



Youth Voice Forum

Creating a youth forum to give young people a voice in their local community

Using Youth Forums to consult with and inform strategy

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Why Have a Youth Voice Forum?

Giving young people a voice in their local community

We are pleased to present this guide on how to give young people a voice in local priorities and development initiatives whilst also giving them the opportunity to volunteer as well as growing their skills and confidence.

We created a forum where young people can collaborate with Havant Borough Council and Link Up Leigh Park partners to develop initiatives that support their priorities.

Giving young people the opportunity for their voice to be heard in strategic groups, feel their voice is considered in decision making, and have an impact on the community.

Participants will also gain the skills and confidence and be upskilled supporting their employment search to get good local jobs.

The Economies for Healthier Lives Programme across Havant Borough aims to reduce the barriers experienced by young people and generate opportunities to access education, training and employment, thereby increasing the economic activity of young people (16-24) and improve their long-term health outcomes.

Please use this guide to help you set up your own Youth Forum.

Meeting the Priorities of Young People

To understand the needs and priorities of young people a Young Persons Survey was carried out across Havant Borough, interviewing over 200 young people, which was used to identify the challenges they face in continuing education, securing employment, and highlighting areas of priority to them.

The results of the survey highlighted five key priorities for the young people who took part:



The Aims of the Youth Forum

- Create an opportunity for youth voice to contribute to local strategy as a group who don't often respond
- A safe place for young people to connect
- Empowerment
- A sense of accomplishment
- Address the top 5 priorities – decision making and solution finding
- Upskilling – employability skills
- Increase confidence in collaborating with others

Planning The Programme

How we planned the programme

The Connect Youth Ambassadors meet once a month at the Youth Employment Hub and is led by a project officer from the Economic Development team. The project officer is a young person who leads the group as though she were a participant, aiming to make the sessions interactive and enjoyable and 'not like school', therefore maintaining a high level engagement from the ambassadors.

It is important that young people's voices are heard and that they shape the ambassadors programme, so initial meetings were very much geared around the creation and identity of the forum, and then we focused on the top priorities identified in the Young Persons Survey.

Partners who deliver programmes and plan development relating to these priorities are invited to deliver sessions to the ambassadors.

The project officer meets with these partners to support planning of the sessions, to ensure they engage the young people and that valuable and useful feedback is obtained.

Feedback is given to the youth forum ambassadors so that can see the outcomes of their input and understand the impact and value of taking part.

Planning the Programme

Meeting/Session	Main Focus
Session 1	Introduction to the Youth Voice Forum. Why does the forum matter? What is youth social action?
Session 2	What is the group's culture and purpose?
Session 3	How can employers better support young people
Session 4	CAHMS Academy (Solent NHS Trust)
Session 5	Feeling Safe in Havant Hampshire and Isle of Wight Police Commission
Session 6	Local Housing Strategy (Havant Borough Council)
Session 7	Places for People Like Me (Youth Services Evaluation)
Session 8	Get Up And Go (Havant Borough Council)
Session 9	Team Building Event
Session 10	Climate Change Workshop (Havant Borough Council)
Session 11	Impacts & Evaluation
Session 12	Celebration & Achievements

Engaging Young People

Recruiting and Engaging Young People

The Youth Voice Forum was initially promoted to those who took part in the Young Person Survey and ongoing promotion to young people who access our youth employment services.

To sustain engagement from young people it was essential that the forum was meeting their needs and priorities (referring back to the initial Young Persons Survey), and demonstrated to the group, the impact their voice had on local decision making, and evaluation by sharing outcomes of the work they have taken part in.

Regular communication was needed with the group to maintain engagement and commitment through social media, messaging, and employment coaches.

A loyalty scheme was set up, to incentivise and reward regular attendance to sessions. The attendees were also be rewarded for recruiting friends to the forum.

Job roles were also created to encourage the group to take more active roles in the group rather than just being participants, (e.g. president, secretary). Job profiles were created and ambassadors asked to submit applications.

Sustaining A Youth Forum

A youth forum needs resourcing, particularly in terms of leadership and management.

