

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Children, Families and Adult Safeguarding Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 1st September 2014

Report of: Tony Crane

Subject/Title: Young People's Representation on Scrutiny Board

Portfolio Holder: Cllr R Bailey

1.0 Report Summary

This report sets out the proposal for the inclusion of Cheshire East Youth Council on the Council's Children, Families and Adult Safeguarding Scrutiny Committee.

2.0 Decision Requested

Scrutiny is requested to:

2.1 Approve the inclusion of Cheshire East Youth Council on the Council's Children, Families and Adult Safeguarding Scrutiny Committee and invite 2 representatives to the Board;

2.2 Consider the suggestions for additional involvement of young people in the work of Scrutiny Committee as set out in in paragraph 4.3.

3.0 Background

3.1 In 2013, the Council was challenged by Ofsted to improve the engagement and participation of children and young people in the borough in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

3.2 In February 2014, an express election was held for the election of 2 representatives to represent the borough's young people at the UK Youth Parliament. At the same time the borough's Youth Council was established.

4.0 Cheshire East Youth Council

Following the Youth Council election in February, the Cheshire East Youth Council has started to develop and consists of 3 tiers of involvement:

- Leadership Group. This consists of MYP's (Members of Youth Parliament), Deputies, REP's (Representatives of other groups) and PYP's (This stands for Passionate Young People who really want to get involved). This group attends meetings, makes decisions about

campaigns, and represents the Youth Council at other meetings. Currently there are 33 members.

- **Active Group.** This consists of young people who are involved with other youth groups and prefer to have their say through that group. Young People who are on a mailing list and want to get involved with some things and not others. This group are invited to meetings, invited to sit on task and finish groups. They also receive online survey opportunities. The mailing list includes professionals who then involve their young people at this level. Currently involves 7 secondary schools, 3 youth forums, Young Carers group, and 43 individuals.
- **Informed Group.** This is a social media based group and is very near being launched. Young people have already signed up at workshops and events to be in this group. This group will give their views and opinions through social media and join in online polls. Details of opportunities for task and finish groups will also be offered through social media.

Young people are able to swap and change between groups as their circumstances allow. For example, during the exams, several young people from the leadership group moved to being kept informed.

Backing all this up are Meet Up Speak Up events, where a worker will go out and make contact with young people and groups who wish to be involved in any different way. Meet up, Speak Up events that have already taken place include Park Lane School for young people with disabilities, Tytherington School Council, Cheshire East Young Carers, Young people from Sandbach. This part of the structure is to include hard to reach groups of young people.

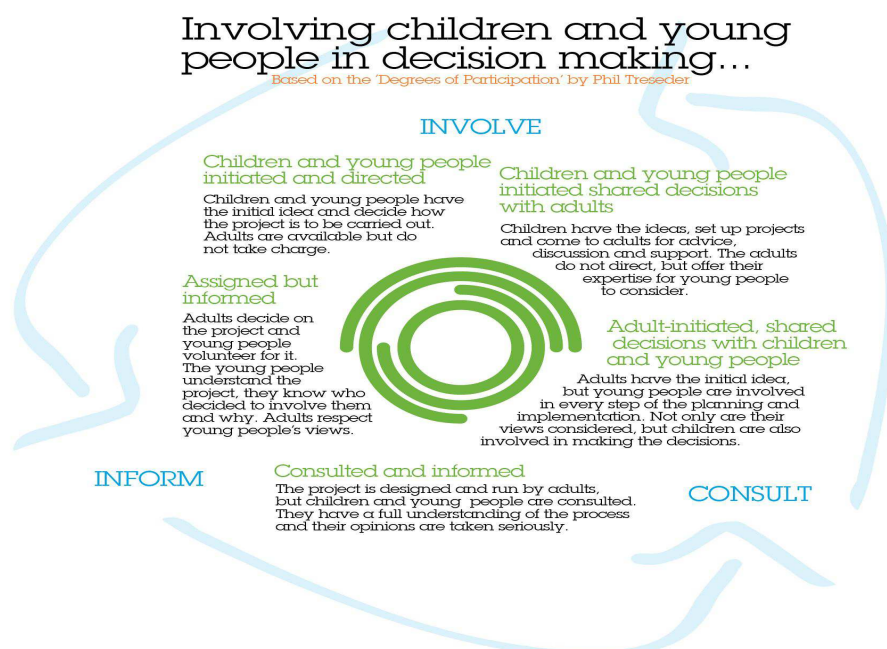
Youth Council have chosen 2 campaigns chosen for the year which are mental health and provision for young people.

