



Youth Voice & Creative Engagement Service
Annual Report 2020 / 2021

NY Voice Annual Report 2020/2021

Introduction

Welcome to the first annual report on the activities and achievements of NY Voice, our Youth Voice and Creative Engagement Service, for the April 2020 – March 2021 reporting period. It is fair to say that this year has been very different to the one we imagined in our inaugural year as a new team within Children and Young People's Services! The impact of the Covid19 Pandemic, and the associated restrictions it has placed on participation work, are difficult to overstate. The absence of in-person engagement or face-to-face working with our children and young people has reduced the impact we have been able to make in some areas, whilst determining that some plans are best deferred until normality resumes.

Despite these challenges, our children and young people have accomplished a huge amount this year. The passion, determination, and resilience they have shown to have their voices heard, and make a difference in North Yorkshire, is something to be celebrated. Our team has adapted very quickly to embrace and maximise the benefits of virtual working, whilst undertaking socially distanced, outdoor work where this has been possible. Our offer to CYPS colleagues has extended, to now include 1-1 casework support for those children and young people who benefit from more creative approaches to giving their voice and views. You will see examples of our creative work, completed across the 2020/2021 period, illustrated throughout this report. Our Partnership networks, both internal and external, continue to increase rapidly, and our commitment to ensuring children and young people have a real say on the issues that affect them, is stronger than ever.

In common with all of you, we look forward greatly to seeing our children and young people in person as soon as it is safe to do so. As the pandemic continues to retreat in 2021, we are excited to begin planning our 'return to normality' and the valuable opportunities this presents for engagement and participation work in the future.

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NY Voice Headlines 2020 / 2021

- An expanded Children in Care Council, now with more than 25 members
 - A new team of *Innovation Award* winning Young Inspectors
- Children and Young People with SEND in leading roles across our youth voice groups
 - Local youth councils established across North Yorkshire
- Regular Service User Feedback Reviews throughout the year - engaging with more than 280 children, young people, and families across CYPs services
- Fantastic Creative Approaches and Engagement Outcomes across numerous projects and events
 - A Covid19 informed Mental Health Survey completed by more than 300 young people
 - More than 200 Virtual Youth Voice Sessions held on multiple online platforms
 - Three new Social Media accounts with almost 600 followers
 - *Mind of My Own* Apps brought to North Yorkshire – Going Live in June 2021!



'Have Your Say' Day 2020, Carlton Lodge

Our Youth Voice Groups

NY CARE CHAMPIONS

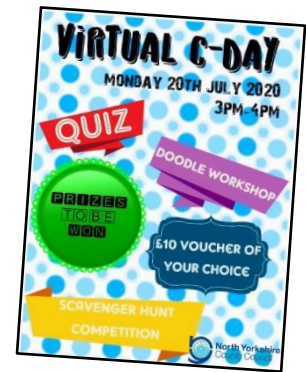
NORTH YORKSHIRES CARE EXPERIENCED YOUTH COUNCIL



Operating under their newly chosen name, **NY Care Champions**, our voice group for care-experienced children and young people, has grown from 4 members at the beginning of 2020, to 26 members today. A flexible approach to membership as desired by our young people, has been adopted – moving away from mandatory monthly meetings towards a more inclusive programme; whereby young people can be more or less involved depending on their interest in a particular subject, and their other commitments at the time. Members of the group meet quarterly with our Children and Families' senior leaders and lead elected members, providing an opportunity to discuss current and prospective work, and allowing young people a direct mechanism to hold the authority to account on the services we deliver.

The group have continued to meet regularly via virtual platforms, and are now planning some face-to-face meetings and events as Covid19 restrictions are eased. Amongst other things, the group have undertaken the following pieces of work this year:

- Work on the Family Time Development Project.
- Supporting the design of the 'On Track' higher education initiative.
- Consultation work around improving uptake of LAC Health Assessments & Developing Health Passports.
- Supporting the commissioning of the new Mind of My Own Apps.
- Focus group work to develop new Mind of My Own software around education meetings.
- A consultation report for the IRO National Management Partnership.
- Focus Group work around how we think about 'consent' within CYPs.
- A young person's '30 minute takeover' of the NYSCP Development Event.
- Health and Wellbeing project work with North Yorkshire Sport.
- Partnership work with our Young Inspectors on the inspection into how well the *Voice of the Child* is gathered and used to inform planning across our Children and Families Services.
- A virtual celebration day for Looked After Children and Care Leavers across North Yorkshire.
- Support of CYPs recruitment through Young Person Interview panels for several positions.



