

## Cabinet

### 17 March 2021

<b>Report Title</b>	Creating more opportunities for our young people: #YES Annual Report	
<b>Decision designation</b>	AMBER	
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor John Reynolds Children and Young People	
<b>Key decision</b>	Yes	
<b>In forward plan</b>	Yes	
<b>Wards affected</b>	All Wards	
<b>Accountable Director</b>	Emma Bennett, Director of Children's and Adult Services	
<b>Originating service</b>	Children and Young People	
<b>Accountable employee</b>	Kush Patel Tel Email	Children's Innovation Lead 01902 550354 Kush.patel@wolverhampton.gov.uk
<b>Report to be/has been considered by</b>	Children's and Education Leadership Team Strategic Executive Board	18 February 2021 4 March 2021

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#### Recommendation for decision:

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Endorse the achievements set out in the #YES (Youth Engagement Strategy) Annual Report and 2021/22 priorities identified to create more opportunities for our city's young people.

## 1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 Delivering more opportunity for our young people is a key priority within the 'Relighting our City' plan and this #YES Annual Report summarises key engagement activities and achievements from the strategy's first year. It also sets out priorities, identified by our young people, for the next 12 months

## 2.0 Background

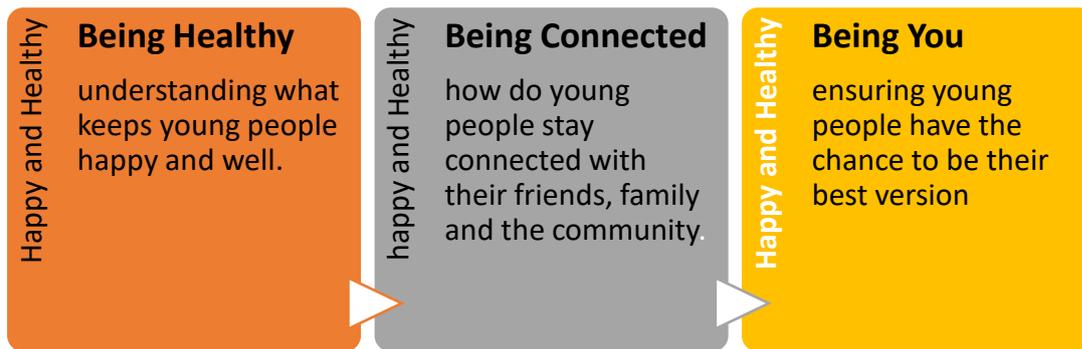
- 2.1 Young people have an incredible excitement, positivity, optimism, contagious spirit and boundless ability to dream fearlessly. Their talents stretch beyond academic and other achievements: they recognize the detail in everyday life, appreciate the small things and simplify the complex. Young people are naturally inquisitive, inclusive, helpful and imaginative.
- 2.2 In Wolverhampton, developing the huge potential of our city's children and young people is a key priority for the council and partner organisations. It is also a priority for our local residents: people of all ages tell us we need more opportunities for our children and young people.
- 2.3 The council's ambitious plans to deliver a better deal and more opportunities for our young people are set out in the 'Relighting Our City' recovery plan and 'Our Council Plan 2019-2024' where giving 'children and young people the best possible start in life' is a key priority.
- 2.4 These plans and the #YES engagement strategy have been backed by new investment by the council of around £2 million including:
- New funding to commission the activities young people want to get involved in, supported by an £370,000 fund with a ring-fenced pot for our most disadvantaged youngsters
  - Connecting young people to a new network of youth engagement workers who – as covid hopefully recedes - will be out-and-about in our local communities, funded by a £1 million council investment
  - providing better access to emotional well-being services with £400,000 funding in partnership with the Black Country and West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Headstart
  - Safeguarding the future of the city's fantastic youth zone, The Way, by investing a further £200,000 bringing our total investment to £4 million-plus
  - New investment in a new online platform and signposting for activities and opportunities for young people.
- 2.5 These are important commitments because, simply put, young people are the future of our city and deserve opportunities to learn, develop *and shape the future*. The council is

committed to giving them a voice to influence these things both in terms of the communities where they live and also our wider city.

- 2.6 #YES aims to harness their potential. It gives young people a platform and a voice within council policy and decision-making. It also encourages learning, self-development, creativity and a new generation of change agents and advocates.
- 2.7 Young people have been significantly affected by the pandemic. Learning and social opportunities were hit hard and although city youngsters are strong and resilient, there is the risk that the pandemic has created a potentially 'lost generation' – particularly in our most deprived communities.
- 2.8 The broader consequences of Covid-19 – including the anxiety of growing up during a global pandemic and fearing for family members – remains to be seen. But children are highly perceptive of their parents' and carers' worries and it seems likely that they will absorb some of this angst – whether it's worry about the disease itself, job losses or the strains of isolation. National and local data already highlights the negative impact Covid has had on children's wellbeing and mental health. Local evidence shows a significant surge in demand and referrals to the wellbeing service.
- 2.9 The closure of schools and loss of valuable education will widen the (already highly significant) gap in educational achievement between richer and poorer families.
- 2.10 #YES annual report shows the resilience of our young people, how they adapted and continue to adapt, influence and shape the services that matter to them. This ranges from:
- being part of the emotional wellbeing service procurement process; developing tender questions and sitting on the tender panel.
  - working with officers to improve local environments. Bilston youth ambassadors and Blakenhall ambassadors will be developing action plans on how to improve the local environment.
  - Developing campaigns that promote positivity. 'Thank a teacher' day and the more recent 'appreciation day', where young people thanked people who have supported them through the pandemic.
  - working on supporting local communities via their youth grants process. The #YES Board is currently developing a small grants application process, focusing on awarding funding to local organisations that can evidence coproduction.

