



Young Person Engagement



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Young Person Engagement

The following slides provide an overview of the key messages and content from the Young Person Engagement video produced by Somerset County Council.

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Introductions



From right to left:

- Anne Porter, DfE Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Professional Adviser
- Ellen Collard, Young Person's Champion for Special Educational needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- Shane Dangar, Young Person's Champion for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- Jemma Lang, Engagement and Participation Officer for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Reasoning behind Children and Young People Champions

- It is important to have young people with SEND represented.
- Shane and Ellen joined the team in April 2015 and have met lots of practitioners and young peoples groups.
- Attend and input into strategic meetings.
- Collect the views of young people and reflect these back to key stakeholders
- Young Persons Champion is a paid role within Somerset County Council.
- Going from voluntary to paid employees of Somerset Council has transformed the roles:
 - Participation had previously meant attending meetings/events whereas now they contribute more, carry out actions and actively deliver work from the meetings.
 - Key aspect of this role change was introducing themselves to professionals and promoting the work.

Reasoning behind Children and Young People Champions

- One of the first tasks for the Young People Champions was to set up dates with key Somerset Council employees:
 - Senior Leadership Team
 - Head of Somerset County Council
 - Head of Children's Services
 - Head of Education
- Key message for Senior Leadership buy in was “We are here, this is what we are planning to do”.
- It is important and fun to go and meet Education, Health and Social Care to ensure the reforms are fully embedded
- Short time commitment – only 30 minutes with each person or group but a very powerful and beneficial approach.
- Work was promoted through Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and national groups.

Reasoning behind Children and Young People Champions



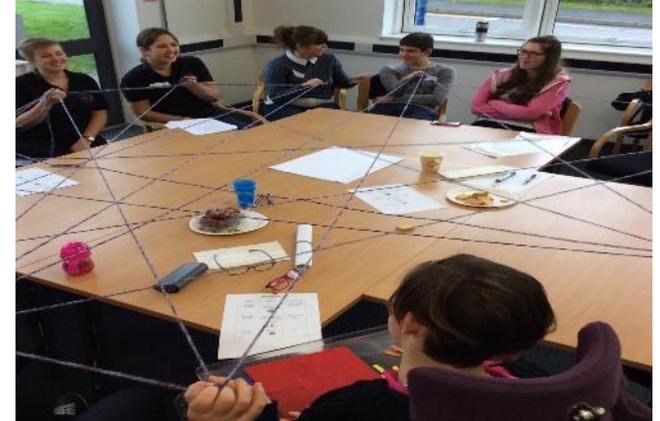
- Children and Young People Champions are based in the Somerset County Council offices.
- Started in a 'Smart Office' but now have their own office space in the Council.
- Lots of benefits to this: Daily interactions, they are seen and can be responsive.
- Lots of storage to hold resources and provides a familiar environment if inviting other young people to attend.

Barriers

Key barriers

- Peoples' perceptions.
- A lack of representation of young people with SEND.
- Young people with SEND that were attending meetings were not initially equipped or prepared.

Barriers



Breaking down the barriers:

- Held participation workshops and made clear what was needed for meetings.
- Engagement improvements – attitudes positively changed due to seeing the importance of engagement.
- This however created a new barrier where Ellen and Shane were considered ‘the voice’ of all young people.
- Shane and Ellen had to be clear that they were unable to answer on behalf of all young people - they had to speak to other young people first.

Challenges

Key challenges

- Planning was difficult due to not know the specific needs of the children and young people attending each event.
- There was demand for a social media presence but was difficult to target this without knowing what young people wanted.
- Difficult to promote themselves without any branding.



Deciding on roles and responsibilities

- At the beginning the group was inundated with invites to contribute to various projects and travel.
- Mapped all the events, considered whose strengths and interests fitted with specific areas.
- For example – Shane enjoys the Local Offer webpage and IT side of things whereas Ellen enjoys working with CCGs (Clinical Commissioning Groups) and healthcare projects.
- Communication with each team member is key following events and on different areas of work.

How do you deliver?

- Mapping strengths and weaknesses to identify support requirements.
- Biggest positive difference was moving from a 'Smart Office' to their own office.
- Noticed quickly that Shane was becoming exhausted and lacking in concentration so altered hours to work around him.
- Ensured all needs were met and that any required equipment was provided to enable them to perform to the best they can.
- Created feedback cards for all the work we do, ensuring we are having an impact and fulfilling our intended roles.

Lessons learned

- Building on existing provisions already set up is the most efficient way to ensure wide participation.
- Establish the keys links within these groups to feed into a participation network.
- Somerset is very rural with transport constraints and therefore found building on existing networks the best way to get a wider representation.
- Held a series of events inviting children and young people on gathering ideas on how to make a forum.
- This took place in October however would have been more beneficial to do sooner.
- Important to ensure young people and families are involved from the beginning.
- The Young People's Champion should be there from the beginning.

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How will it keep going?

- Making ourselves present across Somerset was a great start.
- Participation can be time consuming and expensive but the end result makes it worthwhile and sustainable.
- Had some really great results so far.
- Want to create the cycle of Young People's Champions supporting more Young People's Champions.
- Once this cycle begins the system will become a lot smoother.

Advice to others

- Don't reinvent the wheel - check what other local authorities are doing and how it might work in your area.
- Tap into the groups that are already working and ask questions on documentation, referrals and promotion.
- Make strong connections across participation with other groups to join the work up.
- Learn from the work that is already there and ensure you plan properly.
- Remember why you are here and what you are doing it for.
- Being a paid Young People's Champion is key and bridges the gap:
 - Show commitment
 - Important to ensure young people involved know what is needed of them
 - Power comes from speaking up when you don't understand
 - Good feedback is the key to good participation

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Personal benefit



- Shane - changed dramatically, developing both professionally and personally.
- Gained skills in terms of asking questions and getting feedback/advice.
- Learn a lot about yourself.
- Learn a lot about people and the world around you.
- Gained a much higher of empathy of young people with SEND.
- Met inspirational young people.

Pathways to employment

- Has been set up for approximately 3 years.
- It was identified that the workforce wasn't representative of the citizens of Somerset.
- A ring-fenced pot of money is set aside to spend on salaries/training of young people from vulnerable backgrounds.
- Supported 90 people in the past 3 years.

Key Resources

- 'Top Tips Poster' - Top Tips for working with children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.
- 'SEND Participation Team Annual Report 2015-2016' - The team have created this document to report their journey from April 2015 - April 2016, focusing on some key events that have taken place over this year.
- 'Engagement and Participation Strategy' - This document shows what will happen as a result of the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) reforms.

THE Unstoppables

'we can't be stopped...'

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