Vinyl artwork from our Care Champions work on the 'Consent' focus group

Looking to the coming year, the group are planning to move forward with some young person led work, with existing proposals for some peer mentoring workshop events, and a campaign around what makes a 'good move' for children who are moving home whilst looked after. This young person led aspect of work has been extremely challenging to progress due to the restrictions and impact on participation work during the pandemic - it very much forms the basis of the group's priorities as we move into the next period.

Our **Flying High** voice group, for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, has also continued to engage well, although it must be acknowledged that the conditions imposed by virtual working have been especially challenging for these young people. The lack of access to schools and other providers has significantly hindered proposals to expand the reach of the Flying High brand, something which remains a key priority in the coming year. Notwithstanding the challenges posed, Flying High have had a busy year of work, and amongst other activities, have undertaken:



NYSCP Development Event 2020

KYMSGAME

- Consultation work on sexual health and education provision for young people with SEND.
- Supporting the PFCC Youth Commission on the development of KYMS GAME (an interactive game around risk taking and staying safe).
- Consultation work for the Youth Loneliness Campaign being led by Community First.
- Feedback on North Yorkshire's Local Offer Website with future development work pending.
- Joining the '30 minute takeover' of the NYSCB Partnership Development Event.
- Work with Health and Adult Services on transitions to adult participation groups.
- Focus Group work around how we think about 'consent' within CYPS.
- Work with North Yorkshire Sport on a campaign to promote health and physical activity.
- Regular work with SENDIASS providing guidance and advice on many aspects of their work.
- Support of CYPS recruitment through Young Person Interview panels for several positions.



World Social Work Day Postcard

In addition to work completed by Flying High directly, our Young People with SEND have been working extremely hard across other voice groups and other pieces of participation work. This is a key focus for our team, as we recognise that while Flying High is a perfect fit for some young people with SEND, others do not wish to be a member of a 'SEND' group per se. Furthermore, there is no area of participation work, or children's services improvement, on which input from young people with SEND is not highly beneficial: young people with SEND do not only access 'SEND Services', they are young people who are impacted by all the services we deliver.

Young people with SEND are well represented on our Young Inspectors group, inspecting council services to give a young person's perspective on how well the needs of young people with SEND are being met. Young People with SEND, including one of our Deputy Members of the UK Youth Parliament, are also prominent in our Youth Cabinet (formerly Youth Executive) – our North Yorkshire wide voice group which brings together members of local youth councils, our Members of Youth Parliament, and all other voice groups - to provide a representative voice for all young people in North Yorkshire. A member of Flying High was also a key member of our SEND Strategy Engagement Planning Group, with work due to begin soon to engage a range of children and young people to inform our strategic priorities across North Yorkshire.



Vinyl artwork from Flying High's work on the 'Consent' Focus Group

As with our other groups, Flying High are extremely keen to meet in person, and are beginning plans to do so at the earliest opportunity once pandemic restrictions allow.

Another new introduction by our service has been the creation of **Local Youth Councils** across North Yorkshire. Introduced just prior to the onset of the pandemic, recruitment to and progress within the new groups has proved difficult as young people have coped with the pressures of home schooling and virtual working practices.

A real cause for celebration, however, has been the achievements of the newly established *Craven Youth Council*. In Craven, a passionate and ambitious group of young people has emerged and worked with noteworthy dedication in the past year.



Newspaper article from *The Craven Herald*, November 2020

The group began by undertaking a local young person survey to establish the priorities of their wider peer group. Based on the results, the group have met regularly online and worked on an environmental campaign, including a social distanced litter pick in October which was covered by the local newspaper. In addition to this, the Craven group have become *Kooth* ambassadors, hosting Q & A sessions for local young people; as well as supporting review and update work to the NHS Go-To Website.

The group have also begun making links with their local county councillors, and from May 2021 will take up a rotating attendance at the *Skipton & Ripon Area Constituency Committee* to share their priorities and explore potential partnership projects.

