

Minutes of Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board

**Wednesday 22 February 2023 at 6.00pm
in the Council Chamber, Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

Present: Councillor Hinchliff (Chair);
Councillors Chidley, Dunn, W Gill and Mayo, and (Co-opted
Member) K Heeley.

Officers: Sally Giles (Strategic Partnerships and Commissioning
Manager)
Tariq Karim (Area Manager Youth Service)
Neesha Patel (SHAPE Programme Manager)
Connor Robinson (Democratic Services Officer)

In Attendance: Councillor Simon Hackett (Cabinet Member for Children and
Education)

11/23 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors McVittie
and Preece.

12/23 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.



SHAPE Survey and Youth Summit Feedback and Future Youth Involvement in Scrutiny

The SHAPE Programme Manager presented the results of the consultation and engagement activities that had taken place over the last six months with children and young people across Sandwell.

The SHAPE Survey was an annual consultation mechanism for children and young people aged 8 – 18 years old. It allowed Council members, senior leaders, officers and partner agencies to understand the experiences, issues and views of young people in Sandwell.

The questions covered all the SHAPE themes of staying safe, being healthy, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and economic wellbeing.

The survey had highlighted that although children at a primary age enjoyed their life as a child, they faced some increasing challenges as they moved into their teenage years.

The key findings included:-

- The primary six identified issues facing young people were:
 - gangs and youth violence;
 - knife crime;
 - school/college work and exams;
 - drugs and substance abuse;
 - Post-16 Pathways;
 - and being bullied.
- youth violence and knife crime was an issue that young people had highlighted previously and while it had not been such a prominent issue during the pandemic, it was again highlighted as an area of growing concern for young people;
- young people felt the Council should focus on resolving issues such as littering and making Sandwell safer;
- young people wished for there to be more education and job prospects within Sandwell, as better prospects locally would allow them to remain in Borough;
- academic achievement and mental health and wellbeing continued to be impacted in a negative way;



- young people felt that schools should do more to support their mental health and wellbeing;
- there was a lack of education in schools on important life skills such as money management and taxes;
- bullying had been highlighted as an issue throughout the report, and affecting all ages and young people felt that harsher sanctions should be in place for the perpetrators;
- young people wanted to be able to voice their views and were keen to have someone to talk to about the issues they faced, however, they felt that adults did not listen;
- although there are many diversionary activities in Sandwell, young people were interested in increasing and improving youth provision in parks, increasing sporting activities such as football and basketball and ensuring youth activities were located close to them.

The Create Your Future Youth Summit had taken place in early February, aimed at those young people who had struggled in mainstream education. The SHAPE Team, in partnership with Youth Services and West Midlands Police, had worked with the secondary schools in Sandwell to identify the needs of schools and young people.

West Midlands Police had led on a discussion on the issues that young people were facing. Young people had indicated that access to drugs and drug misuse was an ongoing concern. In addition, young people had also highlighted their concerns around gang violence and poverty.

The Police had also delivered a Stop and Search workshop, which allowed the young people to debate on whether the Police were right to use the powers they did across a number of case studies.

Following comments and questions from members of the Board, the following responses were made, and issues highlighted:-

- 795 children and young people had completed the survey;
- the survey had been open from April to July as a means of allowing schools to distribute the survey and return a higher rate of responses;
- the results would be collated and analysed and finally translated into a report which would be produced by September;



- SHAPE worked to encourage more young people to engage across schools and wider community organisations;
- youth services worked closely with schools and the police on targeted intervention and ensured that those children and young people were heard and provided with the necessary support;
- more could be done to educate and support children and young people on life skills in terms of food prep, budgeting and money management. The Citizens Advice Bureau had been working with the Youth Forum on delivering advice to young people on life skills;
- a lot of work was being undertaken within Sandwell and nationally to address bullying, including verbal, physical and online bullying;
- support was given to support those young people who engaged to ensure they were comfortable when talking with SHAPE and partners;
- the Cabinet was committed to providing the youth service, and there was an ongoing strategic review of provision and how it worked with the wider Council and partners.

A Review of Youth Facilities in Sandwell that had been carried out by the Board in January 2020 and had made a recommendation that through the SHAPE Youth Forum, the Board should engage with young people on a continuous basis and this would now be implemented (following delays caused by the covid-19 pandemic).

The scope of what young people were engaged in and felt passionately about was broad and included, education, crime, health and employment. Whilst the Board would continue to lead on engagement with children and young people, the Chair undertook to discuss wider engagement with children and young people with all scrutiny chairs and vice-chairs.

Meeting ended at 7.17pm

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