

Report

Report to:	Education Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	31 August 2021
Report by:	Executive Director (Education Resources)

Subject:	Enabling Youth Voice
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to advise members of the:-

- ◆ steps being taken to further engage with young people, across South Lanarkshire to empower and enable them to have a voice and to help inform and influence the democratic process.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the steps being taken to further engage with young people to empower and enable them to have a 'voice' and to use this to help inform and influence the democratic process, be noted.

3. Background

- 3.1. South Lanarkshire has a long, positive and proven history of engagement and youth voice representation which has continually changed and evolved to meet the needs and aspirations of young people, directing a Youth Strategy and a yearly action plan. This includes the development of the long standing, Youth Partnership (Corporate Connections Board) chaired by an elected member with a responsibility for representing young people, and a membership that includes young people, Council and partner organisations and representatives of different political parties. The Youth Strategy being used as the framework of governance and the Board being empowered to engage with and empower 'youth voice'.
- 3.2. This report provides an overview of the opportunity to increase and widen engagement and strengthen the voice of all young people, further strengthening and promoting youth voice and the involvement of young people in the democratic process across South Lanarkshire, using digital engagement.
- 3.3. On 1 July 2021, proposals to further enhance the approach to enabling the voice of young people to be heard more widely across difference areas of South Lanarkshire were discussed and subsequently supported at the Corporate Connections Board (Youth Partnership).

4. Digital Democracy Proposal

- 4.1. A range of focus groups to consult with young people on youth voice have been held and an outcome arising is the adoption of a Participation Tool that would be visually appealing, sleek, accessible and easy to navigate. This will provide a platform to engage and to consult digitally with young people on a range of issues such as

activities on offer, safety in areas, spending of funding, service satisfaction, youth rights, Council projects and developments etc. This participation tool will support large scale participation from young people and expanding the opportunity to encourage and enable more young people to take part in the democratic process and influence change.

4.2. In this ever-changing world, the youth work sector continues to adapt to the times in terms of using digital technology in a positive and progressive way. However, it is important to note that digital democracy is not the only solution to participatory practice and will require continued face-to-face youth work to strengthen engagement and impact on decisions made. It is acknowledged that additional supports will also be required by harder to engage groups or young people who may face additional barriers to participation.

4.3. Rationale

4.3.1. During the initial period of 'lockdown', YFCL increased engagement through the use of digital technologies, to stay in contact with young people and ensure continuity of dialogue and service provision. This resulted in a realisation that the immediacy and flexibility of digital technology (TikTok, Instagram, Facebook etc.) could be used more effectively to inform and elicit responses in real time.

4.3.2. In the early stages of the 'lockdown' many individuals who had never accessed YFCL services before initiated contact with through digital media, whether it was seeking support or to engage with the activities available online. This also supplemented the ongoing engagement YFCL services had with young people already and the opportunity to reach out and engage with others.

4.3.3. By expanding the delivery model of the youth participation network to the digital sphere, more diverse range of participants can be engaged and to have the opportunity to influence decisions which impact upon them and their communities, in line with YFCL's vision of "supporting a more engaged and equal society". This will give communities 'choices and voices' and assist the Council in preparations toward duties expected under the UN Convention in the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill such as Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Risk Assessments, currently laid before the Scottish Parliament.

4.3.4. The new digital tool will allow for the collation of information from one source rather than from across up to 60 current social media sources including 9 different Universal Connections social media accounts, as well as accounts for various other projects (Duke of Edinburgh, Holiday Clubs, Grass Routes, Flourish, KEAR, Youth Council) within the service on Instagram, Facebook, TikTok and Twitter. The proposal for use of the new participation tool within YFCL will not exclude those used by partner agencies, voluntary sector or other Council resources.

4.4. A new development within Young Scot presents a viable solution to the development of a digital tool ('app.') for use at local level. The potential for linkage to South Lanarkshire's own Digital Service developments is currently being explored.

