

Appendix 1

Belfast City Youth Council Terms of Reference 2020-23

Background

The Belfast Youth Forum was established in 2006 to act as the voice of young people in Belfast City Council. Belfast has one of the most significant young populations in Europe. The recent census figures show that Belfast is home to a young population with under a fifth of the population aged 14 years or younger and approx. 12% aged 0 – 9 years of age and 42 % of the population aged 30 years or younger (NISRA, 2021).

In recognition of this fact, the Youth Forum was set up to engage young people in the democratic processes of our city and to promote active citizenship from a young age.

In 2020 the Belfast Youth Forum was renamed the Belfast City Youth Council (BCYC). The Terms of Reference were produced in order to clearly articulate the function of the BCYC and ensure a shared understanding of its role.

Aim of Belfast City Youth Council

To lead on priority issues affecting Children & Young People in Belfast and influence city/local and regional planning in terms of issues affecting Children & Young people

Objectives:

- To provide its members with the opportunity to share their views and directly influence decisions taken by the Belfast City Council and partnerships that it facilitates when/where appropriate.
- To inform, influence and support the thematic and cross cutting work of Belfast's Community Planning Partnership with a focus on those areas of work that impact on children & young people in Belfast.
- To provide a source of intelligence and networking on children & young people issues in Belfast including commissioning and reviewing research on matters affecting children & young people in the city
- To support children & young people to be actively involved in the activities of the Belfast City Youth Council

Principles:

- Promote partnership working and collaboration among all those with an interest in, and contribution to make on issues affecting children & young people, especially other Children & Young People's Forums
- Create an environment that supports innovation and a problem - solving approach to issues affecting children & young people in Belfast
- Support the voice of children & young people, including hard to reach groups, to influence matters that affect all children & young people

Organisation:

- The group will meet at least once a month in City Hall and in other venues as required to deliver on their action plan/programme of activity.
- Where possible meetings should be arranged for one year ahead.
- Subgroups or task and finish groups will be established and meet as needed.

Commitments from Youth Council members:

- Attend at least 50% of meetings to ensure active participation and consistent membership
- Agree to code of behaviour that will ensure best practise in operation of the youth council

Commitments From Belfast City Council:

- Provide access to monthly meetings in City Hall
- Provide opportunity for youth council to meet with elected members at least 4 times per year
- Provide opportunities for social engagements and best practice learning
- Provide Refreshments and Transport to meetings and activities

Accountability:

Decisions will be made by consensus at full Forum meetings in the Council Chamber and other venues. If consensus cannot be reached a vote will be taken. Meetings are informal and all Youth Council members are entitled to vote.

The youth council will attend special meetings of the Council's People & Communities committee on a quarterly basis. At these meetings the youth council will give an update on its work and the priority issues that it has identified. If there are issues for Council to consider these can be addressed at these meetings.

Membership:

Officers will actively engage with all areas to encourage applications from across the city. If applications of a sufficient standard are not received for all DEAs, officers will engage with organisations and elected members in that area to encourage more applications and fill vacancies.

When a membership term finishes, existing members will have the opportunity to reapply providing that they are within the age range and have attended at least 50% of activities in the previous term. Members will be able to remain on the Forum for a maximum of 3 x 2 year terms.

The Youth Council shall seek in its membership a diverse representation and Members will be selected with sensitivity toward gender, race, and geographic area represented.

- **The forum is made up of 40 young people.**
- Young people must live within the Belfast City boundary area.

- **4 young people are recruited from each of the 10 District Electoral Areas**
- Young people are aged 13-18 (21 if they are disabled or have just left care/are referred through social services).
- Young people serve a two year term on the Youth Council.
- **Qualifications** Young People (13-18 years of age, increase to 21 for those members with a disability or referred through social services) with or without disability who have desire in leading and directly influencing decisions to make a difference in their community.