Children and young people's planning, resilience and safeguarding arrangements
'Square Table' Consultation Conversation
FEEDBACK AND OUTCOMES
28 March 2019

Welcome

The 'square table' event was an opportunity to build upon the excellent work and the role that children and young people already have in North Lincolnshire.

We want to work collaboratively to ensure our local approach to children's planning and resilience and safeguarding arrangements is young person friendly and that an approach is developed that respects their rights whilst also protecting those who need to be.

This summary provides an overview of the feedback and outcomes from the event. It will be distributed across key leaders and partnership arrangements, where it will help to shape and influence the strategic direction relating to children and young people.

What is a 'square table' event?

The purpose of a Square Table Event is to create an environment where people can have a discussion to develop a deeper understanding of the identified issues, where:

- Everyone is of equal importance
- Everyone has the opportunity to talk
- People are encouraged to contribute
- There is no right or wrong thing to say

It is not about looking for answers or identifying actions. However, the feedback and outcomes should impact on those who can shape and influence services and support.

Attendance

Rosie Parkin, Youth Councillor and Regional Representative, North Lincolnshire Youth Council (NLYC) and Mick Gibbs, Director of Children and Community Resilience, North Lincolnshire Council co-chaired the event.

An invitation to attend was extended to members of the NLYC, Children in Care Council (CICC) and other young people in receipt of services. Alongside Rosie, nine other young people from the NLYC and the CICC attended the event, representing three secondary schools, one sixth-form and two colleges.

All attendees were evidently open to sharing their views, perceptions and experiences in a simple and succinct way and any questions were routed through the co-chairs to enable a reflective and equal conversation to take place. Attendees actively listened to each other and did not try to look for the answers or focus on action planning.

Areas of focus

The co-chairs orientated the conversation around these areas:

? what it's like being a young person in North Lincolnshire

? what are the key issues and challenges that young people face

? whether services and support are in the right place at the right time

? are we engaging with young people in the right way

? how people work together and who are the best people to help

? how we make sure that people who live in the area know about how to build their resilience and keep themselves safe

? what strengths and assets that young people have

? how we involve young people in tackling local issues

? what are the opportunities for co-production

Emerging themes

A summary of the emerging themes arising from the conversation are as follows:

1 - Community Issues	Some areas have more sense of community Perceptions of police and other agencies are often learned/conditioned – can impact on trust and relationships
2 - Knife Crime	Understanding that the reality is not as common as the perception but not everyone is aware and this can contribute to fear – media play a significant role Difference between feeling safe and being safe
3 - Resilience	Not age related – it's about experiences – reflection is useful to help build resilience
4 - Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health	Different young people experience things in different ways Need more access to information and support – right time, right place, right person – relationships are key Confidentiality is important to young people The importance of self-help resources and self development
5 - Positive activities	Perceived lack of activities and facilities – needs to be a wider offer and/or more communication regarding current offer
6 - Transitioning to adulthood/ schools	Curriculum for life – whose responsibility is it? Need to develop life skills from an early age including grounding, mindfulness and coping strategies Schools could be more creative in 'off timetable' activities Focus on attainment – needs to be the whole person Exclusion within the school environment e.g. isolation and learning zones – doesn't help to reduce the stigma
7 - Communication and engagement	Media is crucial – opportunity for more responsible/positive messages – need to dispel myths and contribute to changing the narrative Value of peer to peer messages Need to positively challenge and educate
8 - Children's Challenge	All talk and no activity – is boring Feedback to be shared with the right people who can make a difference

Theme 1 – Community Issues

Discussion:

There was a consensus that there is a difference between feeling safe and being safe. This is often dependent on where you live and individuals perceptions of community. One young person referred to living in the Isle, which was perceived to be a close community, where everyone knows someone. It was suggested that other areas might not necessarily have the same sense of community. Some specific areas i.e. Everest Park, Burringham Park, Frodingham Road and the memorial garden on West Street were identified as places where issues tend to arise which can contribute to feeling unsafe. Young people reflected that a police presence can help to reduce issues and that seeing police regularly can help to build relationships. There was an acknowledgement that police resources are limited, but young people were pleased to hear that ongoing recruitment is likely to increase police presence, which is positive. It was also acknowledged that having a presence in the community from other services, including volunteers, would help to increase the feeling of safety. It was suggested that people's perceptions of the police and other agencies are often learned from others' views and experiences, which are often dependent on a range of factors. One young person reflected that children and young people are often 'threatened' with the police in that if they behave a certain way then they will be arrested. This pre conditioning can significantly affect trust and relationships and does not really reflect the positive role that the police and agencies can have within the community.

