



Subject:	Belfast Youth Forum update
Date:	4 th December 2018
Reporting Officer:	Nigel Grimshaw, Strategic Director City & Neighbourhood Services,
Contact Officers:	Cate Taggart, Neighbourhood Services Manager Áine Hargey, Young People's Coordinator

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the ongoing work of Belfast City Council's Youth Forum (BYF) as well as the Children and Young People Unit's 'Ur City 2' fund.
1.2	The paper presents the main developments in BYF work, mainly: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• BYF recruitment and induction• BYF campaign areas• BYF mental health campaign• Formalising BYF participation structures

	The paper also provides an update on Council's 'Ur City 2' fund for Children and Young people.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>Permission from Members is sought for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. For BYF member's to present their mental health research report findings and recommendations to P&C Committee at the next available date; ii. Permission for Council to support NI Youth Forum's funding application to Children in Need for an 'Elephant in the Room' project worker by acting as a referee in this process and committing £10,000 over the next three years to support this project. This decision requires no additional money and will come from the Young People's Coordinator budget, which is dedicated to BYF work.
2.2	<p>Members are asked to note the main developments and updates in the paper, particularly in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. BYF recruitment and induction; 2. Updates on the Elephant in the Room project; 3. Formalising youth participation structures; and 4. The Ur City 2 fund.
3.0	Main report
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.1	<p>Youth Forum Recruitment</p> <p>Young people on the BYF serve a 2 year term and in June the 2018-2020 recruitment process was completed with over 100 young people applying and taking part in taster sessions and interviews to be selected as members. A total of 40 young people were selected to join the BYF (4 young people per DEA). A celebration event was held with the Lord Mayor in City Hall in September to mark the end of the term for the 2014-16 members and welcome the new members and their families.</p>
3.2	<p>Youth Forum Induction</p> <p>Since September our new young people have been settling in and learning about their new role. During their induction from Sept-Dec 2018 they are exploring the following areas with BCC staff:</p>

- Team building and getting to know each other;
- Vision for next 2 years;
- Human rights;
- The powers of local and regional government;
- Council Structures and decision making ;
- How to engage effectively with Cllrs and decision makers.

3.3 Young people also held their first full Forum meeting in the Council Chamber and met with the Lord Mayor as part of their induction.

Youth Forum Campaigns

3.4 In November BYF members attended a weekend residential in Greenhill YMCA Newcastle to plan their work for the next 2 years. Young people voted to work on the following issues:

- Mental Health (a continuation of their *Elephant in the Room* work);
- Relationship & sexual health education;
- The experiences of young immigrants living in Belfast.

3.5 An update on the Elephant in the Room will be provided in this paper and over the coming months the young people will be exploring their other selected issues and will be forming projects around these.

Poverty

3.6 Members will remember the BYF poverty report, 'Poverty: it's not a choice', launched in City Hall in May 2017. Young people made a number of recommendations in this report and in October 2018 BYF members took part in a poverty workshop with Members and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. BYF work in this area remains ongoing.

Elephant in the Room

3.7 On 4th October the BYF launched their 'Elephant in the Room' (EITR) mental health research report in Stormont. This project was completed in partnership with young people from the NI Youth Forum and the Children's Law Centre and saw the young people

involved conduct surveys and focus groups that engaged almost 1,300 young people NI wide. The data collected was then used to create a research report and make recommendations to Government about the future of mental health advice and support for young people.

i. *Key findings*

3.8 The report is called 'Elephant in the Room: Exploring young people's awareness of mental health in Northern Ireland.' A summary of key findings follows:

- The findings can be broken down into three broad themes:

1. Stigma
2. Safe Spaces
3. Schools and information

- 3.9
- Overwhelmingly young people reported that there is a huge negative stigma attached to mental health which in turn leads to a 'culture of silence' where young people are afraid to talk about mental health.
 - Added to this, young people reported not having the language to be able to talk about mental health and there being no safe spaces available to talk about it.
 - Young people also said that conversations about mental health are adult led and that often this results in the focus of conversations being narrowed and excludes young people.
 - Young people said social media has a huge negative impact on their mental health and is damaging.
 - Young people said they need access to safe, reliable and *consistent* mental health information and advice.
 - Young people said they receive little to no information and support on mental health and wellbeing in schools and this needs to change.

ii. *Young people's recommendations*

3.10

A key part of the youth-led focus groups involved asking young people what solutions they would like to give to Government in the campaign to promote positive mental health and wellbeing. Young people gave many new and creative ideas. BYF members analysed these and used them to create the following recommendations for Government:

1. Support the creation of a youth led mental health campaign challenging the culture of silence and negative stigma. As part of this, work with young people to create a new and positive language around mental health by creating a mental health dictionary.
2. Engage with young people to create and fund safe digital solutions to receive mental health information and support. These solutions should be designed by young people for young people.
3. Create a compulsory curriculum programme for all schools and colleges on mental health and wellbeing that helps to raise awareness and challenge stigma and that allows young people to access consistent mental health information. This programme should be long term and embedded in schools.

iii. *Next steps*

3.11

Now that the report is launched, the BYF and our partner organisations will begin work in two areas:

1. *Awareness raising campaign with young people:*

- a) A young people's wellbeing day linked to EITR is being planned for late January 2019 in Girdwood Community Hub.
- b) Our partner organisation, NI Youth Forum, has applied for funding from Children in Need to employ a full time EITR project worker to roll out a regional youth led EITR mental health campaign.

