



Kirklees Democracy Commission Cross Party Working Group – 28 November 2018

Civic Pathways for Young Citizens

Background

As part of its work the Commission undertook detailed work looking at active citizens in civic society and in particular the responsibility we have to develop an environment and culture that nurtures our young citizen's interest in local democracy.

By way of a reminder Council have agreed the following outcomes in the context of the work covered by this paper:

- ***Active citizens have a stake in the place they live and are able to inform and influence the future of their community and the decisions affecting it;***
- ***Young citizens are interested and have the opportunity to be engaged in local democracy;***

The Commission concluded that young people do not currently have the same stake in civic society and were therefore keen to address that imbalance. However, they also recognised that there is a need to develop a life-long approach to active citizenship. Citizens who took part in the roadshows emphasised the importance of building new relationships with a wider body of active citizens, and young people in particular. The Commission was keen to grow stronger relationships between active citizens of all ages, through mentoring, shadowing and collaborative social activism.

As part of the Commission's work the theme of young citizens therefore emerged strongly as an area of longer-term priority in the context of a wider Active Citizens approach. The Commission emphasised the importance of developing an environment and a culture across Kirklees that nurtures young people's interest and engagement in local democracy. This is a long-term goal which will require the development of strong foundations now.

In the group discussion with Kirklees Youth Council, young participants highlighted a strong concern that young people are often stereotyped and they feel that young people's views are not valued as a consequence of this. They commented that young people are seen as a social problem rather than as citizens who have something to contribute.

Our [Youth Councillors](#) told us that young people would like to be more involved in decision-making. Suggestions for this included having a conference to talk about youth issues, making space for young people to speak at Full Council or other Committee meetings, and councillors visiting schools to ask young people what things they would like to see change. The University of Huddersfield Student Union feel that they can play an important role in educating and informing students. However, they told us that among students there is a clear lack of understanding about how decisions are made in the council.

[Kenny Imafidon](#) from Bite the Ballot helped us to understand the challenges and opportunities faced by young people when trying to engage in local democracy. Kenny explained that the most significant barrier to young people being engaged in local democracy is the lack of political education throughout the course of their school lives. There is a fear of teaching politics. Kenny believes it's important to overcome the fears that are associated with political education, as teaching such subjects fosters and facilitates critical thinking. Schools are well placed to address these issues from the outset by embracing a democratic culture.

There are opportunities to involve young people in decision-making by identifying what decisions can be passed to young people in schools. Such power-sharing is important as it can become habit forming and will allow young people to develop the attributes that will make them active citizens. Young people need support to understand the system and the landscape if they are going to engage in those local issues and get involved in local democracy.

Other witnesses similarly highlighted the central importance of creating opportunities for young citizens to understand and experience local democracy. [Sarah Allan](#) from Involve explained that there is a strong case for political education in schools. This would help to remove one of the barriers to equality of participation. Sarah also told us that it's important to focus on relevant issues as a starting point for engaging young citizens, as this means young people can get involved without needing to understand how local democracy works first.

[Anthony Zacharzewski](#) from the Democratic Society emphasised the importance of giving young citizens a close up view of what happens in order to demystify the way that decisions are made. Anthony explained that it is important to give young people the opportunity to have their say on the things that matter to them. This could be as simple as putting democratic procedures in place at schools or in communities where young people are present. It could also involve creating opportunities for young citizens to have their say in a format that works for them, and for young people to know that they are being listened to without being patronised. Anthony added that

there is scope to delegate some decisions that specifically affect young people, at least as a “first draft” of those decisions.

The Commission felt that supporting Young Citizens should not be a Kirklees Council agenda alone as it has an impact on our wider civic society in the borough and also has implications for local and national government as a whole. That said, the Commission particularly felt that Kirklees schools have a crucial role to play in supporting this culture change which is reflected in the recommendations). The Commission felt that to effectively support and develop our young citizens, all local schools should play a central role as local democratic hubs. This should involve designing (and putting into practice) a range of approaches which will create pathways for young citizens to become involved in civic society, including raising awareness about being a councillor.

In light of the above the Commission has made the following recommendations:

- Kirklees Council should ensure that schools play a central role as local democratic hubs as part of the delivery of an Active Citizens Strategy. This should involve designing (and putting into practice) a range of approaches which will create pathways for young citizens to become involved in civic society, including raising awareness about being a councillor. These could include:
 - Designing local democracy resources for Kirklees schools to be used in the context of civic education;
 - Strengthening the links between local councillors and the schools in their wards through programmed “school surgeries” as part of citizenship education;
 - Working with the National Citizen Service to develop a mentoring scheme, to be piloted in Kirklees;
 - Working with the Local Government Association (LGA) to develop a young councillors “apprenticeship” scheme, to be piloted in Kirklees;
 - Working with the University of Huddersfield and local colleges to develop a structured approach to work placement;
 - Developing a mentoring scheme between Kirklees Councillors and Kirklees Youth Councillors. **PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION**
- Working with key providers, Kirklees Council should develop a democratic digital literacy pilot as part of a wider civic education programme for young citizens. **LINKED RECOMMENDATION**

It is important to note that some work has already taken place to look at the ways in which some areas of work could be developed. Some of this was tested as part of Local Democracy Week in 2017. It is expected that learning from that process is utilised as part of any future work.

