



Subject:	Youth Forum update
Date:	4 April 2017
Reporting Officer:	Nigel Grimshaw, Director City & Neighbourhood Services Department
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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 update Committee on the main activities of Council's Youth Forum (YF) and, in particular, present the YF report into young people's views on poverty in Belfast.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Note the ongoing work programme for the BCC Youth Forum• Consider and endorse the Youth Forum 'It's not a choice: Poverty in Belfast' report including key findings and recommendations and• Support the planned launch and related publicly on 10th May 2017.

3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>Youth Forum Recruitment</p> <p>Young people on the BCC Youth Forum (YF) serve a 2 year term. In June the 2016-18 recruitment process was completed with over 100 young people applying and taking part in taster sessions and interviews in order to be selected as YF members. A total of 40 young people were selected to join the YF (4 young people per DEA). A successful celebration event with the Lord Mayor to mark the end of the previous term for the 2014-16 members and to welcome the new members and their families took place in Sept 2016.</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 2016, they explored the following areas with BCC staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Team building and getting to know each other; ▪ Meeting with young people from across the city to hear their issues and what they would like the YF to work on and bring forward to Council; ▪ Vision for next 2 years for the YF; ▪ ‘Rights in Action’: Using Human Rights to create change where you live; ▪ The powers of local and regional government; ▪ Community Planning & the Belfast Agenda; ▪ Council Structures and decision making ; ▪ How to engage effectively with Councillors and decision makers.
3.3	<p>Young people also held their first full forum meeting in the Council Chamber and met with the Lord Mayor as part of their induction.</p>
3.4	<p>‘What you say matters’ Young People’s Conference</p> <p>In 2015 our Youth Forum helped Children’s Law Centre to gather the views of 900 young people from NI on the changes needed to improve their lives. These views were turned into a report called ‘Our Lives in Our Words,’ which was presented to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (UN) in Geneva. In June 2016, based on the findings in the young people’s report, the UN Committee made recommendation to the NI Executive. Their recommendations reflected the young people’s report which highlighted a need for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Better mental health provision for young people;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An end to discrimination against young people in community life and leisure experiences; ▪ An improved knowledge and understanding of Rights; ▪ Greater levels of meaningful participation from young people in decision making both at community and government level.
3.5	<p>The YF wanted to bring young people together to discuss what each of the themes above meant to them and to hear from their peers what they would like the YF to bring forward to Council on their behalf and to shape their future campaign activity. To support this objection, they organised and ran a young people’s conference in October 2016 called ‘What you say matters.’ The conference was organised in partnership with young people from the NI Youth Forum and the Children’s Law Centre as the young people believed it would strengthen their voice and reach more young people. The conference, held in City Hall, was attended by over 100 young people. The entire event was youth led, workshops were held on the day around each theme and young people were asked to form questions on each for the panel discussion taking place that afternoon with key decision makers.</p>
3.6	<p>The decision makers who came to City Hall to take part were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Barry McElduff, MLA, Chair of the Education Committee ▪ ACC Stephen Martin, Assistant Chief Constable, PSNI ▪ Andrew Dawson, Head of Mental Health & Capacity Unit, Department of Health, NI.
3.7	<p>Cllr Matt Garrett, Chair of People and Communities Committee opened the conference and welcomed all the young people to City Hall. The key issues emerging from the day were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Police stop and search powers; ▪ Inadequate mental health provision for young people under 18; ▪ Votes at 16/ Meaningful participation; ▪ Mental health issues caused by exam stress at school; ▪ Need for more ‘youth-friendly’ spaces for young people in their Belfast; and ▪ Inadequate sexual Health education.
3.8	<p>Some early outcomes from the conference are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Health Minister, Michelle O’Neill MLA, invited a delegation of young people from the BCC YF, NIYF and CLC to have a private meeting with her to discuss concerns around young people and mental health provision. ii. Barry McElduff, MLA, has invited a delegation from all 3 Forums to present

	<p>evidence to the Education Committee in Stormont.</p> <p>iii. All 3 Youth Forums have committed to continue our partnership working, particularly around a young people's mental health campaign.</p>
3.9	<p>A full copy of the conference report is enclosed at Appendix 2 for information.</p>
	<p>Youth Forum Campaigns</p>
3.10	<p>At the end of November 16, the YF members attended a weekend residential in Corrymeela in Ballycastle to plan their work for the next 2 years. Young people voted to work on the following issues: Poverty in Belfast; Votes at 16 and Mental Health. As noted, these issues were selected based on direct engagement with wider groups of young people outside of the Forum. Since the residential, forum members have been meeting regularly to progress the work and have received 4 training sessions from the Participation and Practice of Rights Project (PPR) in advocacy and lobbying. This training included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Researching their 3 issues; ▪ Building their campaign case: designing monitoring tools, gathering evidence; ▪ Developing a campaign plan: setting timeframes, agreeing campaign protocols; ▪ How to lobby effectively; ▪ Using human rights indicators and benchmarks: setting targets for government.
3.10	<p>The YF's intend to launch their first campaign (Poverty) in May 2017. Their second campaign, Mental Health, will follow in September this year and our young people are running this campaign in partnership with young people from NI Youth Forum (NIYF) and Children's Law Centre (CLC).</p>
	<p>YF meets Junior Minister</p>
3.11	<p>On 10th January 2017, a delegation of young people from our YF, NIYF & CLC met with Junior Minister, Megan Fearon, MLA. This meeting came as a result of the 'What you Say Matters' conference. The meeting was a great success for our young people, who got to ask the Minister questions relating to mental health provision on behalf of the young people who had attended the conference. In particular they asked:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Why funding for mental health makes only 8% of the overall health budget? ii. How does the Minister plan to ensure young people have a say in creating their mental health services? iii. What are the plans to ensure under 18's have the same access to mental health services as adults?

	<p>iv. We also highlighted young people's wishes to see more community based mental health provision that is less clinical and includes more peer support.</p>
3.12	<p>The Minister was keen to hear young people's views and answered all questions. She also gave a commitment to meet the groups again in 6 months and to update young people on the progress made with the issues highlighted.</p>
	<p>Belfast Agenda & Local Development Plan Consultations</p>
3.13	<p>Since January 2017 the YF has assisted the Community Planning and LDP teams to create youth friendly versions of both consultation documents. YF members will spend the month of March taking both consultations into their schools for young people to complete and feed into the wider process. The CYP unit staff team have also been conducting consultation exercises with more marginalised groups of young people including young people in the Juvenile Justice Centre and young people in care.</p>
	<p>Ur City 2</p>
3.14	<p>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. Based on programme submissions, relatively modest amounts of funding of 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 within their action plans as priorities but for which funding is not otherwise secured. We have rolled out the 2016/17 funding to all 14 NRP's and a total of £69,886 was awarded. A summary list of projects is attached as Appendix 3. The 2017/18 round of funding will be issued in early July 2017.</p>
	<p>YF Pilot Study on Poverty in Belfast: key findings and recommendations.</p>
3.15	<p><u>Background to project:</u> One of the campaign issues of the 2014-16 YF was poverty and the new 2016-18 YF retained this as a thematic priority issue. The last Forum spent a number of months engaging with the charity sector, service providers, researchers and academics from Queens University and Ulster University to understand the issue of poverty and to agree the focus for their project. As a result of these engagements, the YF highlighted that young people's voices were missing in the conversations about poverty in our city and for this reason set about designing and facilitating a youth led piece of research into young people's views on poverty in Belfast. The YF received research training from the National Children's Bureau (NCB) and from this our young people created a research tool.</p>