Under a new, more representative model introduced by our service, our **Youth Cabinet** is attended by leading members of all of our other youth voice groups, as well as our three Members of the UK Youth Parliament (MYPs). The Youth Cabinet replaces the previous *Youth Voice Executive* group, with our young people working with us on group representation as well as choosing their new group name. The group meet on a monthly basis, and have a fantastic proposal for a ‘by young people, for young people’ Youth Awards Ceremony, to recognise the hard work and dedication of young people and workers in the field of participation. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic conditions, the difficult but necessary decision was made by the young people to postpone the ceremony until 2022 in order to maximise the success of the event.



Currently, cabinet members are planning a ‘Walk for Wellbeing’ campaign to raise awareness of mental health and positive wellbeing, which they hope to launch in the summer of 2021. In addition to the above, in the past year the group have:

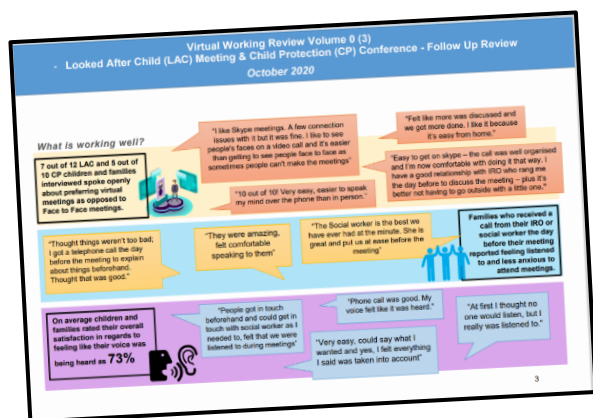
- Supported the review of the Young and Yorkshire 2 Strategy.
- Completed consultation work on a new culture strategy for North Yorkshire.
- Coordinated local arrangements for the national young people’s Make Your Mark survey.
- Worked with our Communications Team around Covid19 safety messages for young people.
- Been part of CYPs recruitment through Young Person Interview panels for several positions.



Our MYPs visiting parliament for the annual sitting

Service User Reviews & Family Feedback

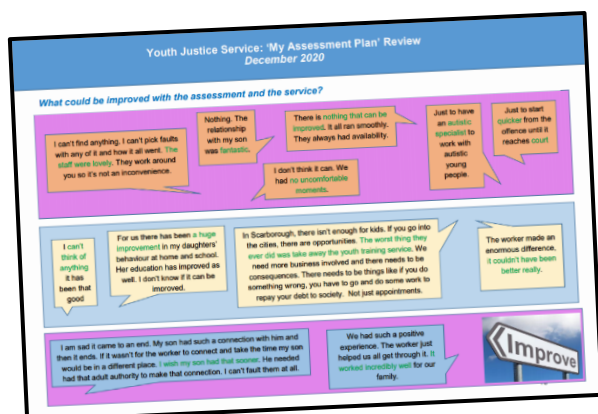
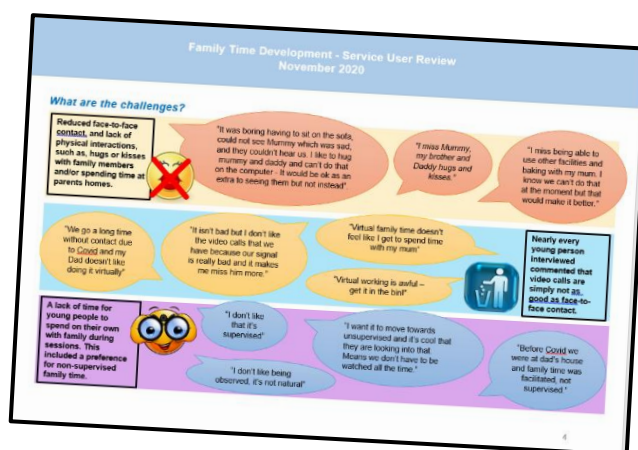
In addition to coordinating the youth voice groups outlined above, this year has seen a rapid expansion of the other means by which we gather the voices and views of our children, young people, and families. This direct work on behalf of CYPS teams is now a primary aspect of the support we offer to help improve the services they deliver.



Over the course of this annual period, a rolling programme of **Service User Reviews** has been undertaken by the NY Voice team. In the course of these exercises, more than 280 children, young people, and families have been reached across 10 focussed service user reviews. The team use a variety of approaches to gain service user feedback, with methodology adapted for the task or audience being contacted.

