



Special Congress 29th September 2009

Child Poverty Consultation “Making lives better for all”

Participants: 20 young people; 7 staff from 4 schools

Introduction

The Voluntary Action Children and Families Team hold a series of Congress events each year to engage with and ascertain how young people feel about what happens to them. This is then fed into the planning and development of services for those same young people and is fed back into schools via the School Council process.

Special School’s Congress took place on 29th September 2009 at Britannia Stadium. 20 young people took part from four Special Schools. The participants were aged between 10 and 16 (*Characteristics of the participants Table 1 below*). The numbers were lower at this event than usual as one school was unable to attend at the last minute due to an Ofsted inspection that day and this particular school usually brought a large number of participants to Congress events.

Table 1 – characteristics of the participants

Age	No	Gender	No	Ethnicity	No	Children In Care	No
6 - 9		Female	3	White British	12	CIC	1
10 - 13	8	Male	17	Pakistani	1	Not Stated	19
14 - 16	10	Not stated		Indian			
16 - 19	1			White European			
Not stated	1			Chinese Heritage			
				Other Asian Heritage			
				Other White Heritage			
				White & Black Afro Caribbean			
				White Bangladeshi			
				Not Stated	7		

On behalf of the **Children and Young People’s Trust** and as a continuum of the consultation done with Primary Schools this event carried the same theme - ‘Child Poverty’ portrayed in more child friendly terms as ‘Making lives better for all’.

Aims of the day – to find out:

- What young people feel is the effect when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime, poor health and family breakdown
- What young people feel can help to reduce these effects when families suffer from the problems listed above

Methodology:

As always we endeavour to include all partner agencies in the design and delivery of such events and multi-agency planning meetings were booked and invitations sent.

Table 2 – Partners involved with this event

Claire Farrell – Children and Young People’s Trust	Guy Volpe – Staffordshire Fire Service
Darren Baddeley – Connexions	Gina Volpe - Volunteer
Sarah Emery – Youth & Play Service	Chris Hill – Police Community Support Officer
Jackie Baddeley – Edensor High School – VAST Children & Families Team Young Voluntee	Simon Holmes - Police Community Support Officer
Eleisha Bloor – Blurton High School – VAST Children & Families Team Young Volunteer	Guest Speakers – Sue Thomas Champion for Children
Vikki Gwynne – Haywood High School VAST Children & Families Team – Quality Award Volunteer	Visitors –Adele Eaton – Children and Young People’s Trust
	Resources for goody bags – Parins; Staffordshire Fire Service:

There were a few changes to the methodology used at the recent Primary Congress to cater for the diverse needs of the participants. Just as before, there were teenagers from High Schools involved in the design and delivery; a fun activity with a positive purpose (fire assault course); a practical leisure activity - the parachute game; a theme around their community, jobs and the future. Also, the services that were involved in the consultation last time gave feedback around what changes had taken place based on the views expressed at the last congress.

The school staff who accompanied the children took part in adult workshops which mirrored the topics used for the children.

Findings & Evaluation:

Special school children and young people were consulted on the concept of child poverty using three workshops:

Workshop (1) Going without – looked at materialistic deprivation:

To open the consultation the young people were asked to discuss what they liked to do & why and for their favourite experience of the week. Overall the consensus was about having opportunities to socialise with others

- Inside activities centred around – computer games; board games; Facebook
- Outside activities – holidays; treats i.e. cinema; hobbies i.e. kayaking & break dancing

They then looked at the impact on them from situations known to contribute to child poverty:

- Crime – most could identify with this and it left them feeling fearful and angry
 - “last house someone threw a brick and loads of glass on my bed”
 - “football – scared of other people – fights/getting hurt”
 - “Packmoor bike track, because I would have to cross busy road and there are people there who would pinch my bike so mum will not let me go”
- Unemployment & low income – the responses here centred around access to activities due to cost and the need to be accompanied
 - “sports clubs – no taxi to get home from ‘Out of school club”
 - “want to see my friends but they live far away and I can’t catch a bus on my own and have no money”
 - “unable to do things because dad works a lot and mum cannot take me alone”
- Homeless / temporary housing – the young people had very little to say on this subject other than associating it with having bad neighbours
 - “bad neighbours who hit young people and friends”

Suggestions for improvement:

- “free swimming cards are for under 16 only, what if I am over 16, still at school and want to go?”
- “cheaper cricket equipment, more chances to play cricket” - Dem, age 16
- “paint balling – there is no opportunity”
- “sometimes I need bigger trunks to go swimming. Not having money to take part” Barbar, age 14
- Important messages from this workshop - “all the stuff – I like being able to talk to people about what I want” Mitchell, aged 10

