



Subject:	Belfast Youth Forum Update
Date:	3 December 2019
Reporting Officer:	Nigel Grimshaw, Strategic Director, City and Neighbourhoods Department Ryan Black, Director Neighbourhood Services
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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).
1.2	The paper presents the main developments in BYF work: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relationship and sexual health education project• Mental health campaign• Poverty campaign• Racism and diversity project• BYF recruitment

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formalising youth participation structures within BCC • Queens University 'B-RADICAL' research project
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> To agree the three suggested meeting dates between P&C Committee and the Belfast Youth Forum. To agree to BCC being a partner stake holder organisation in the Queens University 'B-RADICAL' research project. To grant permission for BYF recruitment to begin in April 2020.
2.2	<p>Members are asked to note the main developments and updates in the paper, particularly in relation to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The findings and recommendations contained in the BYF 'Any Use?' research report; BYF campaigns updates; BYF recruitment timelines.
3.0	Main report
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.1	<p>Belfast Youth Forum</p> <p>BYF is the main youth participation structure of BCC and acts as the voice of young people within local government in Belfast. BYF is made up of 40 young people aged 13-18 recruited from each of the DEA's across Belfast; members serve a two year term with the current cohort serving from September 2018- September 2020. Our BYF model is rights based and youth led, and every two years young people select campaign areas to work on and bring forward to decision makers within local and regional government.</p>
3.2	<p>Youth Forum Campaigns</p> <p>BYF members are currently working on the following campaigns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty (Poverty: it's not a choice campaign); • Mental Health (Elephant in the Room campaign); • Relationship & sexual health education; • Racism and diversity.

Updates on each of the campaigns will follow in this paper.

3.3 **Poverty**

Members will recall that in the June Committee paper there was an update on a proposed meeting between the BYF and Department for Communities (DFC) officials to discuss poverty in Belfast and in particular, the BYF's poverty report and recommendations. This meeting took place in City Hall on 15th October and was attended by a delegation of BYF members and Permanent Secretaries from the DFC, the Department of Education (DE) and the Department of Infrastructure. Also in attendance was the Deputy Permanent Secretary for the Department of Economy and senior officials from The Executive Office. Young people discussed issues around public transport costs, zero hour contracts and minimum wage amongst other things. There was also a discussion around Government plans for a costed anti-poverty strategy and the role young people should play in shaping this. A number of commitments were made by officials at the end of the meeting including:

- DFC will engage with the BYF on the draft anti-poverty strategy;
- DE will engage with the BYF on its educational underachievement strategy;
- Department of Infrastructure committed to meeting jointly with the Chief Executive of Belfast City Council and the Permanent Secretary of DFC to discuss how best to involve the BYF in engagement events around city centre design that they are currently working on together.

BYF will make contact with each of the departments in the New Year to ask for a progress update on each of the commitments above.

3.4 **Elephant in the Room (EITR)**

The BYF continue to work on the two main strands of their EITR campaign:

- **Engaging and lobbying decision makers around report recommendations**

In August young people from BYF and NI Youth Forum met with the Permanent Secretaries of the Department of Health (DOH) and the Department of Education (DE) in Parliament Buildings. A number of senior officials from the departments, the Public Health Agency, the Health Trust and the Education Authority were also in attendance. At the meeting, young people presented the findings and recommendations from their EITR research report and led a discussion with officials on how they could work together to

progress these recommendations. The report and work of our young people was well received and highly praised and officials are keen to keep engagement ongoing and frequent. A commitment was made by both Permanent Secretaries to establish a working group between EITR, DE, DOH and relevant statutory agencies around the recommendations in the report. The initial meeting of this group is due to take place in early 2020 and organisations are liaising to organise a date.

- **Awareness raising campaign with young people:**

BYF, NI Youth Forum and the Children's Commissioners Youth Panel have entered into a short-term partnership and have been working together from July to create a mental health advocacy toolkit for young people. Work in this area has been ongoing and the toolkit is due to launch in March 2020. As part of their awareness raising work, the BYF also took part in the Commissioners 'World Children's Day' event in W5 on 20th November. This event celebrated the 30th anniversary of the UNCRC and saw over 2,000 children and young people attend and take part in rights-based activities on the day. BYF facilitated EITR mental health workshops as part of the event.

3.5

Relationship and sexual health education (RSE)

In the June committee paper, Members were updated that BYF, Queens University Centre for Children's Rights and Common Youth had entered into a working partnership to create a youth-led research project exploring young people's views on the standard of their current RSE in school. The groups worked together throughout the summer to create an RSE survey which was launched in August and ran until the end of September. BYF and QUB spent October analysing the findings and creating a report, titled:

'Any Use? Young people's opinions on relationship and sexuality education in Belfast 2019.'

The report launched in City Hall on 21st November to coincide with World Children's Day and both the Lord Mayor and Children's Commissioner spoke at the event. A total of 771 young people from Belfast completed the survey and a summary of key findings follows.

i. Key findings

- 72% of young people said they knew they had a right to receive RSE in school.
- But one in two young said this right is currently not being met.