Theme 2 – Knife Crime

Discussion:

Knife crime was highlighted as a topical issue. NLYC members mentioned that knife crime had been voted as one of the top five issues in the 2018 Make Your Mark annual youth ballot and CICC members indicated that that their concerns were heightened due to a recent incident in Brigg. Young people also reflected on the previous incident at Winterton School and the impact it had on increasing anxiety. While it was acknowledged that it is not generally as much of an issue in this area compared to cities, particularly London, it was felt that there are certain areas and populations where it is on the rise. Young people reflected that the fear of knife crime could contribute to more people carrying weapons and gang culture, which can then contribute to more incidents. Young people recognised the media's role in raising awareness, but also in increasing anxiety. They felt it would be valuable for children and young people, including younger children, to understand the facts and actual statistics relating to knife crime. Young people reflected that it is necessary to equip young people to be more resilient and that if they are more exposed to information, it can reduce anxiety. They added that there is a need to ensure young people have access to the right information, perhaps through PHSE, which reduces misinformation and misperception. It was acknowledged that Humberside Police attended the Youth Council to talk about the No More Knives Campaign and that they are working in schools to raise awareness.

Theme 3 - Resilience

Discussion:

The young people remarked that resilience is not necessarily age related, but that it is developed because of different experiences and that reflection helps to further build levels of resilience. It was suggested that building confidence and building resilience go hand in hand and that young people need to be able to access different experiences in order to develop their confidence and resilience. The young people referred to accessing different opportunities and perspectives through the NLYC, CICC, families, trusted adults and within their peer groups. Some young people reflected that they had good PHSE in their school environment, though it was felt that the PHSE offer can be very inconsistent. Young people felt that PHSE in schools needed to be more fun and more engaging and it was suggested that it would be useful to give them examples of how other people have built resilience, so they can learn from others. It was mooted that children and young people with mental health issues may not be in a position to build their resilience and that there needs to more focus on raising awareness at a younger age. One young person referred to work in their school, which focussed on building resilience through rationalising fear. It was suggested that workshops focussing on building resilience would be useful for children and young people.

Theme 4 - Emotional Wellbeing & Mental Health

Discussion:

There was a consensus across all young people that emotional wellbeing and mental health remains a key issue for young people and that there needs to be better access to mental health support. There was a view that depending on your personal circumstances and resilience, normal life experiences can impact more significantly for some young people than others i.e. test results, not being chosen for things, the ups and downs of relationships/friendships and school/working life. It was suggested that schools should have specific teams of people to support emotional wellbeing and mental health issues and though there was some awareness of mental health champions, this did not seem to be commonplace. Young people referred to the School Nursing Service as a support mechanism, though they are only available in certain schools at certain times, which was a particular concern in relation to mental health issues as they may not be available when young people need to access them most. There was a view that teachers are generally happy to talk to young people about concerns if they feel confident in approaching them and discussing issues with them.

There continues to be a perceived stigma regarding mental health compared to physical health and young people reflected that it should be okay to not be okay, but that this does not always feel like it is the case. It was suggested that sometimes a mental health diagnosis or fear of what the diagnosis may be could prevent people from talking to individuals or seeing them as whole person. Young people suggested that some adults need to have a better understanding of young people, adolescence and the modern day pressures they face, and that the default position is not a 'happy go lucky' child who skips off to school.

Emotional wellbeing and mental health discussion continued:

It was thought that some adults needed more education on adolescence and how to respond positively as a 'just get over it' attitude is not helpful and can result in problems escalating, rather than being addressed at an early stage. Dealing with emotional wellbeing and every day pressures should be built into everyday life and sometimes having informal opportunities to talk to people as well as more structured support can be beneficial.

Confidentiality remains a key issue for young people and it was suggested that the fear of information being passed on could prevent them from seeking help. Although most young people were aware of the confidentiality parameters and that any safeguarding issues have to be passed onto the appropriate channels, some were not, therefore a clearer explanation of confidentiality guidelines would be useful for young people to understand, not least, as this may help young people to make decisions about if and what to share.

The importance of trust and relationships was highlighted as significant to good emotional wellbeing and mental health. It was felt that through trusted adults and by having trusted relationships, there are opportunities to impact positively on young people and that they could contribute to breaking cycles. Having trusted peer relationships was also highlighted as significant as young people often go to their peers to offload and for advice. This reinforces the importance of ensuring everyone has access to education and information for themselves and to support others too. It was suggested that online forums, like Life Central, could be further developed to offer a chat facility as well as more information about national trusted information sources. Young people had a sound awareness that taking positive steps contributed to positive emotional wellbeing, like doing things you enjoy, trying new things and having time to stop, think and reset.

Whilst it is important to ensure that support is available and that services reach out and engage, one young person indicated that some young people either don't want to talk to people or access services. In these cases, it is important to educate young people and to ensure that the right information is available at the right time and in the right place, so people can access information for themselves and develop their own resilience. This self-development could contribute to increased confidence and coping strategies. There is also a need to reach out to young people who cannot or do not know how to engage and access information though this may require services to 'go to them' and engage with them in different places and different ways.