5. **Proposal**

5.1. Through discussions with the focus groups the consensus was overwhelming that this should be 'young people led' and as a result, the proposal is to train and employ up to 6 people, to take this process forward, under the umbrella of Youth, Family and Community Learning Services and to enable a Modern Apprenticeship (MA) in Youth Work.

- 5.2. Up to 6 people will be identified and mentored through YFLC to develop the skills and attributes they require to enable them to communicate effectively with young people in a full range of settings. As mentors, they will be in a position to engage positively with other young people and elicit response from them on the things that truly matter in their lives, thus enabling more young people to really make a difference.
- 5.3. Most young people live in a digital world and it is imperative that information sharing and consultation with them happens at the optimum times when they are most engaged with technology. As mentors, the Modern Apprentices will engage with young people through digital technology as well as a range of other engagement mediums.
- 5.4. Modern Apprentices will work in a locality area as well as working together as a whole team as appropriate. The team will be based within the Youth, Family and community Learning Service.
- 5.5. The Modern Apprenticeship team would be aspiring to capture some of the good practice (see para 4.5) to inform the development of the participation digital tool, build on this and ensure that it is exciting and accessible.
- 5.6. The Modern Apprentices will be supported through YFCL to become skilled in all aspects of Youth Work including group work, safeguarding, detached and outreach, and reflective practice, as well as developing skills in areas such as sport, arts, drama, music and IT. This will assist in widening the scope of their communication and engagement with young people of differing backgrounds, interest and communication levels. Detached youth work will be used to increase their visibility and availability in communities, to create dialogue through youth work approaches, and to embed them within the life of the community. Modern Apprentices will be able to move from community to community, to work with other young people in those communities to develop their skills and confidence.
- 5.7. The Modern Apprentices will be in a position to take a lead in Community Planning consultation, facilitating conversation, in whatever medium meets the need including street work, digital and group work. They will be supported to become adaptable, flexible, resilient, creative and peripatetic and will be in a prime position to be an advocate for young people.
- 5.8. Given the level of experiences of people expected to apply for the Modern Apprenticeship, the apprenticeship is set at Level 2 (SCQF level 5), which YFCL previously delivered through a vocational traineeship programme that helped unemployed, vulnerable young people aged 16-24 into employment. The Modern Apprentices will become associate members of the Community Learning and Development (CLD) Standards Council for Scotland and the long-term goal will be that they can move on to achieve and sustain a career in local government.

6. Informing policy and service development

- 6.1. As the existing Youth Partnership (Corporate Connections Board) is recognised as the Council's platform for young people to raise issues and to engage further with service providers. Partnership is ideally placed to present the views, ideas and aspirations of young people gathered using the app and from face-to-face contact. This too will provide a platform for young people to influence the development of policy and practice across the Council and partner agencies.
- 6.2. A critical component of the participation engagement tool will be the ability to give timely feedback alerts such as:

- number of respondents, number for and against etc.
- what people have said
- what happens next
- decisions made
- infographics (examples using real data attached as appendix 2)

7. Expected outcomes

7.1. This new model of engagement presents a range of outcomes that complement the CLD Strategic Guidance (2012), CLD Regulations 2013 and the implementation of the National Community Engagement Standards in the context of the Community Empowerment Act 2015. This model will create the lasting legacy that was envisaged after the Year of Young People 2018 had concluded. These outcomes include:

- Robust participation leading to an increased influence in community, council and partners' decisions
- Up to 6 people achieving Modern Apprenticeship Level 2 and employment
- Larger, more diverse audience gained more efficiently and effectively.
- Increased responsiveness of organisation
- A deeper understanding of local patterns of need and interaction
- More robust rationale for tough decisions made if individuals are consulted on them
- Improve quality of decision making with faster access to real data
- Involve individuals in the agenda setting stage of decision making
- Consultation and engagement at more appropriate times more suited to the needs of the young person
- Better quality of participation experience
- Active engagement of young people taking pride in their local communities
- Understanding responsibility and ownership of the impact of decisions made
- Increased understanding of rights and how to apply them
- Increased citizenship and community understanding

8. Next steps

8.1. The next steps will see a report being presented to the Community Planning Partnership outlining the planned progression of the voice of young people and the methods of engagement to support this.

