

Halton Council Youth Engagement Health Check¹

Involve is a project that has been running for a year. It is an advisory group of young people who advise Halton Council and its partners on Halton Children's Trust Board **how** to involve children and young people in decision-making. The group comprises of young people nominated from constituent groups from within the borough. The youth voice vehicle is the Youth Cabinet. The two groups work together

Involve is recognised by the Children's Trust and has high level support in their work to embed the involvement of young people in decision making across the local authority and it's partners. It has started to have a positive impact on young people's access to meetings and on the CCG

Increase representation of groups operating in Halton in **Involve**.
Create a formal agreement between the Youth Cabinet and **Involve** to maintain their positive relationship.
Measure the impact of **Involve** systematically.

¹ This is the brief report of findings and recommendations of the confidential and independent 'health check' of **Halton Council** engagement practice. The health check is linked to the British Youth Council's measuring impact tool. It took place on Wednesday 10th December 2014 with Michelle Forder and was conducted by Elizabeth Harding.

Halton

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The Youth Voice Vehicle for Halton is the Youth Cabinet they are elected into position and deal with broad issues that need decisions. I.e. transport. Young people from the Youth Cabinet sit on **Involve** and the two groups work together

Representation:

Involve is an organic structure that does not set out to be representative in a democratic sense. It does, however, set out to be representative of the young people of the borough by offering every constituent group the opportunity to nominate one or two young people from within their ranks to sit on Involve.

Is the service fully accessible?

The group meet monthly on the last Monday of the month 4.00 – 6.00pm, a day and time the young people have selected. Meetings are held in partner organisations. Meetings are accessible to young people with a range of disability. Communication is through workers, emails from young people are replied to with the worker copied in. **Involve** has a Twitter account.

Does **Involve** consider itself to be independent or an independent body?

Yes, the young people who attend come from different groups and are equal members of **Involve**. **Involve** advise on the engagement of young people rather than being consulted or decision making themselves. The group meetings give space to discuss and plan how different groups and agencies should be engaged. They are recognised by the Children's Trust and through Michelle they have an independent voice that can be critical.

Who does Involve have relationships with (decision makers)?

Involve is supported by David Parr, Chief Executive and Gerald Meehan, DCS. Young people can attend the Children's Trust with Michelle and meetings are held at 4.00pm to allow young people to attend. A role descriptor for young people attending the CT is being developed. Ged Philbin, Lead member, liaises more with the Youth Cabinet who are the YVV for Halton.

Does **Involvement** have power and influence?

The purpose of **Involvement** is to advise on how participation works and use that to influence a change in culture, increasing the engagement of children and young people in decision making. The group can put items on the agenda for the Children's Trust meetings and are able to report to them on specific issues. To help **Involvement** focus on advising people wishing to work with them they have to complete a form to give information on their request. This form is then used to summarise discussions and advice from **Involvement** and to ask for feedback on the eventual outcome.

What impact/ success has **Involvement** had?

Involvement has put forward arguments to have the times of meetings changed so young people can attend. A number of meetings, including the Children's Trust's, have moved their meetings to 4.00 – 6.00pm. A group of young people organised an SEN conference in Halton.

More agencies and groups are involving young people on interview panels looking at tenders for services. Some Clinical Commissioning Groups in particular are involving young people.

The meetings of **Involvement** are recorded in minutes and each request form has an action plan for the organisation/group. Feedback is always asked for so the young people know what has happened.

The use of measurement tools.

Involvement undertake evaluation with young people. This is done to evaluate the meetings and to look at distance travelled for the group. On an individual basis references go back to individual organisations. There are capacity issues and any collection of quantitative and qualitative data being developed will have to take account of this and be proportionate in approach.

Development:

- To increase representation **Involvement** could engage the Polish Youth Group and the LGBT Youth Group
- To develop a formal agreement between the Youth Cabinet and **Involvement**. To ensure the positive and respectful working relationship between the two groups and the appreciation of each other's role survives any changes in key staff. An agreement would give a useful framework for any new staff to be able to work to.
- To develop a qualitative and quantitative measure of impact. This could use some of the methodology used by Family Voices. A useful resource will be the Centre for Youth Impact <http://www.youth-impact.uk/> NWRYWU are working with Brathay Trust to put on a programme of training in the region and the Unit can be contacted for further support.