



Young people making a difference

# What is **Our Voice**?

**Our Voice** is the Kirklees young advisors project. More than 70 young people are now part of Our Voice and are ready and eager to work with the council and its partners to help them understand what it is like for a young person to live, work and play in the Kirklees area.

**Our Voice** provides teams of trained young people, ranging in age from 15 to 21, who have the skills and ability to work with community leaders and decision makers to increase the engagement of young people in local decision making, in community life and the improvement of services.

**Our Voice** offers organisations an effective means of gaining valuable customer insight, leading to services which respond more effectively to the needs of young people. The approach to the engagement of young people in Kirklees has always been underpinned with a belief that young people are experts in their own lives and given the opportunity they will share their ideas.



# we offer:

- young people led research
- young people's creative consultation
- young people's appraisal
- young people's shadow boards
- young people's decision making panels
- youth proofing information (paper, online)
- developing materials for a youth audience
- mystery shopping

# What are the **benefits** of working with us?

- Young people have a positive influence on service delivery and decision making processes.
- Young people can bring new ideas to enhance policy and practice.
- The involvement of young people becomes more meaningful.
- The quality of decision making across partnership organisations will be improved as young people identify their 'real' needs which will then be reflected in the services offered.
- Resources can be targeted to meet the needs of young people.
- Confidence that a trained team who specialise in engagement with young people can provide you with quality information in a timely manner.

# How are young people **trained** ?

Our Voice provides a fun and engaging package, which 'skills up' young people to become trained advisors to services.

**Young people complete an AQA accredited training scheme which covers:**

- effective participation
- public speaking
- service appraisal
- creative consultation
- making changes
- being an effective leader

The young people learn all of this whilst having fun and making friends.

Once trained they become a '*crew member*' who can 'dip in and out' of commissioned projects.

Thanks to our young photographers: Laura Mateescu, Ellie Gale and Alex Beldea



# Creative Consultation

**Our Voice** creative consultation enables young people to identify their needs, reflect on the needs of their peers and make suggestions about how a service might respond to these needs. The crew members will develop an activity, event or 'tool' which will engage other young people, collect the information you need and then feedback to you with a summary report and/or presentation.

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## **Example: "Your Library, Your Voice"**

A group of 13 young people visited libraries to see what was on offer and then created a consultation exercise to find out what young people wanted from their libraries. The crew members collected 276 responses about preferred opening times and 46 detailed responses from young people about their 'dream library' and displayed them on a mood board.

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The group helped create a report from the responses which was fed back to decision makers in a meeting. Based on their recommendations the crew members went on to support making changes in their local libraries.

### **These included:**

- Helping furnish a new community room, by creating a shopping list based on an allocated budget
- Suggesting canvasses were designed for the walls and other community groups being invited to help paint them.
- Applying for grants funding and running 3 fun sessions to attract more young people into the libraries. This resulted in 28 young people coming along to join in, 8 of these didn't use the library previously.



# Crew Member Led Research

**Our Voice** can provide young people led research which can be especially valuable when a service or organisation wants to explore young people's feelings about an issue. The crew members leading a research project will usually have personal experience of the issue, which will be reinforced through additional training at the beginning of the project.

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**Example:** *"If I was Homeless, I would need"*

Locala commissioned crew members to be involved in analysing how school nurses could best support young people whose family has become homeless. 45 young people took part in a workshop which looked at how the school nursing service currently delivers support. Young people were asked to give feedback or make suggestions for change.

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Crew members helped formulate a report to share the information collected and attended a committee meeting to discuss the key messages with professionals.

A key message that came out of the research was that young people wanted to know who to talk to and where to go if they needed support. They also said they spent most of their day in school-so promoting the service there was key. When not in school they surfed the web a lot. As a result, Locala school nurses have developed a presence on social networks. Locala have also created a new advertising campaign in school to promote their service.

They are subsequently working with 'English as an additional language speakers' to reach young people who may not speak English via their peers. Locala wish to commission the Our Voice crew members to review how effective the changes have been in a years time.



# Young People's Appraisals



**Our Voice** can provide honest and open feedback from young people about your service. The crew members can inspect services against specific standards or review how well a service is meeting its need. Alternatively they can look broadly at an issue and provide general feedback, which can then be developed and refined.

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## **Example: “Our Voice: Our Town”**

Young people are currently involved in the High Street Innovation Fund Project. This project aims in the short term to increase the number of young people visiting our town and lengthen the time they spend in our town centres. In the long term it will provide customer intelligence that can inform future decisions and planning.

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## **So far:**

- 18 young people have visited our town centres to see what is on offer and give feedback about how to improve them.
- 19 young people have helped create a town centre mosaic.
- 18 young people have visited Bury in an activity that mirrors the adult decision makers to see what other market towns have to offer
- Over 180 young people have been asked about their ideas to improve our town centres.

A report is being created which will be shared with the town team in July 2013. Young people will then start working with adults to make some of the changes over the summer. So far, young people's events and an outdoor cinema screen have been the most popular choices to make our towns the place to be for teens.



# Youth Proofing Information



**Our Voice** will ensure that the information your service provides for young people is appropriate and effective. Young people can help with design and marketing ideas to ensure your message is clear and targeted. They can help with copywriting, design layout and suggest mediums that will have the maximum impact for your agency. If you are developing a new publicity campaign you can involve young people in concept and steering meetings to ensure your idea starts in the right place.

Alternatively, if resources are limited-ask young people to review current resources and offer feedback and recommendations to amend or suggest complimentary information.

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## **Example: National Careers Service website review**

The commissioner wanted to see if this website met the needs of local young people. Therefore a small group of crew members were asked to take a close look at the site and feedback what they thought. In general, young people were happy with the site but recommended it is more heavily publicised locally.

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## **Young people's event**

**Our Voice** crew members have events management experience. They can organise events with a designated budget and suggest activities, themes and ideas that young people will 'buy into' and attend. They have access to lots of other young people in their social networks and can help with publicity and recruitment too.



## Want to work with Our Voice?

To commission **Our Voice** or for more information, please get in touch.

Commissioning and Health Partnerships in the Children & Adults Directorate.

The Voice & Influence Team (IYCE)  
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