



Sonia Mainstone-Cotton

Early years and participation trainer and consultant

An independent review of the Bath Youth for Christ participation practice

This is a review of Bath Youth for Christ participation practice. The purpose of this review is to look at what Bath Youth for Christ are already doing and hear the views of young people, staff, and trustees, about what is working well and what could be improved with Bath Youth for Christ.

As part of this review I met with team members in a staff meeting and most of the team individually, James the Director, trustees and around 50 young people. I also spent time looking at various forms and processes that the team already have as part of their participation practice.

Feedback from young people

I met with young people from seven different pieces of work and I had feedback forms from ten young people who are using the mentoring service.

The feedback from young people was incredibly positive, there was only one negative and that was in relation to not being happy with the time of the mentoring session. All the young people I spoke with felt that they were listened to by the staff, and they all said they were able to give ideas and suggestions for the work.

"On the 2nd week of academy, we got asked what food and drink we wanted"

"I have put in choreography in the dance , it is being used in the next dance performance"

"They listen to our good ideas"

"Staff listen to us"

"Staff are really good at listening to our ideas"

"Staff are really friendly, they always talk"

Many of the comments from young people emphasised the positive relationships the staff have with the young people and how important this was to the young people.

"I can tell the staff stuff I would not tell my parents"

"Staff are amazing, really helpful"

"They treat us like family/ they are like friends"

"We can talk to them"

"Not like teachers, they are like friends"

"I can talk to them and tell them my concerns"

"Staff are friendly, kind, they care about us, they are welcoming and funny"

Most of the young people interviewed said they did not have any suggestions for changes, they felt they had a voice and were listened to well. Through the mentoring service there were a few suggestions:

"Maybe ask more about what makes you anxious"

"I would want to see her a bit more because it makes me feel very good about myself"

On the mentoring feedback forms, I asked if they had been given any information about the service. They all said they had and several commented that it was very helpful.

Review of current participation practice, what is working well

It was really clear from talking to staff and young people that the team are very good at listening to young people.

It was really clear from speaking to the staff that they all believe in and are committed to hearing the views of young people and including them in decision-making.

Young People were incredibly positive about the staff, their ability to listen to them, and their ability to take on their ideas and suggestions

Staff are good at informally asking young people for ideas e.g food and drink suggestions, ideas for choreography, ideas for activities in sessions.

Staff are good at adapting their sessions and work to meet the needs and requests of the young people they work with.

Some evaluation work happens both informally and sometimes more formally.

There have been examples of hearing and seeing the needs of young people, finding out how these can be met and then setting up new work based on this gap.

Young people give some feedback to trustees/ supporters by adding pieces for the newsletter and taking part in annual events e.g AGM.

Suggestions for ways to further embed a culture of participation :

- For trustees to hear from young people more regularly
- Involve young people in the recruitment of every new young people worker
- Involve young people in staff appraisals
- Use feedback forms for each piece of work to use with every young person, as a review at the end of the work
- Involve young people in ongoing evaluation of work
- Keep participation on the agenda both at team meetings and trustees meetings

the additional sheet - embedding participation gives further information on how to do the above.

Summary

Bath Youth for Christ has an excellent relationship with the young people they work with. The young people clearly feel supported, listened to and valued. Bath Youth for Christ have some very good informal practices in place to hear the views from young people. However sometimes by only doing this informally some good practice can be missed, for example involving young people in staff recruitment.

To really embed a culture of participation Bath Youth for Christ now need to put a few things in place, e.g. systems to remind staff of participation, this could include:

Information about participation, how and why to do it, for induction of new staff.

Feedback forms which are always given out at the end of work.

Adding involvement of young people in staff recruitment to the recruitment to do list.

Young people's feedback for annual staff appraisals.

A system with Trustees to hear from Young People.

May 2016

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