9. Employee Implications

9.1. The additional modern apprentices will be recruited in line with South Lanarkshire Council's recruitment procedures.

10. Financial Implications

10.1. The costs associated with Modern Apprenticeship programme will be met within the Youth, Family and Community Learning Service budget.

11. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications

11.1. None

12. Other Implications

12.1. None

13. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

13.1. This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to an existing policy, function or strategy and, therefore, no impact assessment is required.

- 13.2. Consultation and engagement has taken place with young people on the new participation tool and the benefits that are expected to accrue from it, and on the proposal to establish up to 6 modern apprenticeships as well as liaison with personnel services.

Tony McDaid
Executive Director (Education Resources)

17 August 2021

Link(s) to Council Objectives

- Improve achievement, raise educational attainment and support lifelong learning
- Support communities by tackling disadvantage and deprivation, and supporting aspiration
- Deliver better health and social care outcomes for all
- Protect vulnerable children, young people and adults
- Work with communities and partners to promote high quality, thriving and sustainable communities

Previous References

Corporate Connections Board meeting – 1 July 2021

List of Background Papers

None

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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Appendix 1

South Lanarkshire has a long established and nationally recognised process of engagement within South Lanarkshire through the South Lanarkshire Youth Council and the Scottish Youth Parliament. Listed below are some examples:

- ◆ Universal Connections facilities
- ◆ Skatepark provision
- ◆ Increased provision for young carers - provision in Universal Connections doubled as a result of direct engagement and influence of questions by young carers themselves.
- ◆ Rural Youth Summit (Biggar) - 24 service providers engaging with Biggar HS pupils - organised and funded by young people (SLYC)
- ◆ Larkhall Youth Housing Forum (SYP members, Housing and Technical, Larkhall Housing Forum and Larkhall Academy)
- ◆ Participatory Budgeting & Changing Places monies - Springhall, Whitlawburn and Larkhall youth provision/youth led bids
- ◆ SPTransport - rebadging and framing of Dial-a-bus service - young person identified issue, took direct action supported by staff
- ◆ SYP Mosquito device at Hamilton Train Station - young person identified issue, took direct action supported by staff
- ◆ SYP elections – paper ballot process with 11% (7,700) of all votes cast in Scotland, cast in South Lanarkshire in the 2019 elections.
- ◆ Year of Young People 2018 -events and numbers
- ◆ Money for Life -VIPs (Very Important Penny Savers)
- ◆ Care Inspectorate Services for Children and Young People. Inspection good practice example recognising outstanding commitment to participation and consultation, stating that South Lanarkshire Youth Council provides a strong and genuine democratic structure – “A well developed and highly effective youth council is a model of its type. Staff are hugely committed to skilling up and supporting members to carry out their roles and responsibilities. The Youth Council has a high profile in civic life. The voices of children and young people meeting at a local level and those coming together around a common cause shape the work of the Youth Council. It is at the heart of developing and delivering the Youth Strategy. The Youth Council is positively influencing a growing number of policy, planning and service developments which impact on the lives of children and young people.” (Services for children and young people in South Lanarkshire, Care Inspectorate, 23 February 2015)
- ◆ Education Scotland Community Learning and Development Inspection good practice examples – “South Lanarkshire Youth Council is influential and is regularly consulted on issues affecting communities. Young people are active and enthusiastic contributors to strategic decision making. Their views are valued by senior officers and elected members. Their actions are leading to positive change, for example, through recent work with Scotrail. The work of YOYP Ambassadors is leading to good levels of involvement in YOYP events with over 900 attending the recent launch.” (Inspection of Community Learning and Development in South Lanarkshire, Education Scotland, 23 July 2018)

These models offer young people a route in to formalised engagement beyond the expectations of this new process and reflects the differing levels of engagement open to young people.