It should also be noted that other work is taking place which contributes to this area of work. Examples include: My Country My Vote, National Citizen Service

programme, Kirklees Youth Council, voice of the child work, school based provision. **Details of this work known to us is attached at Appendix A.** It is noted however that these differing programmes are not always joined up or coherent which limits the opportunities for young people to engage with civic pathways in Kirklees. There is also real scope to enhance the emerging offer in a way that works closely with our partners, and in particular the University of Huddersfield

The remainder of this paper sets out a series of proposals as to how these recommendations could be progressed.

The Theme Leads for this project will be Vina Randhawa and Diane Sims.

Suggested approach

1. Local democracy resources

Citizens of all ages have told us that they need to understand how local democracy works so that they can get involved. Young citizens who have participated in Kirklees Youth Council have told us how much difference learning the basics about local democracy has made to them. We know there's a clear need for learning resources, and for these to be easily accessible to more of our citizens. By working with our young citizens to develop these resources and to test out ways of sharing them, we will also be able to create something that is useful for citizens of all ages. Our key tasks are to develop:

- Materials *(including resources in different and accessible formats, based around the needs of our citizens)*
- Methods *(including a pilot that will support citizens with democratic digital skills and confidence)*
- Standards *(including exploring options for an accreditation scheme, such as "train the trainer")*

2. Working together to support our young citizens

A key challenge for us is how to bring together the work that's already happening to support our young citizens. We need to work more closely with partners to recognise the valuable work that's already happening and to create a shared vision for the future. This will enable us to develop and promote clear pathways that help our young citizens to be involved in local democracy. Our key activities will be:

- Bringing together a network.
- Recognising the key role of schools, but making sure the work is open to others.
- Mapping our current approaches.
- Creating a coherent approach that different partners each understand their active role in.
- Storytelling to improve understanding and to encourage participation.

- Evaluating what's working well (or not working well), so that we can focus on activities that meet the needs of our young citizens.

We have the opportunity to strengthen our valuable partnership with the University of Huddersfield through this work. In particular, Dr Andy Mycock is keen to partner with us on developing local democratic education pilots, and he has offered to seek external funding for research and evaluation activities. The Students' Union are also keen to take an active role. The Working Group is recommended to invite key partners to the next meeting, to discuss in more detail.

3. Developing and strengthening our pathways

A number of new pathway options are included in the Democracy Commission's recommendations. Some of our current activities give a strong starting point for developing these pathways:

- **School surgeries with councillors** - councillors are already developing their relationship with schools through visits and activities, but in addition we are proposing to develop a standard format for school surgeries that could be used more widely across all wards.
- **NCS mentoring scheme** - we have already developed new learning activities with NCS, although developing a mentoring scheme would be in addition to these current activities.
- **Young councillors "apprenticeship" scheme** - this would be a new project with the LGA.
- **Structured approach to work placement** - we have offered more student placements this year, although we need to refine these as part of Kirklees Council's wider approach.
- **Mentoring scheme between Kirklees Councillors and Kirklees Youth Councillors** - some councillors are already providing ad hoc shadowing opportunities to our youth councillors, but in addition we are proposing to develop a standard mentoring offer that could be provided by any councillor. Initial work would involve finding out what both councillors and youth councillors want from the scheme.

We are aiming to work with partners to pilot, evaluate and develop each activity. We'd like to ask the Working Group to prioritise these pathway options and to share ideas for practical pilots.

Recommendation

The Cross Party Working Group is asked to:

- Consider (and sign off?) the objectives and proposed approach for undertaking this project as set out in the **Suggested approach** section of this paper. **Are they the right ones and are you happy with how the work will be progressed?** In particular the Working Group is asked to consider and prioritise the pathway options and share their ideas for practical pilots.

2(b)

- Identify and agree a member from the Working Group to take strategic lead responsibility for this area of work.
- Invite Dr Andy Mycock and key partners to the next meeting to discuss opportunities to develop and evaluate local democratic education pilots.

Report produced by:

Vina Randhawa and Diane Sims and in consultation with Carl Whistlecraft and the wider Programme Team.

Existing Opportunities and Activities**Democracy Service****➤ Kirklees Youth Council**

The Youth Council is a voice for young people living, studying or working in Kirklees.