In the past year, review work has included a focus on child and family experiences of:

- Looked After Child and Child Protection Meetings
- Leaving Care Services
- Family Time
- Youth Justice Services
- Covid19 and related 'virtual working' experiences across services.

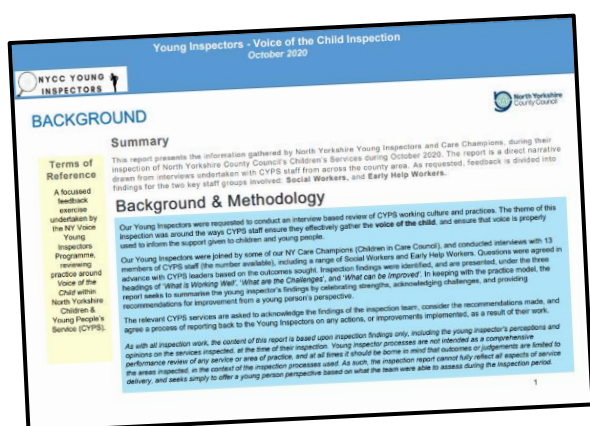


Feedback reports are provided to the relevant service area, highlighting what is working well, what the challenges are, and recommending improvements from a children and family perspective. NY Voice staff also attend team meetings, to present and discuss findings in person. All Service User Review Reports, in addition to the reports completed by our Young Inspectors, are presented at the Strategic Quality Assurance Steering Group – to support improvement planning and ensure development action is taken based on what our children and families are telling us.

Our engaging *Signs of Safety* based reporting style has proved extremely popular with our CYPS leaders and colleagues, and as we move into the new year we are already underway with several more pieces of review work for different services; with many more requests received for completion in the 21/22 period.

Young Inspectors

Our new team of Young Inspectors have had a successful first year, completing two inspections (and starting a third!) in what have been very challenging circumstances. The group began with an inspection of our commissioned Young Carer's Providers, which had to be quickly adapted to suit virtual conditions. The group interviewed staff, spoke to young people using the services, reviewed provider websites, and even designed a survey for parents and carers. The final inspection report was presented to our leadership team and then service providers, who have since worked with the commissioning team and reported back to the young inspectors on the changes they have made based on the report recommendations.



The most recent completed inspection looked at how well the Voice of the Child is gathered and used to inform planning across our Children and Families Services. Young inspectors were joined by young people from our Children in Care Council – NY Care Champions. Together they conducted interviews with Social Care and Early Help staff, highlighting success, challenging practice, and finding out how things could be improved from a young person's perspective.

The Inspection team produced another professional report, which they presented to our leadership team with recommendations for improvement based on their findings and judgements. We will soon be arranging a meeting between the inspection team and the relevant service leads to enable them to feedback to our young people on the difference their report has made in improving services.

The hard work of our Young Inspectors was recognised last year with an Innovation Award in the *Inspiring Change Behind the Scenes* category, which was a wonderful way to reward their dedication and effort. As we move into the new year, the young inspectors are mid-way through an inspection of North Yorkshire's libraries, due to be completed once pandemic restrictions allow for site visits and other in-person aspects of their activity.



In addition to some early proposals for areas of SEND service delivery for the team to look at, planning has also begun for an inspection of our No Wrong Door hubs later in the year. This will be a significant piece of work, for which in-person inspection approaches will be essential; our young inspectors plan to team up with some of our care-experienced children and young people, to give us a real insight into how our hubs are working and how they can be improved even further.

Creative Approaches

At NY Voice we know that fun, creative approaches can often deliver the best results when engaging with children and young people. Using these approaches, we reach children and young people who otherwise may not be heard, or feel able to express themselves, via traditional approaches. By providing such children with a safe space to be heard where they previously may not have been, we are proud of the impact we are able to have in giving them a voice, and helping our CYPS colleagues to hear that voice.

Our creative side has been ever-present during the past year, and our team have used their artistic talents to engage children and young people on numerous development projects and other pieces of work for our CYPS colleagues.



