

Report title	Young Opportunities (YO!) – Our vision for young people and families	
Decision designation	AMBER	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Beverley Momenabadi Children and Young People	
Key decision	Yes	
In forward plan	Yes	
Wards affected	All Wards	
Accountable Director	Emma Bennett, Executive Director of Families	
Originating service	Commissioning and Transformation	
Accountable employee	Andrew Wolverson Tel Email	Deputy Director of Commissioning and Transformation 01902 555550 Andrew.Wolverson@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Report to be/has been considered by	Directorate Leadership Team Strategic Executive Board Children’s Scrutiny Panel	23 February 2023 7 March 2023 15 March 2023

Recommendations for decision:

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Approve that the outcomes of the Youth Engagement Strategy (2020-2023 #YES) be embedded into business as usual.
2. Approve the principles for development of the Young Opportunities (YO!) brand which will support our vision for children, young people and their families to have access to a range of opportunities that build aspiration and resilience.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The Council, through its Our City: Our Plan sets out to ensure we have “Strong families where children grow up well and achieve their potential.” This ambition is realised through a number of programmes and initiatives across the city. This paper sets out how we propose to build on the YO! branding to ensure we have a joined up offer to children and families. The paper also sets out proposals for a pilot focussed on raising aspiration and widening opportunity.
- 1.2 Cabinet is asked to approve the embedding of the outcomes of the Youth Engagement Strategy (#YES) into business as usual and endorse the proposed Young Opportunities (YO! Wolves) approach to supporting opportunities for all children, young people and their families.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The #YES Strategy was designed to improve the well-being of all children and young people living in the city of Wolverhampton. It was set up as the Council’s commitment to young people aged 8-18 (and up to 25 for those with a Learning Disability or Care Leavers) to support them in living a happy and rewarding life. It recognised the importance of young people’s voice in shaping services, valuing their contribution in making the city a great place to bring up families.
- 2.2 The table below sets out the key performance indicators and successes of #YES:

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[NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED]

#YES theme	Performance Measure	Action	Outcome
Being Connected	Increasing the number of young people participating and engaging effectively in their communities	The development of the #YES board	19 young people on the board – evaluating and challenging the #YES and HAF provision
		The #YES Grant for community sector to utilise to deliver opportunities to young people	36 providers are supporting this provision with over 9400 places available for young people
	Ensuring young people and their families have access to the right information and advice to make their own choices	The Launch of YO Wolves platform to offer information on Support services and activities	7727 new users to the YO Wolves site in December 2022
		Market and communication plan to develop the knowledge of the platform to families	45,000 leaflets delivered to city schools for distribution to pupils and families Web traffic up by 63% compared to last year Social media reach over 33,000 Press advertising & PR Education Bulletin Posters via Providers

#YES theme	Performance Measure	Action	Outcome
Being You	Increasing engagement and participation, voice and influence of young people	The success of the Youth Council Elections, the strength of the #YES board in being the governance for not just #YES provision, but also the HAF provision	All schools represented on Youth Council, 19 young people on #YES Board, HY5 has a committed membership
	Co-Producing services for children and young people with children and young people	Coproduction activity supported by commissioning of services	Emotional Health and Wellbeing service Young Carers Strategy
Being Healthy	Encouraging physical activity and healthy eating	The promotion of physical activity and healthy eating is embedded in the application for HAF/#YES funding	Mystery Shopper activity and dragon den activity evaluate this with providers
	Improving outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disability	HY5 implementation and links to the SEND Partnership Board	HY5 has developed their own training for professionals on what it is like to be a child with Disabilities in Wolverhampton. They meet regularly with SEND partnership board have developed their own response to the written statement of action

2.3 January 2022 saw the launch of National Make Your Mark Vote in Wolverhampton. 10,500 children and young people voted with the top four themes being; Education and learning; Jobs, Money, Homes, and Opportunities; Mental health and wellbeing and Health and wellbeing

- 2.4 On 8 November 2020, the Government announced that the holiday activities and food programme (HAF), which has provided healthy food and enriching activities to disadvantaged children since 2018, would be expanded across the whole of England in 2021. The programme covers the Easter, Summer, and Christmas holidays. In Wolverhampton, this provision has been expanded by the #YES grants (since January 2022) to ensure all children in the city have access to holiday activity and food over the half term holidays which are not currently funded by the Department for Education HAF programme.
- 2.5 The YO! Wolves website was the first phase of developing access to support, events and opportunities to children, young people, and their families. This platform has become a key feature of how families in Wolverhampton can access the HAF and #YES activities during the holidays. The brand of YO! Wolves was developed with young people.