Through the Youth Council, young people have been able to influence and inform decisions that affect their lives or on which they have strong opinions. They are empowered to have a say, be heard and gain recognition for their positive contribution to society. This is currently delivered via a two day accredited Local Democracy workshop.

KYC is has recently celebrated its 10th anniversary and work is currently taking place to find out from young citizens and stakeholders how we can grow our Youth Council to ensure it continues to support young people for the next 10 years.

➤ Local Democracy Activity within Schools

A range of approaches and opportunities to engage with schools initially piloted during European Local Democracy Week (ELDW) 2017 and now part of a regular programme to raise awareness of what Councillors do, how decisions are made and encourage young citizens to be active in their communities. The offer includes:-

- School Participatory Budgeting
- Meet the Mayor - & the Council Chamber Experience
- Meet your Councillor – Councillor led local democracy sessions in schools. A range of interactive/creative resources are developed to support this.

➤ Democracy Ambassadors Programme

This programme is funded by the Cabinet Office as part of the Government's Suffrage Centenary Fund until March 2019 and is aimed at recruiting, training and supporting 13-16 year olds to talk to their friends about democracy in a way that makes sense to them, in places that are familiar and comfortable, so that talking democracy becomes a natural part of growing up.

The Democracy Service is currently working with 2 schools to recruit, train and support young people to talk to at least 20 friends/peers about democracy.

➤ Electoral Services

Electoral Office remit is 16+ targeting secondary schools and colleges to raise awareness of participation in the democratic process, focusing on electoral registration. This includes:-

- Proactive engagement with Heads of years 10 & 11 in all schools across Kirklees to engage young people through direct delivery of democracy workshops or by provision of resources to teaching staff.
- Continuation of work with Schools Colleges and the University in support of activities to increase understanding and awareness of the benefits of engaging with the democratic process e.g. voter registration sessions; delivery of Rock Enrol and vote with your feet workshops; attendance at Fresher Fayres and provision of resources to Huddersfield University Students Union and to PSCE Tutors in Colleges and schools

➤ **UK Parliament Education Programme**

A number of staff within the Democracy Service are Teacher Ambassador of the UK Parliament Education programme and can deliver the following free sessions:-

- An Introduction to UK Parliament
- Take Action

➤ **Kirklees Schools**

The Democracy Service is in the process of engaging with schools to map current opportunities and activities, identify what resources they are using (and who is delivering), what support they may need and how resources for schools might be enhanced going forward. Feedback will help develop and strengthen civic pathways for young citizens.

Children and Families Service

➤ **National Citizens Service**

NCS is a 2-4 week programme for young people aged 15-17 that takes place in the school holidays. It gives young people the opportunity to live away from home, develop new skills, take part in social action and meet new people – helping to develop their confidence, leadership and independence.

Kirklees Council has been involved in a pioneering partnership with NCS in order to boost the numbers of young people participating in the programme and to maximise the impact of the programme upon young people for the benefit of Kirklees and its communities.

The Democracy Service won a contract to boost the number of young people participating, particularly vulnerable young people, maximise the impact the initiative brings to Kirklees communities through social action projects delivered by the young people (during and after the programme) and establish a programme of democratic engagement e.g. Councillors engaging in social action projects in their wards and building in active citizenship and local democracy opportunities into the NCS programme.

The formal partnership arrangement with Kirklees Council and NCS has come to an end however work in progressing to ensure that NCS is strategically positioned as part of a wider complimentary civic pathways offer for Kirklees and encourages inclusive progression routes into and out of NCS that enables the majority of young people in Kirklees to benefit from the programme.

Communities Service

➤ **My Country My Vote**

MCMV is delivered by the **Cohesion and Integration Team** and is designed to increase awareness of, and participation in, the processes of local democracy. The project explores the development of democracy and highlights the importance of the democratic process in fostering debate and creating change.

➤ **Change Maker**

Change maker is a youth leadership programme that builds on MCMV with a focus on what change young people want see in their communities and empowering them to take action. The Cohesion and Integration Team is currently developing this programme for Kirklees schools.

People Service

➤ **Corporate Apprenticeship Programme**

The Council currently offers an entry level apprenticeship programme (age 16 years +) and a higher level programme (graduates and post graduate level).

The schemes provide an opportunity for young people/young adults to gain valuable work experience and gain a nationally recognised qualification i.e. to 'earn while they learn'.

The programme includes an introduction to working in a political environment as part of new apprentices' induction and workshop on voter registration delivered by the Democracy Service.

Third Sector

- Kirklees Youth Alliance (KYA) is a project funded by Kirklees Council, based in the local voluntary and community sector (with Third Sector Leaders Kirklees). The aim of KYA is to help young people access activities which develop their personal, social and educational potential in relaxed, fun and safe places within their local communities.