- 34% of young people who completed the survey had never received an RSE lesson in school.
- Of the young people who did receive RSE, only 10% said the information they received was 'very useful.'
- 60% said the RSE they received was either 'not very useful' or 'not useful at all'.
- The majority of young people in our survey were taught RSE in a science-based class.
- A massive 86% of young people felt school was still the best place to receive RSE.
- Three quarters of young people believed RSE should not be influenced by the ethos or religion of the school.
- An overwhelming majority want it taught by a qualified RSE teacher as part of an in-depth curriculum programme.
- The most popular subject young people want to learn about in RSE is 'personal relationships'.
- Young people said this includes LGBT relationships, consent, how to identify healthy and unhealthy relationships and love and respect.

ii. Young people's recommendations

BYF members have analysed the findings and created the following RSE recommendations for Government:

- a) Adopt a right-based proactive approach to relationship and sexuality education.
- b) Work with young people to co-produce an RSE curriculum programme for schools.
- c) A curriculum programme should be taught by specialised, qualified and trained staff.

iii. Next Steps

Now that the report has launched, the BYF will begin work in two areas:

1. Engaging with decision makers and statutory agencies: The BYF have created an RSE pledge and in the New Year will begin to meet with decision makers and officials from departments and statutory agencies to present the report findings and to ask them to sign the pledge. Permission is sought in this report to meet with P&C Committee on 8th January and it is envisaged that a large part of this meeting will be dedicated to discussing the RSE report and in particular what role BCC can play through Community Planning in promoting our young people's recommendations.

2. Awareness raising with young people: The BYF are planning to hold a number of young people's RSE vents throughout 2020 with the first expected to take place in City Hall in Spring 2020.

3.6

Racism and diversity

BYF members will hold workshops in City Hall in January 2020 with young people from immigrant/refugee/asylum seeker communities in Belfast. The workshops will explore these young people's experiences of living in Belfast as well as gathering their opinions on how best to promote multi-culturalism and diversity in the city. BYF will use the feedback from discussions on the day to create a video report which they will launch in the QFT film theatre in Spring 2020. Dr Jonny Byrne from Ulster University is working with BYF to create workshop content and to analyse data collected.

3.7

Recruitment

Recruitment for the 2020-2022 BYF is due to begin next year via the following methods:

- Engagement with young people, youth workers and community workers from February-March;
- Applications will open via an 'expression of interest' form in April;
- April time online social media campaign to encourage applications;
- Letters will also be sent to all Belfast schools;
- Applications will close in May and young people will be invited to BYF taster sessions in City Hall;
- Interviews will take place in June and 40 young people will be awarded places.

Permission is sought to approve the above process and begin recruitment for the next Forum in April 2020.

3.8

Formalising our youth participation structures

At June committee, Members agreed to establish a joint engagement between the BYF and P&C Committee by holding formalised meetings three times per annum. These meetings are to be recorded and ratified at Full Council three times per annum also. This is part of Councils work to build on and strengthen our current youth participation offer. Permission is sought to approve the three proposed meeting dates for 2020:

- ✓ 8th January at 5pm.

- ✓ 2nd June at 5pm.
- ✓ 20th October at 5pm.

If the dates above are approved then a draft agenda will be circulated to Members ahead of January's meeting for their input.

3.9

Queens University 'B-RADICAL' project

'B-RADICAL' stands for Belfast: Respect and Disrespect in Children and Adolescents Lives.

The B-RADICAL project, facilitated by QUB, seeks to understand how respect, lack of respect, and disrespect are theorised, understood and experienced by children and young people in the city of Belfast. The overall aim is to generate a rich understanding of the concept and experiences of respect and disrespect from children and young people's perspectives with a view to generating better relationships among children and their peers and the adults whom they encounter. The research further seeks to inform the delivery of public and community-based services which children and young people engage with on a daily basis in the city.

A distinctive feature of the research will be a child rights-based methodology which requires the participation of CYP as stakeholders to assist in the planning and design of the project through to the impact strategy and dissemination. The BYF are acting as the Children and Young People's Advisory Group (CYPAG) on this project and QUB have already held pre grant application consultations with them. They have helped shape the study and informed on areas and issues of importance to them and their peers.

As well as the BYF, researchers from QUB seek to work collaboratively with key adult stakeholders from across Belfast including members of Belfast City Council, the Children's Commissioner, representatives from various government departments and state agencies such as transport, health, education, leisure, social care, justice, and members of the business community, NGOs and other charitable organisations. A number of activities will facilitate discussion across the stakeholder groups on research aims, focus, methods and dissemination. In addition, it is hoped that engaging adult stakeholders in the design phase will maximise the potential impact of the research findings as they will act as 'champions' for the research in their related areas of expertise.

	<p>Permission is sought from Members to allow BCC to act as a stakeholder in the research project and be named as an official city partner organisation in the grant application. There are no financial or resource implications for BCC.</p>
3.10	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>There are no financial or resource implications to this report.</p>
3.11	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>There are no equality or good relations implications.</p> <p>No rural needs assessment is needed.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	None