3.0 Progress

- 3.1 In August 2022 co-production activity was completed with all Wolverhampton's Youth Voice Groups, using the #YES themes. This work was to evaluate the #YES strategy and what needs to be developed from the learning from this program. This review and evaluation focused on the expansion of the provision to incorporate building on opportunities for families.
- 3.2 Following on from this work, research was undertaken by a Social Policy Student at Birmingham University on the impact of opportunities for families has on building resilience. This research was successful in securing £80,000 of funding which has been ringfenced to support the development of an Enrichment offer to families which it is hoped will build families life skills and support them in developing the aspirations to access a wider range of opportunities and support them in achieving their full potential.
- 3.3 The success of co-production with children and young people in Children's Services has led to the commitment to expand the team through the recruitment of two participation officers to implement a similar approach with adults. This will support our aim of a whole family focus of co-production and design.
- 3.4 Expanding on the successes of #YES, the brand of YO! Wolves incorporates support for the whole family under five pillars:
- Pillar 1 Physical and Mental wellbeing
 - Pillar 2 Youth Voice
 - Pillar 3 Doing Well
 - Pillar 4 Encouraging Life Skills
 - Pillar 5 Connecting Opportunities
- 3.5 It is proposed further development of the pillars and the co-production activity will be part of Wolverhampton's Make Your Mark planned in September 2023.

4.0 Evaluation of alternative options

- 4.1 Option one would be to make no change to the existing #YES and not develop the YO! Wolves offer. This would result in not recognising the developments that have been made to extending the offer under the YO! Wolves and could diminish the investment made so far in the brand.
- 4.2 Option two would be to partially implement the recommendations of this report. This would result in a weakened offer and hinder any future expansion of the program to support families in making use of the opportunities showcased through this brand.

5.0 Reasons for decision(s)

- 5.1 The decision to embed #YES into business as usual and the learning to influence the YO! Wolves five pillars enables the success of the brand to grow using this knowledge base to inform future developments.
- 5.2 It is recognised that the city faces a number of challenges, some that existed before Covid such as youth unemployment and others that have been exacerbated by Covid and other factors such as mental health and the cost of living crisis. We also face challenges around young people becoming aligned to activity that leads to exploitation and in some cases gang affiliation.
- 5.3 There is significant work underway to tackle many of the issues outlined in the previous paragraph but they may be seen currently as isolated projects or programmes. The YO! branding offers an opportunity for us to provide a clear focus on what the city is doing to support children, young people and families across a broad spectrum.
- 5.4 The YO! branding also offers an opportunity to ensure we recognise all of the provision we have within the city delivered by a range of providers and ensure that families know where they can go for support that already exists within their local communities. It will also help in identifying where we have gaps in provision or support and determine what the city's response to this is going to be.
- 5.5 The funding and confidence shown by Adults Services in using the approaches to support co-production enables views and opinions of all family members in provision that affects them.
- 5.6 The expansion of the life skills and enrichment opportunities enables families to think big about their aspirations for themselves and have their 'best life.'

6.0 Financial implications

- 6.1 The report seeks approval for outcomes of the Youth Engagement strategy to be built into business as usual. The outcomes for 2023-2024 are detailed in the table at paragraph 2.2. These will be funded from existing approved budgets in 2023-2024 for #YES and Holiday Activities Programme grant (HAF).

- 6.2 The approved gross expenditure budgets for #YES in 2023-2024 total £817,000. The funding for these budgets includes £305,000 approved use of reserves and £106,000 funding from HAF.
- 6.3 In December 2022, Department of Education (DfE) awarded the Holiday Activity fund to the amount of £1.9 million to cover a minimum of one week in Easter, four weeks over the summer and one week at Christmas in 2023-2024.
- 6.4 As the YO! Offer is developed further reports will be received by Cabinet detailing financial implications and funding.
[JG/03032023/W]
- 7.0 Legal implications**
- 7.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.
[SB/05032023/Z]
- 8.0 Equalities implications**
- 8.1 The purpose of this report is to mitigate the impact of social, economic impact of access to support, opportunities, and aspirations which families in Wolverhampton may have as result of the impact of the cost-of-living crisis.
- 9.0 All other implications**
- 9.1 None.
- 10.0 Schedule of background papers**
- 10.1 Appendix 1 – Young Opportunities (YO!) presentation slides.