### **3.0 #YES 2020/2021 Priorities**

- 3.1 #YES is an ambitious engagement strategy that puts children and young people at its centre. It was designed by young people, for young people and has three key priorities – all aimed at supporting 'happy and healthy' young lives:



#### 4.0 Highlights of #YES 2020/2021

- A new co-production team has been created. This includes a specialist in special education needs and disability (SEND) and a culture and diversity officer.
- #YES Board established in November 2020 with 18 board members.
- Locality youth forums set up in Bilston, Whitmore Reans, Blakenhall and Low Hill.
- WV Virtual Holiday Squad created, promoting over 100 online activities. These ranged from art and crafts (most popular), learning, cooking, sport, music, wellbeing and SEND specific. The site has had 23,135 unique visitors.
- Over the Summer, this reverted back to WV Holiday Squad. Over 3,000 young people took part in activities. 952 young people from BAME backgrounds.
- WV Holiday squad supported over 16 local organisations resulting in an investment of over £120,000
- Roll-out of the wellbeing toolkit in schools with over 1,300 pupils accessing wellbeing sessions.
- Young people involved in the recommissioning of the wellbeing service, influencing the specification and sitting on the tender panel.
- Three mental health awareness campaigns over the year: kindness conference, 'Thank a Teacher' and 'Appreciation Day'.

#### 5.0 What next? #YES Part 2

##### 5.1 The priorities for the next 12 months include

- Continuing to progress the actions already mentioned.
- Youth Engagement Strategic Board to commission youth provision based on the three themes
- Youth representation on locality forums such as Police and Communities Together (PACT) meeting, HeadStart Consortiums and place-based groups.
- Delivering training on co-production to CWC internal departments and key stakeholders (CCG, voluntary sector, Housing)
- Engaging with parents
- Establishing a young people's communication group to oversee the campaign work.

## 6.0 Evaluation of alternative options

6.1 Whilst a number of alternative options were explored, the proposals set out in this report best balance the importance of this key strategic priority with the Council's financial challenge. Proposals also directly respond to key points raised by young people.

## 7.0 Measuring success

7.1 Key performance indicators to measure success include:

- Increasing the number of young people participating and engaging effectively in their communities
- Ensuring young people and their families have access to the right information and advice to make their own choices
- Increasing engagement and participation, voice and influence of young people
- Encouraging physical activity and healthy eating
- Improving outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disability
- Improving social, emotional and mental health and wellbeing for all children and young people.

## 8.0 Reasons for decision

8.1 The recommendation to continue with the implementation of #YES will promote wellbeing, better connect young people to the city and give them a voice in shaping future opportunities.

## 9.0 Financial implications

9.1 There are financial implications associated with the delivery of this three-year strategy. Some of the work builds on existing structures that currently deliver co-production activity such as the Youth Council and Children in Care Council.

9.2 The National Lotteries Community Fund extended the HeadStart Programme. The funding will be used to implement the priorities.

9.3 The table below summarises the implementation costs:

Activity	2020-2021 £000	2021-2022 £000	2022-2023 £000
Universal youth engagement offer	328	328	328
A new co-production fund	279	279	279
Improved information and signposting	70	21	16
Total Cost	677	628	624

- 9.4 This will be funded from a combination of existing resources, including efficiencies found from within services, grants and contributions from reserves.

[JG/09032021/E]

## **10.0 Legal implications**

- 10.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.  
[TS/11022021/Q]

## **11.0 Equalities implications**

- 11.1 By offering earlier support, the strategy aims to ensure young people have opportunities to thrive and succeed in life. By targeting those young people, families and communities who are likely to have poorer outcomes, this strategy contributes to narrowing the gap and reducing inequalities.
- 11.2 Locality groups have been established across the City to reflect the diverse population. Equality groups such as SEND, culture and diversity have also been established. #YES, is continues to promote the groups on social media and among partner agencies. The performance framework will collect equalities information about service users. This will help identify gaps and inform future commissioning intentions.

## **12.0 All other implications**

- 12.1 In the development of the implementation plan consideration will be given to climate change and environmental implications.
- 12.2 #YES will have a beneficial impact on children, young people and families by providing opportunities for them to engage in positive activities thereby improving wellbeing, having a sense of community and raising aspirations.
- 12.3 The work will take in account Covid measures, adapting services as and when required.

## **13.0 Schedule of background papers**

- 13.1 None