5.0 Involving Young People in Scrutiny

5.1 Against these developments, the Council is considering how best to involve young people in decision making processes including scrutiny where involving children and young people can add value to its work by ensuring that local services are effective and accountable. Young people can comment on services from the point of view of their current needs and aspirations, as well as contributing ideas for the future of their communities. The Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) has published good practice guidance for Scrutiny Committees on how to involve young people in their work.

'Tomorrow's people? A guide for overview and scrutiny committees about involving young people in scrutiny' looks at why involving young people is important, and the role that scrutiny committees can play. While the report found that a great deal of good work already exists, it recommends that councils will need to go beyond 'traditional approaches' if they are to engage with young people on a broad range of issues.

The borough's Participation Strategy outlines that participation which is *'Participation is a process where someone influences decisions about their lives and this leads to change'*. The Strategy adopts the following definitions:



5.2 Cheshire East Youth Council members have been elected by their peers to represent their views. It would therefore seem appropriate to involve them as members of the formal structure of the Committee. This would be as non voting members. In order to ensure that young people can make a meaningful contribution at meetings the following would be helpful:

- **Induction:** young people will need to understand what the powers, purpose and function of the Committee is, what the format of the meetings are, and what the different roles are.
- **Before meetings:** as new members young people may need some support in understanding the business to be discussed and the opportunity to seek input from others on the issues and questions they may want to ask. It would be helpful if the representatives could meet with the Chair in advance.
- **Accessibility:** young people will generally be in education or employment and will find it difficult to be able to attend day time meetings. It is recommended that the timing of meetings be able to accommodate this with a 6pm start. All documents should be presented in a format that is easy to read with as little jargon or acronyms as possible. Language similarly should be easy to understand and "management – speak" should be avoided.
- **During meetings:** the atmosphere should be welcoming and open to younger members and the role of Chair is key to establishing the right

format and ensuring that young people are both able to speak and understand the content of the discussions and that their contributions are respected and listened to.

- **Logistics:** Young people will be supported to attend arrange the logistics such as travel and consent.
- **Recognition:** Some Boards where young people attend and contribute reward young people for this through for example vouchers. The Committee may wish to consider whether this is appropriate and whether there is a budget.

5.3 In addition to membership, the Committee may wish to consider the following suggestions to ensure that the voice and involvement of children and young people is evident in its work:

- Direct involvement from children and young people on specific issues – direct evidence sessions, workshops etc. This
- Take opportunity to play a role in November Child's Rights Month to raise the UNCRC rights to have a voice in decision making.
- Consider how Cheshire East Youth Council and related networks have the opportunity to reflect what matters to them in scrutiny work plans. For example the Youth Council has adopted 2 campaigns for the year which are mental health and youth provision, issues which were highlighted as top issues in the "Mark Your Mark" ballot of young people.
- Young Researchers - Cheshire East has established a team of young advisers who can be commissioned to undertake specific pieces of work for example research, consultation, mystery shopping, scrutiny, training etc.
- Consider any meetings/events in November as an opportunity for CYP to Take Over Day.
- Committee templates to ensure that Officers should report on children's voice/experiences in all reports.

6.0 Conclusion

Yong people can add considerable value to the work of scrutiny provided that their involvement is effectively managed and their contribution welcomed. The proposals in this paper set the context for ensuring that their involvement is meaningful creating opportunities to greater understanding and improved communication.

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Appendices
None