- c) This report seeks permission from Members for Council to act as a referee in this application and to pledge £10,000 in financial support over the next three years to support this project (£3,333 per annum). This money will come from the existing Young People's Co-ordinators budget.
- d) The original EITR research project was joint funded by Council and Big Lottery. The project has now been shortlisted for Big Lottery's 'People's Choice' awards and if successful will win £50,000 to be spent over the next year on rolling out the EITR campaign.

2. *Engaging with decision makers around report recommendations:*

- a) Requests have been made for the young people from BYF, NI Youth forum and Children's Law Centre to present their report to the All Party Working Groups on Health and Children & Young people.
- b) In January 2019 there will be an engagement night in City Hall between key decision makers and young people, hosted by BYF.
- c) This report seeks permission for BYF members to present their report findings and recommendations to People & Communities Committee at the next available date.

3.12 **Formalising our youth participation structures**

The Assembly Commission is currently carrying out a scoping exercise for a future NI Youth Assembly. As part of this work, Commission staff are reviewing current youth participation structures that exist and have therefore been engaging with Council staff, at the request of the NI Commissioner for children and young people (NICCY), to gather information on our BYF model.

3.13 Council's BYF is widely regarded as a model of best practice in NI, both in terms of innovative practice with young people and in providing effective pathways for young people to express their views. In order for this practice to continue and develop, it is important to reflect and seek ways to continually improve on our participation offer.

3.14 The Lundy Model of Child Participation, developed by Laura Lundy, Professor of International Children's Rights at Queen's University Belfast, provides a way of conceptualising a young person's right to participation as laid down by Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The model is intended to focus

decision makers on the distinct, and interrelated, elements of the provision of participation rights and to facilitate decision makers' abilities to do this well. It is endorsed as a model of best practice by NICCY. There are 4 elements to the Lundy Model, which have a rational chronological order:

1. **Space:** Children/young people must be given safe, inclusive opportunities to form and express their views.
2. **Voice:** Children/young people must be facilitated to express their views.
3. **Audience:** The view must be listened to.
4. **Influence:** The view must be acted on, as appropriate.

3.15 Currently Belfast City Council, via the BYF, excels in facilitating elements 1 and 2 (Space & Voice). However, in terms of elements 3 and 4 (Audience & Influence), there is a need to formalise these parts of our participation structures within the organisation and strengthen our offer to young people. If we are to continue to be regarded as innovative and a regional leader in terms of youth participation, then it is important for Council to develop and agree on formal pathways for the BYF to feed their work into Council decision makers and into our decision making structures, and for Council to track and evidence how BYF work has influenced decisions and change. The Assembly Commission is particularly interested in learning from what we do in this regard and in following our example.

3.16 Over the coming months a scoping exercise involving BYF members, Council staff and the youth participation sector will take place in which options for formalised structures will be explored. Following this exercise an options paper will be presented to committee for agreement and approval.

Ur City 2 2018/19

3.17 The UrCity2 programme involves a linked city initiative for children and young people which has been formulated and delivered in conjunction with the fourteen Neighbourhood Renewal Partnerships in Belfast. Relatively modest amounts of funding, that is, up to £5,000, are made available to each of the NRPs to enable them to give impetus to programmes or projects that have been identified as priorities within their action plans but for which funding is not otherwise secured. We have rolled out the 18/19 funding to all 14

	<p>NRP's and a total of £70,000 has been awarded (please see Appendix 1 for details on how funding was awarded).</p> <p>Ur City 2 2019/2020</p> <p>3.18 UrCity2 has been running for a number of years and there is now an opportunity, in partnership with the Neighbourhood Renewal Areas, to reflect on and evaluate its impacts and also to shape it going forward. The Children & Young People's Unit will spend the next number of months engaging with the NRA's and BYF members on the future of Ur City 2. In particular how we can better align the programme to the work of the BYF and, in line with the review of our youth participation structures, what steps we might take to move towards a participatory budget model for Ur City 2. A paper on this will be presented to Committee at a future date.</p> <p>3.19 <u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>£10,000 over 3 years for the EITR mental health project (£3,333 per annum). The first year will be met within existing 18/19 CYP revenue budget and future support will be considered as part of the estimates process.</p> <p>3.20 <u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no equality or good relations implications. • No rural needs assessment is needed.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix one: List of funded Ur City 2 projects for 2017/18.