A piece created from our children's drawings on their experiences of Family Time

Creative Work this year has included:

- Creative doodle art workshops into experiences of Family Time as part of a PiP Research Project
- The creation of vinyl artwork based on what 'Consent' means to the young people we work with
- A #BeKind project creating a patchwork from the designs of children across the county
- Regular sessions hosted on Wellbeing Wednesdays to support staff during difficult times
- Work with the Mockingbird Fostering Programme, creating a giant jigsaw with their children and young people to celebrate their two year anniversary in North Yorkshire
- Creating some fantastic postcards with staff during themed workshops on World Social Work Day
- The design of a new name and logo for our service
- Artwork created from staff feedback following Children & Families Locality Events



Art based on staff feedback of new virtual working practices



World Social Work Day Postcard

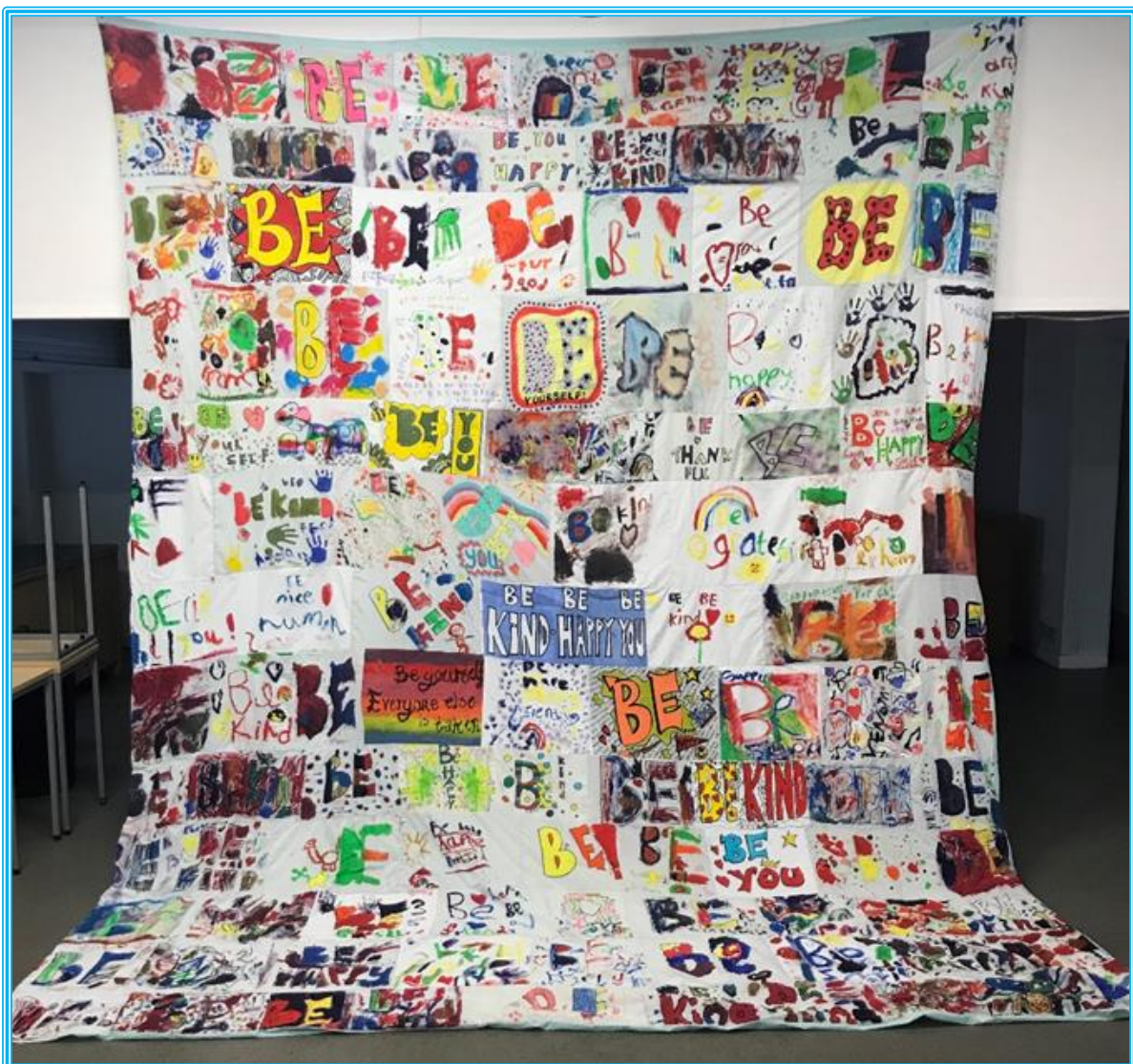
helping
piece it all
together



World Social Work Day Postcard



Giant Jigsaw created with children working with The Mockingbird Project



The completed stitched banner from our #BeKind Project. Patches were designed by more than 160 children from a range of schools and youth groups across North Yorkshire. At the height of the pandemic, the project brought hope and positivity to children and adults alike!