Workshop (2) Missing out – looked at emotional aspects; what opportunities do young people miss out on because they are too shy, feel they don’t fit in, or aren’t encouraged or supported to participate:

- The young people said that they often ‘opt out’ of most things – underlying cause – fear for safety; confidence in own ability and lack of trust that services can effectively cater for their needs
 - “dance clubs, choose not to go – lots of hassle”
 - “sports clubs are too busy”
 - “community events – do not like being with other people as they may use me”
 - “do not go to places because of people we do not know”
- For activities that they felt they were ‘kept out of’ the underlying cause was often said to be parents/carers restricting access on grounds of transport and time constraints because someone has to accompany the young person
 - “walks – sister can go out with friends, I am not allowed”
 - “concerts – never been, no-one to take me”

“mum will not let me go to skate park in Hanley because there are so many muppets out there that will take your phone and bike”

Suggestions for improvement:

- ✚ “make places safer like parks and skate park so mum will let me go to these places on my own with cousin and not mum and dad”
 - ✚ “police already put cameras in the park but there is no police around”
 - ✚ “special schools should do school trips / week in France / camping – other schools do and we miss out”
- Important messages from this workshop - *“People are safe if there are rules and they follow the rules”* Ruby, age 12

Workshop (3) Fairness /equal chances – looked at their ideal community and the effect they felt living in such a community would have on their life chances and aspirations:

For this workshop the young people were re-organised into five groups of geographical location based on their post code. It was very hard to decipher the messages they were trying to relay through their responses in this workshop. Without further investigation the assumption could be made is that this is down to their lack of clarity and understanding of the concept of community or perhaps it is the fact that as young people from special schools mainly go to schools outside of their community area they then do not feel part of that community . Most of their activities focus around their school and schools are chosen based on their needs rather than where they live.

- **Wishful community:**
 - “more police – protect against vandalism”
 - “more houses and make them safer”
 - “more lollypop people” “ lollypop ladies to cross us over”
 - “street lights – safer environment”
 - “closer school”
 - “more / local youth clubs”
 - “more places to grow your own food”
 - “better transport”
 - “less bullying” “ stop bullies at school”
 - “stop losing jobs”

- **Aspirations:**

Most of their aspirations were to follow in the occupations of the staff delivering the workshop i.e. police; fire; youth worker; teacher. Many could not answer what they would like to be.

Other responses included:

- “successful businessman – have to know market, what people want, have a good pitch to impress them”
 - “singing – I will need to go to college”
 - “artist illustrator – English skills, art stuff”
 - “ brick layer – construction, GCSE, maths”
 - “mechanic – know about engines”
- **Important messages from this workshop:**
 - “going to park with my mates/cleaner park” Ben, age 16
 - “that people are safe, not hurting each other” Ruby, age 12

“respect” Aaron, age 13

“less recession” Jas, age 15

“more children same age so that I can have more friends. There is a field but it’s dangerous due to motor bikes” Cameron, age 13

Staff workshops were also held to explore what practitioners felt about the same topics. The findings from the staff workshops can be located in the full report (copy available on request). Their views support those expressed by the young people on the day.

The results of the consultation were not unusual; the findings mirrored many of the responses from the children at the Primary Congress, the concerns and issues focusing around:

- Costs and access to activities and equipment
- Parks, crime and vandalism
- People and how they are with you
- Unemployment and lack of jobs
- Child Safety

Overall, the event was a success, the feedback is very positive and all those involved, young and old, commented on how much they want to be involved in future events. Team work is vital to the success of these events and this is the reason why this Congress was so successful. Many thanks to all involved. We all look forward to seeing the impact this event will have for the children of our City.

There is a full report which captures everything the young people said or told us on the day as well as the results of the staff workshops. This will be sent to all the schools so that they can use the information in their school assemblies, school council meetings and in the classroom to ensure that all the young people are aware that they have been listened to. For a copy of the full report or further information about anything within this summary please contact us, using the details below.

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We need your help to tell young people that sharing their views really does matter.

An Impact Form is attached to this summary report – please use it to tell us what changes you will make in your service in response to what the young people have told us. Please return the completed Impact Form, either by post to the address above or by e-mail to lesley@vast.org.uk. The feedback received will be shared with the young people at the next Congress event.

Thank you for your help.

Special Congress September 2009 Report Feedback Form

Please return the completed form to Lesley Boughey at lesley@vast.org.uk or to the address in the Summary Report.

1. Which service are you responsible for?
2. What do you think of the report as a vehicle for sharing the views and concerns of children and young people about services which concern/involve them?
3. What are you going to do as a result of receiving this report? *Please detail exactly what you propose to do as a follow up to finding out what young people are concerned about.*
4. Who will you share this with and why?
5. What impact do you think events/evidence like this will have on your service?

Name:

Title:

E-mail:

Contact Address: