



Subject:	Belfast Youth Forum update
Date:	11 August 2020
Reporting Officer:	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	<p>The purpose of this report is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide an update on the ongoing work of Belfast City Council's Youth Forum (BYF) and the success of the campaigns;• Seek agreement on the next date for the joint Committee and Youth Forum meeting;• Seek permission to extend the term of the current Youth Forum membership for 1 year due to the impact of Covid-19 on the recruitment process.

2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • note the content of the report relating to the ongoing work and development of the Youth Forum; • agree the date of the next joint Committee and Youth Forum meeting; • agree to extend the current term of the 2018-20 cohort membership for 1 year.
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"> • Mental Health (Elephant in the Room campaign); • Relationship & sexual health education (Any Use campaign); • Racism and diversity (HOME campaign). <p>Updates on each of the campaigns will follow in this paper.</p>
3.3	<p>Elephant in the Room (EITR)</p> <p>The BYF continue to work on the two main strands of their EITR campaign:</p>
3.4	<p>Engaging and lobbying decision makers</p> <p>In October 2018 young people from BYF and NI Youth Forum presented their report, its findings and its recommendations in Stormont. 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 led a discussion with officials on how</p>

they could work together to progress the recommendations. The report and work of our young people was well received and highly praised.

This research and subsequent lobbying by the Youth Forum has had significant impact on Government Departments. Chris Lyttle MLA, chair of the All Party Group on Children & Young People has asked the NI Executive to adopt the recommendations contained in the Youth Forum's research report. The young people involved in this research have been invited to present the findings to the full Assembly in late July 2020.

3.5 **Mental Health Advocacy - Awareness raising campaign with young people:**

Building on this work the BYF, NI Youth Forum and the Children's Commissioners Youth have been working together to create a mental health advocacy toolkit for young people titled '**Heads Up**'. Work in this area has been ongoing and the toolkit was due to launch in March 2020, however due to COVID19 has been delayed slightly. It is hoped the toolkit will be published and launched in the very near future.

3.6 **Relationship and sexual health education (RSE) – Any Use? campaign**

This campaign is a joint partnership between Belfast Youth Forum, Queens University Centre for Children's Rights and Common Youth to create a youth-led research project exploring young people's views on the standard of their current RSE in school which resulted in a report titled

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

The report launched in City Hall in November 2019.

A total of 771 young people from Belfast completed the survey and a number of recommendations were made as set out below:

i. 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.

ii. Next Steps

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

1. Awareness raising with young people: The BYF had planned 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, however due to COVID19, these have had to be postponed. It is hoped that these can begin to take place in the latter part of 2020.
2. The BYF hope to present the findings of this report to the Education Committee in Stormont and present their recommendations to Ministers.
3. The South Eastern HSCT have expressed interest in replicating this research in the other parts on NI. This would include an identical questionnaire for young people in these other Council areas so that the results can be compared to establish how RSE differs in different parts of NI. Work with the Health Development Specialist – Sexual Health & Disability from the SE Trust and the Project Coordinator from CCEA has begun to establish the best way to engage young people in these areas.

3.7

Racism and diversity

BYF members have been working with Dr Jonny Byrne from Ulster University on a piece of research titled HOME which explores BAME young people's experiences of living in Belfast. Young people from the BYF will be conducting focus groups with 6 different ethnic youth groups across Belfast. These will take place in September 2020 either socially distanced (preferred option) or via Zoom.

Findings from these focus groups will then be analysed, a report presented and recommendations made on how Belfast can be a more culturally diverse city.

A short film will also be produced focusing more in-depth on some of the BAME young people's experiences.

3.8	<p>COVID19 Youth Press Conference</p> <p>NI Executive have invited BYF to be represented at a youth press conference focusing on COVID19. At this press conference, young people from a variety of youth organisations will have an opportunity to pose questions to the Ministers on a variety of issues which have affected young people during this time. This press conference is scheduled to take place in July/August 2020.</p>
3.9	<p>Formalising our youth participation structures</p> <p>At committee in June 2019, 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. This is part of Councils work to build on and strengthen our current youth participation offer.</p> <p>Permission is sought to approve the next meeting date of Tuesday 20th October 2020 at 5pm.</p>
3.10	<p>NI Youth Assembly</p> <p>BYF received correspondence from the Speaker of the NI Assembly, Alex Maskey MLA, thanking the young people as stakeholders for their involvement in helping to shape the proposal for the NI Youth Assembly. The letter notes that the Youth Assembly will be forming shortly and will mirror the structure of the NI Assembly. This will be a great opportunity for our Youth Forum members to put themselves forward with our support to become members of the Youth Assembly. A further report will be brought to Committee when we know detail of the nomination and selection process.</p>
3.11	<p>Extending current Youth Forum membership</p> <p>Recruitment and selection to our Youth Forum takes place every two years with members serving the full term. The process is robust involving the following elements and timeline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement with young people, youth workers and community workers from February-March; • Applications open via an 'expression of interest' form in April;

3.12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • April time online social media campaign to encourage applications; • Letters are also be sent to all Belfast schools; • Applications close in May and young people are invited to BYF taster sessions in City Hall; • Interviews take place in June and 40 young people will be awarded places. <p>Due to the impact of Covid-19 we were not in a position to actively engage with young people, schools, and service providers during this time. As we move in to the recovery phase and more opportunities for engagement are developing, it is essential that we continue the valuable work being conducted by the Youth Forum members and the existing partnerships.</p> <p>We are seeking approval to extend the current cohort of members' term for 1 year. This will enable us to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recruit and induct new members over a longer timeline incorporating a range of new methodologies that meet Covid-19 mitigation protocols. • continue the high standard research, lobbying, development and capacity building of the Youth Forum as a collective voice of young people in the city. <p><u>Finance and Resource Implications</u></p> <p><u>Financial Implications</u></p> <p>All costs associated with the Youth Forum have been agreed in the budget setting process. This is subject to revision and Departmental priorities</p> <p><u>Human Resource Implications</u></p> <p>A dedicated Community Development Officer has been assigned to facilitate the Youth Forum</p>
3.13	<p><u>Equality Impact or Good Relations/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None</p>
4.0	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p> <p>None.</p>