Theme 5 – Positive Activities

Discussion:

The young people indicated that there could be a wider range of activities, community projects and schemes available for them to access as not one thing is suitable for all. Examples of other things that could be more available included gardening and youth clubs. One young person referred to two incidents of young people setting fires in Burringham Park, which was felt to be due to lack of youth facilities, though activities need to be fit for purpose e.g. gaming, as some young people are 'too cool' to take part in certain activities. It was acknowledged that there is not always lots of funding available, but that it was necessary to put things in place where there are specific problems. Communication and engagement were highlighted as being important in terms of encouraging and empowering young people to engage and contribute in available activities, particularly as some may require more support than others.

Theme 6 – Transitioning to Adulthood/Schools

Discussion:

It was suggested that schools tended to have a focus on attainment, rather than the whole person. One young person referred to having access to career information in their school, but that it was targeted at older year groups, though there was a view that all year groups should have access so young people can develop their mind-set earlier. NLYC members talked about the need for a curriculum for life and there was some consideration as to whose responsibility it was. It was suggested that the schools curriculum offer could be more varied, though it was acknowledged that there is only so much time in the day and that there are other opportunities to learn and develop life skills. There was a notion that life skills needed to be developed from an early age and that it should include softer skills like mindfulness, coping strategies and grounding skills. It was felt that there was a need for young people to have a 'toolbag' of skills that they could dip into as and when required. Other young people indicated that within their school environment, they have a day of reflection, which is off timetable, and gives them an opportunity to engage in different activities. Some other young people reflected that they had access to space within the school setting for contemplation and it was suggested that having an area in school, a relaxation zone, would be useful and would not necessarily affect lesson time. The importance of enrichment was highlighted though young people felt that they were not necessarily able to influence what was on offer, though it would be helpful if they were able to choose the 'added value' lessons in school. There was a perspective that having different people coming into the school environment was helpful, as young people tend to receive some information more positively from less familiar people. The young people felt that some spaces in the school environment, like learning zones, still attracted a level of stigma, though this stems from a lack of understanding. It was suggested that some young people are still excluded and isolated within the school environment and isolation, as a means of managing behaviours, does not really help. One young person described the isolation environment as being like prison. It was acknowledged that there are developing relationships and ongoing conversations with schools and there are opportunities to challenge areas of focus to help improve young people's experiences and outcomes.

Theme 7 – Communication and Engagement

Discussion:

Young people suggested that there remains a perception of living in Scunthorpe and living in certain areas like Westcliff etc and it was thought that the press/media contributes to this. While there are issues and challenges, it was felt that there are many good things about this area and there is a need to positively challenge and educate which will help to change opinions and behaviours. There was a consensus that there are different ways of engaging with the press/media and that there are opportunities to change the narrative. It was acknowledged that negativity is often more interesting to people, but young people can and do contribute to positive messages e.g. through young reporters, community communications, social media, web based information i.e. Life Central etc. These mechanisms help to promote positive local stories more and show the strengths and success of local young people.

Communication and engagement discussion continued:

The young people highlighted that there remains a lot of stigma and negativity about certain 'differences' which often comes from a lack of understanding, lack of life experience and ignorance. Some young people can and do challenge this as individuals and groups, though this comes with confidence and some young people are fearful of challenging perceptions and opinions in case there are implications of their actions. It was acknowledged that young people in attendance at the event are great examples of young people wanting to learn and explore different perspectives and share their views and opinions, which can lead to greater understanding and empathy.

The importance and success of peer-to-peer communications and engagement was highlighted. There are some great examples of this across the NLYC and CICC and young people felt that they are in a good position to share positive messages and improve young people's access to trusted information.

There was a perspective that information is available, though the people who need to access it tend to be the ones who do not. For some people, having more access to information can make them more anxious and fearful, rather than more prepared and engaged. One young person articulated that there is a need to improve information so young people who don't want to engage with people and services can find information and resolutions for themselves. The importance of self was highlighted and of people taking personal responsibility to access information and support.

Theme 8 – Children's Challenge

Discussion:

It was acknowledged that there are many positives about the local area, though there are many challenges for local action too.

The young people reiterated that they, along with other children and young people are part of the solution.

They articulated that local agencies are in a position to make a difference and while young people are keen to share their views, shape and influence, they want to see impact and outcomes. One young person indicated that 'all talk and no action is very boring'.

Next Steps

The outcomes of this event will be shared across the partnership so people who are in a position to shape and influence have access to young people's perspectives.

There will be further opportunities to continue the conversation with young people to consider specific challenges. There may also be opportunities to further develop community conversations around these issues.

For any comments or queries, please contact:

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