3.16	<p>Throughout May and June 2016 the YF met with youth groups across Belfast and conducted youth-led focus groups asking them about poverty in their city, its impacts and solutions for Government. Seven groups from all four parts of Belfast took part in the research: a total of 68 young people. Once the focus groups were completed, the data was collated and sent to NCB for analysis. A research report was then created and since Sept '16 the new YF has been working on finalising the report and shaping key recommendations for Government based on young people's opinions.</p>
3.17	<p><u>Key Findings:</u> The report is called 'It's not a choice: Young people's views on poverty in Belfast, a pilot study.' The full report is attached, however, the following summarises the key findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Young people associated poverty with a range of multi-faceted and inter-connecting issues including homelessness, living in overcrowded homes, poor housing conditions, poor physical and mental health, and a lack of basic necessities. They also highlighted unemployment or low paid employment, poor educational achievement, and a lack of choice in some aspects of life. ▪ Young people identified low paid/minimum wage employment as one of the causes of poverty in Belfast. ▪ Young people also identified inadequate welfare rates and lack of resources as other key causes of poverty in the city. ▪ Young people feel that investment in Belfast is too concentrated in the city centre and that their communities have been 'left behind' when it comes to the sharing economic growth in Belfast. ▪ Young people said poverty impacts negatively on their health, education and social life. ▪ Young people said that effective interventions must target whole families and communities, not just individuals. ▪ Young people said poverty is not a lifestyle choice and that Government needs to do more to raise awareness of poverty in Belfast and challenge the myths and stereotypes that exist around our most vulnerable disadvantaged people and communities.
3.18	<p><u>Young people's recommendations:</u> 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 end poverty. Young people gave many new and creative ideas. Our YF analysed these and have used them to create the following recommendations for Belfast City Council:</p>

- i. **Create a Living Wage recognition scheme:** This would recognise/reward employers in the city who pay, as a minimum, the living wage to their staff. It would work similarly to the 'Scores on the Doors' scheme that Council operates. This should be the 'True Living Wage' as set by the Living Wage Foundation.
- ii. **Drive a Living Wage culture: Utilise contracting powers:** Council should use its power as a major contractor of services in Belfast to only award outside contracts to employers who pay their staff the Living Wage as a minimum.
- iii. **Endorse equal wages for young people:** Council should endorse young people from the age of 16 onwards receiving equal pay for doing equal work to adults.
- iv. **Create a plan to end poverty and share wealth:** This plan should tackle the root causes, create solutions and be funded to make it work. It should also make sure that as our economy grows, our most disadvantaged communities get an equal share of the wealth and investment.
- v. **Commit to meaningful participation:** Have real conversations with people of all ages living in poorer communities before creating policies and making decisions about their lives. They know what they need, so ask them.
- vi. **Create more 'decent' jobs:** Young people think decent jobs are ones that pay well, develop their skills and talents and are long term and stable. Young people don't just want these jobs for themselves; they want them for their families and people in their communities too.
- vii. **Make sure people facing poverty get these jobs: target training & opportunities:** Council should create a work placement programme and career pathways especially for young people at risk of poverty (young carers, young people with disabilities and young people with low educational attainment for example). Work programmes should be built to meet *their needs* and should target them at key transition stages of their lives (like young people leaving school or young people leaving care).
- viii. **Make it free:** Council owned leisure centres should include 16, 17 & 18 year olds in their junior admission prices and offer free swims and gym memberships to young people on certain days of the week. Council should organise more free social events and spaces for young people in Belfast like music festivals, fun days and hang out spaces in the city centre.
- ix. **Raise Awareness:** Council should use its position as a city leader to raise awareness about poverty in Belfast and to challenge the myths and stereotypes about people and communities experiencing poverty and deprivation.

<p>3.19</p> <p>3.20</p> <p>3.21</p> <p>3.22</p> <p>3.23</p>	<p><u>Next Steps:</u></p> <p><i>It is significant that many of these recommendations link very closely with the Belfast Agenda and it is encouraging to note that the young people in Belfast share the aspirations of Council to work with others to improve the outcomes and the life chances of young people. The YF members are very socially aware and have made positive suggestions as to how Council and other organisations can work to reduce the levels of poverty within our city.</i></p> <p>The Youth Forum hope to launch the report in City Hall on 10th May along with their ‘Poverty: It’s not a choice’ campaign. Our YF and older people’s forum (the G6) have been working together on an inter-generational project to create a video that raises awareness of the issue of poverty in Belfast and challenges the stereotypes surrounding people and communities experiencing poverty. This video will also be launched on 10th May and will be followed up with a social media campaign.</p> <p>Our young people then hope to present their research findings, recommendations and video to Committee and hope to work with Cllrs to implement recommendations from the report.</p> <p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>There are no resource implications associated with this report.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>There are no relevant equality and good relations implications</p>
<p>4.0</p>	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p>
	<p>Appendix 1: ‘What you say matters’ conference report</p> <p>Appendix 2: ‘It’s not a choice: young people’s views on poverty in Belfast’</p> <p>Appendix 3: Summary of Ur City 2 project awards 2016/17</p>