

KENSINGTON & CHELSEA YOUTH FORUM

Organisations Involved & Contact Details

Organisation: The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Youth Forum (UK)

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Website: http://www.rbkc.gov.uk/kccrights/political_process/rbkc_youth_forum.asp

Aims & Target Group

Aims: The aim of the project is to create a forum in which young people can find opportunities for debate, information and participation in the development and improvement of services.

Target Group: Any young person aged 13-25 (although the focus of the service is 13-19) who lives or attends school/college in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (UK).

The RBKCYF has a diverse membership including young carers; students; young working adults and looked after young people. Most importantly, the Forum members are from various ethnic backgrounds, and the diversity of the forum mirrors that of the borough they represent. This ensures that young people from diverse backgrounds have an opportunity to interact, make friends across cultural divides, and work towards common goals.

Project Description & Components

The Youth Forum has been involved in a range of activities including:

- Debates about local, national and global youth, democracy and citizenship issues;
- Organising local events;
- Developing publicity to promote events and services for local young people;
- Participating in residential programs and youth exchanges including Morocco, Germany, Switzerland, France and Spain;
- Attending external conferences and events including supporting the 2012 bid and UK Youth Parliament;
- Carrying out research into what young people want from their Council;
- Being part of the interview panels for employing staff;
- Assessing grant applications for community, youth and sporting projects against set criteria.
- And much much more!



Process

- The Kensington and Chelsea Youth Forum (RBKCYF) was set up in 2002. Obtaining the views of young people was identified as crucial in the borough's community strategy.
- Young people were involved from the RBKCYF's inception, deciding how it would work, report and recruit.
- Currently the forum has around 30 active members.
- The Forum meets fortnightly, with the roles of chair and minute-taker rotating amongst members.
- The group has an open-door policy, with existing members visiting youth groups to talk about the work of the RBKCYF and how individuals can get involved.
- RBKCYF members attended training with the Young Roots Lottery Heritage Fund to support their grant assessment work. Members have also completed an accredited course with Save the Children on global youth work and peer education.

Outcomes

In 2002 Kensington and Chelsea responded to the needs of young people who wanted to participate in the decision making which affects their lives. This has included contributing to the agendas of democracy, citizenship and social inclusion. This participation has brought with it a greater awareness from young people of local and global issues, such as housing, trade and the 'green' agenda. Three years later, in 2005, National Youth Agency's 'So what's changed?' paper, edited by young people, explains how the 'Hear by Right' standards have become embedded in the Council's philosophy since 2002.

Local young people and the National Youth Agency (NYA) have named the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Council the first in London to be working at an 'advanced standard' in terms of involving children and young people in decision making under the Hear By Right Framework. RBKCYF members have also taken part in consultation on the borough's Local Development Framework, the Community Strategy and the 2012 Olympic bid.

Some reflections from Forum participants on the benefits of involvement:

Fadwa has attended the forum for over a year, her aim is to help other young people set up their own youth forum. For Fadwa the highlights of her involvement with RBKCYF have been the team working, grant assessment skills and making new friends. Asked what her friends think of her involvement with RBKCYF Fadwa replies, *"they think I'm achieving more because I'm learning more about the borough, as well as promoting the right of young people to be listened to."*

For example, the grant awards process develops skills such as team working, negotiating and fair selection. It is challenging and rewarding work. As forum member **Ridwane** says, *"We have firm criteria to meet, sometimes you have to turn down your own youth club if there is another club that better fits the criteria."*

Daniel has been involved with RBKCYF for about a year. He is also the RBKCYF deputy member of the UK National Youth Parliament (UKYP), the elected



body for 11-19 year olds. For Daniel the RBKCYF and the UKYP have provided important opportunities to work with others from different backgrounds and locations.

Challenges & Obstacles

- How to avoid organisations simply paying lip service to the consultation idea, and not seriously considering the views of the RBKCYF?
- Victor, a participation worker with RBKCYF explains, "*Members insist that after consultation with the Youth Forum that they get a follow-up visit reporting back on progress. The forum need to know if their ideas are to be implemented, and if not, why not. Members are giving up their time on a Friday evening to take part in the consultation and need to know their opinions are being taken seriously.*"

Funding

Funds come from the Youth Support and Development Service, Connexions and Positive Activities for Young People (PAYP).

Images