If funding or time allocation are a challenge there is still a role that youth voice can play in collaborating with local authorities, local businesses and wider partners.

To maintain a youth voice in local authority decision making our communications and insights team will approach our Youth Employment Hub to engage with young people to set up ad-hoc forums, rather than resourcing a permanent youth forum.

What Difference Can A Youth Forum Make?

Our youth forum (Connect Youth Ambassadors) has had very successful workshops with a range of partners.

A particularly successful example of the impact engagement with our youth forum is the CAMHS Academy, Community Engagement and Experience team who were gathering insights and feedback for young people on CAMHS and the future workforce of CAMHS.



This workshop was able to meet two of the priorities identified in the Young Persons Survey: (Mental Health Support and Local Jobs for People Like Me).

The report demonstrates that the voices of the young people they have engaged with have really been heard and are having an impact, and their comments are used throughout the CAMHS Academy report.

'Not to be left for months not knowing what's going on [referencing treatment plan].'

Link Up Youth Hub

'Clear next steps if discharged or moving to a different part of the service.'

Link Up Youth Hub

'Dealing with behaviour issues (i.e. DNA for appointments or bad behaviour during appointments). They need to have levels of support built in to counter this. Maybe if a Young Person can't cope with the clinical appointment there is a level which is more focused at just talking. Different levels of support needed or to be referred somewhere else to support.'

Link Up Youth Hub

'If I can talk about problems anonymously without having to give out my details.'

Link Up Youth Hub

What Difference Can A Youth Forum Make?

The youth forum has also been used to collect evidence from young people about the effectiveness of the Youth Employment Hub which will be used to support funding bids, to ensure the continuation of employment support for young people.

The borough housing department and physical activity officer have also used the forum to gather insights and feedback on the services they provide.

The youth forum itself should also be evaluated by gathering feedback from the ambassadors themselves.

Key Indicator	Activity / Project	Data / Outcome
Mental Health Support for People Like Me (Priority 1)	NHS (CAMHS) Workshop - Young people's opinion on the service	The ideas and experiences that Ambassadors shared along with other young people were taken into consideration and put into a report - this will go towards bettering the service.
Places for People Like Me to Hang Out with my Friends (Priority 5)	Havant Borough Council's Waterlooville Masterplan	The Waterlooville Masterplan has been drafted with the feedback that CYA gave such as; more greenery and more leisure and eateries.
Get Up And Go (Priority 1 & 5)	Get Up and Go Initiative - Affordable physical activities in the local community	The Physical Activity Project Lead gave feedback that the activity (Cycle Project) was costed out well and would be most likely to be created. The CYA feedback will also be put into the Havant Active Wellbeing Strategy.
Being Able to Get On The Property Ladder (Priority 4)	Havant Borough Council's Housing Strategy	The Housing Strategy Feedback stated that what the Ambassadors raised as a concern; availability and affordability of properties, is now a corporate priority moving forward.

What Difference Can A Youth Forum Make?

Waterlooville Town Centre Masterplan



Youth Voice Said:

- Waterlooville is looking rundown and dilapidated in areas
- There is no green in the high street - too much concrete
- There's nothing to do and no reason to come to the town centre



Youth Voice Said:

- Homelessness and preventing homelessness were your top priority
- Owning a home seems 'unattainable' for many in the group
- Affordability and upfront costs were seen as big challenges
- Support for households in learning how to manage a home (e.g. budgeting, processes for renting) viewed as important

We did:

- 'Quick wins' for the town centre include street scene improvements such as more cleaning and artwork
- Masterplan to include pocket park / garden ideas
- Masterplan will also include variety of different uses for the town centre (e.g. retail, food and drink, leisure, community)

Housing Strategy

We Did:

- Homelessness a key feature of the approved Housing Strategy
- The availability and affordability of housing a key feature of the strategy and a corporate priority moving forward
- Highlighted the value of young person feedback on key council strategies
- You have your own section in the public report!

Acknowledgements

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whose efforts have brought this programme
to life.**



Supported by

