

**TO: EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & LEARNING  
8 OCTOBER 2018**

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## **A POSITIVE APPROACH TO YOUTH ENGAGEMENT**

**Executive Director : People**

### **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the document is to set out the Local Authority's approach to engaging young people in decision-making at individual and strategic levels. It addresses the statutory responsibilities as laid out in the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice 2014.

### **2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 2.1 The document provides practical guidance and information for professionals, parents and children and young people on the engagement of young people. The approach to engaging young people has been developed to complement and further define the Council's and its partners' approach to engaging with people, expressed in the Bracknell Forest Partnership's Community Engagement Strategy.
- 2.2 The aim of this approach to engagement is to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of engagement activity and to enable young people to influence decision making and empower them to take action to tackle issues that affect them. This approach will support the Council and its partners to make better decisions and get policy and services to even better meet the needs of individuals and communities.
- 2.3 The document explores the different types of engagement activity and confirms that not all engagement needs to be the same. Sometimes it could take the shape of giving information or consultation; at other times young people and their families will need involvement on a greater scale. The policy clarifies and strengthens existing practices and expectations of the council which can be delivered within existing resources.
- 2.4 The essential element of the document is to give a consistent definition and a shared understanding of participation.
- 2.5 The document will be reviewed and updated as necessary, no later than September 2019 and in line with any government updates.

### **3 RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 **That the updated "Positive approach to youth engagement" guidance be approved for implementation and publicity from September 2018.**

### **4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION.**

- 4.1 There is a necessity for the Local Authority to have a young people's engagement strategy. The strategy should detail how the Local Authority and its partners engage young people in decision making.
- 4.2 For those children and young people with Special Educational Needs and disabilities there is a statutory duty to ensure "the participation of children, their parents and

young people in decision- making” and to ensure “greater choice and control for young people and parents over support”.

- 4.3 Absence of a young people’s engagement strategy will not help us to demonstrate to external assessors, young people, schools or the parents forum that we are serious about partnership working.

## **5 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 5.1 None.

## **6 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 6.1 There are a number of reasons for developing good practice and process for engaging young people, ranging from practical considerations in service design to fulfilling statutory duties.

- 6.2 The benefits of involving young people in decision making are:

### 6.2.1 For the council and partners

- Broadens the representation of decision making
- Children and young people make up a significant proportion of the community.
- They can bring unique perspectives and experiences to the table. They also bring innovative ideas and dynamic perspectives about the future. This can help the organisation make better decisions. A wider range of views, opinions and experiences will energise the decision making process.
- Helps to improve services for children and young people
- Better services can be created if organisations have better understanding of the needs of children and young people and their aspirations.
- Improves image
- Creating a vibrant child and young people friendly organisation inspires the confidence of young users and enhances the credibility of the organisation for the future.
- Help attract young people as volunteers
- Involving young people as decision makers shows that the organisations take young people seriously, treat them respectfully and encourages young people to assume a variety of roles.

### 6.2.2 For young people

- Builds self-esteem and confidence
- Taking on responsibility, taking lead roles and being treated equally is an important step in a young person’s development.
- Develops skills
- Leadership, problem solving, networking and consensus building are all skills that can grow out of being involved in the decision making process.
- Provides experiences relevant to lifelong learning and employment
- Supporting young people with experience to supplement their school lives, build for a career, support CVs and help with university applications are all results from including young people in the decision making process.
- Give young people a chance to be creative and use energy in a productive way

- Giving young people a place at the table will give them responsibility and help break down stereotypes held by many. We can create an environment where they feel appreciated.
- Brings young people together creating friendships
- Bringing young people together from different backgrounds can help to break down barriers; it can support new friendships and understanding of other groups in local communities.

### 6.2.3 For communities

- Breaks down negative stereotypes about young people and helps to create new respect
- In particular young people are able to demonstrate skills and commitment to the local community helping adults to understand that young people are part of the community and have lots to contribute.
- Strengthens community bonds and local democracy
- Including young people in decision making builds community cohesion. Young people's involvement helps to create stronger communities.
- Youth engagement can also help community groups to develop and grow
- Young people are a part of the community, not an add on. Including them more will help them feel a sense of ownership.

## 7 **ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS**

### 7.1 Borough Solicitor

The engagement duty is triggered in a number of situations under the Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEN Code provisions when delivering a range of SEN Services to children and young people in accordance with our local offer and other statutory duties to CYP with SEN.

### 7.2 Borough Treasurer

The Director of Finance is satisfied that no significant financial implications arise from this report.

### 7.3 Equalities Impact Assessment

The positive approach to youth engagement guidance promotes fairness and transparency and will not have a negative impact on any of the equality groups. A full EIA was therefore not required.

### 7.4 Strategic Risk Management Issues

The risks if any will be reputational.

### 7.5 Other Officers

None appropriate.

## **8 CONSULTATION**

### Principal Groups Consulted

8.1 This work has been developed with the support of young people. Their views and ideas have helped with the development of the approach and the action plan that sets out objectives and actions to ensure that young people are able to work as partners to shape and improve services locally

### 8.2 Method of Consultation

Through the Youth Parliament

### 8.3 Representations Received

Representations received are integrated in the present document.

### Background Papers

SEN Code of Practice:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>

The Equality Act 2010 and schools (DfE advice: May 2014):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/equality-act-2010-advice-for-schools>

### Contact for further information

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