



Case study

buy in

Doncaster Council | Having political and senior level buy in from the local authority in place

Who?

Doncaster Youth Council is made up of young people aged 14 - 19 who are elected through the 17 secondary schools to represent the 4 areas across Doncaster. These, along with other young people from school council representatives (1 or 2 per school) and minority and under-represented groups, establish a full Youth Council for Doncaster.

What?

The Youth Council has good political and senior level buy in with Doncaster Council through the good relationships we have built up with the elected Mayor of Doncaster, the Director of Children's Services and the Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People.

Having a place on the Children's Trust Board and being a partner of the Trust is another way the Youth Council has buy in from politicians and senior officers. At a local level ward members work alongside members of the Youth Council to hold youth surgeries in youth spaces.

How?

Over a period of time positive relationships have been built up with elected members and officers within the Council and this is underpinned by the Active Involvement Strategy. This means that even if individuals move on from within the Council this level of support and buy in will continue.

The officers and politicians make a commitment to attending meetings with young people and working with them on action plans. The meetings are planned and co-ordinated on behalf of the Youth Council by the youth worker who supports them. The Youth Worker works with the Youth Council to implement their decisions and to support and guide them.

There are times when the youth worker will see the opportunities and be able to pursue them on behalf of the young people in the Youth Council

How it works:

Over the last year the Youth Council and ward members have piloted a scheme to hold quarterly joint youth surgeries in youth centres or places where young people meet. Here they listen to young people explain the problems and issues they face within the borough.

Following the meeting action plans are drawn up and matters dealt with locally or sent to be dealt with at the Youth Council meetings.

Youth Council meetings are held in the Doncaster Mansion House and following the intervention of the Mayor there is no charge for this as a demonstration of the support for the Youth Council as an elected body. The meetings are attended by the Mayor, the DCS and Portfolio Holder with the Neighbourhood Team managers and representatives from the Police and Health.

One example of a local ward issue is a Children's Centre that was being used by the community and available to young people one night a week. Young people asked for it to be made available for another evening and for a young people dedicated space to be available within that request. This was granted and two extra evenings were given.

Another example of an issue sent to the Youth Council meeting to consider was that the floodlights on a skate park are on a timer so young people couldn't use it at night. Young people wanted lights to stay on till later so Neighborhood teams followed up on this issue and the light timings were amended.

In their work with the Trust, members of the Youth council determine the priorities for young people and what their work plan for the forthcoming year will cover and present that to the Trust Board for inclusion in the Childrens Plan.

To determine their priorities the Youth Council discuss the issues that affect young people, negotiate through debate and jointly agree them.

Impact:

At the meetings the Officers and politicians support the development of action plans on which they report back at subsequent meetings. This means young people are aware of progress or reasons for lack of progress on the issues they raise.

The Youth Council know the impact of their priorities within the Children's Trust plan as they have to present evidence to the trust board. All the work delivered on the plan is evaluated by all trust members.

An evaluation of the pilot scheme on joint surgeries is being undertaken. One of the challenges identified is that a small minority of ward members do not turn up to the joint surgeries or send their apologies. This is being identified as part of the evaluation.

After the last election new ward members have contacted the Youth Council to see how they can get involved. The Youth Council have invited all the ward members, the cabinet members and the Mayor to a meeting where they will feedback on the evaluation they have completed on the joint surgeries.

This includes an evaluation from ward members too. The aim is to set out how ward members and the Youth Council can work together.

Learning Points:

- Develop good relationships with politicians and officers
- Develop relationships at council and ward level
- Underpin relationships with an agreed council strategy
- Have an agreed work plan
- Ask partners to report regularly on progress so young people can see they are listened to.