance of testing and contact tracing. Comms have also paid significant attention to the wider social and mental impact of COVID-19 on young people by providing advice and support on things to do, home-schooling and well-being.
5. The Youth council have also produced a number of short videos addressing the impact of COVID-19 and their views on how this should shape local development moving forward. The first video sees members outlining their suggestions for what schools should focus on to support their students with the impact of COVID 19. Their insightful comments and reflections set out a strong agenda urging schools to focus on mental health support, gradual reintegration, catch up support for those struggling with home learning and continued emphasis on digital skills. A second publication considered the impact of the pandemic on young people's mental health, with members sharing their thoughts and experience during this time. The video focuses on the mental health issues brought about by COVID and the social isolation experienced by young people during this period through the closure of school settings, and associated anxieties and concerns around examinations and transition periods between schooling.
6. Members have also been involved in joint working with other bodies across the council, including hosting a joint questionnaire with Young Hammersmith and Fulham Foundation Peer Researchers, asking 500 young people about

their experiences growing up in Hammersmith and Fulham, and the impact of COVID-19 on their lives. The Youth Council have also joined and presented at LBHF committees, conferences and Head Teachers Forums to share the lived experiences of young people during this time.

Partnerships and future plans

7. The experiences and opinions shared through the inclusive use voice will assist in informing recovery planning as we move away from a crisis phase of service delivery. Members are planning for increased inclusion to the Youth Council to add value through diversity, using communication platforms and strategies to expand the voice within the borough. The inclusive apprentices are also involved in developing this inclusive youth voice through coordinating and networking across the borough. Throughout the summer period, training sessions will be held for new members as part of building a more inclusive Youth Council. Additionally the Youth Council are developing a Youth Voice Network throughout LBHF as part of their ambition to become a more inclusive and proportionate Youth Council.
8. The Youth Council will continue to adapt their ways of working to overcome the challenges and enable every young person to participate. This will be assisted by the introduction of a 'buddy system' and other approaches seeking to support the inclusive youth voice.
9. A Youth Voice Network meeting will be held in September in collaboration with Young Hammersmith and Fulham Foundation Members. This joint working will provide the opportunity to create actionable ways that the Youth Council and various youth boards can work together to expand the network and shape change in the borough.
10. Planning is currently underway to host a virtual 'Youth Take Over Challenge' focusing on COVID-19, Black Lives Matter and inclusive opportunities. The event will be held in conjunction with a range of partners, local services and organisations, hosting activities and challenges to gather the views of young people and encourage opportunities for involvement in wider youth projects. Plans for Mental Health Awareness day are also currently underway within the Youth Council.
11. As a result of COVID-19, the UKYP, Youth Mayor and London Elections have been postponed and will be held in November 2020.
12. As we move towards a phase of recovery, both in the short/medium and long term, the development of co-production with young people remain at the centre of service delivery, integrated in 'the way we do things.'