In addition to traditional graphic art based engagement, we are also very proud of a new *Hip Hop Therapy* programme we have offered this year. Referrals are received by workers from across CYPS, for those children and young people who will benefit from the creation of music and lyric writing as a way to express their thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Beginning as a project with our colleagues in the Youth Justice Service, the offer quickly gathered pace and popularity across CYPS. In the past year, more than 30 children and young people have accessed the sessions, both on a 1-1 basis as well as during group sessions delivered on request for different teams and services.



The feedback received, from both young people and their workers, has been truly amazing. Engaging in this way has allowed young people to express themselves honestly whilst feeling safe 'within the music', as well as providing a cathartic release for their experiences. The approach provides an additional outlet for young people to communicate their thoughts and feelings; and often results in the disclosure of these to workers, through the lyrics they write, in a rapidly faster timeframe – allowing for workers to gain a better understanding and be able to offer better support through their case management.

An example of the expressive power of lyric writing can be seen in the rap lyrics below, written by a young man who had been working with our Youth Justice Service having been released from custody during the first 'lockdown' in Spring 2020. In just three Hip Hop Therapy sessions and through the medium of music, he felt able to talk about his feelings and experiences in a way that would not ordinarily be possible during traditional intervention work, and in turn help his workers to understand and support him better. The recorded version of the rap, along with others, can be heard at our Soundcloud through the link below:

<https://soundcloud.com/nyyouthvoice/tripple-lockdown-rap-live-recording>

*First night of triple lockdown, heart was a'racing / From the prospect of the next day I was facing
Filled with anguish the first time I stepped out / After a whole night of crazy screams and shouts
I don't know what was worse? Being in segregation / Or having dyslexia and being in education
Facing the death stares from getting attention / I felt like my whole life was in detention
Then Covid One-Nine came the invasion / From overseas, invading our nation
Into triple lockdown, lockdown in my cell / Lockdown in my brain, locked into a living hell
No human contact for two whole weeks / No one to meet, no conversation to speak
Bored and Frustrated, staring at four walls / Waiting for those days for those four walls to fall*

You can never understand how that messes with your head

I'll be honest there were times I was wishing I was dead

*First time the door opened I thought about time / Stepping through that door Freedom would be mine
Seeing other humans, I was filled with relief / One final step closer to the peace of my release
Release day arrived, I had completed my fate / Meeting outside, my mother at the gate
Finally going home completed my lockdown / On A64 my belly was upside down
But it wasn't real freedom, I was still locked up / I wanted to see my mates but I had no such luck
Although I had my freedom I was still stuck inside / But now for my future, I'm gonna fill with pride
Greatest sense of achievement that I can feel / As a head chef serving up most delicious meals*

Partnerships

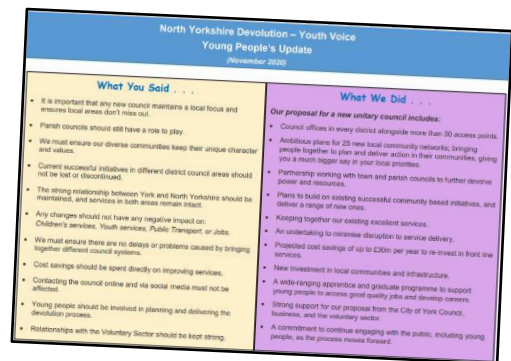
In addition to our primary focus advocating for children and young people and supporting our CYPS colleagues, we have also worked closely with a number of internal and external partners across the year, with whom we share the same goals of improving the services delivered to children in North Yorkshire.



In the summer of 2020, we worked alongside our health partners in designing and developing a survey to look at the impact of Covid19 on the mental health and emotional wellbeing of young people in North Yorkshire. Promoting the survey through our youth voice groups, schools, and other delivery partners, the survey was completed by more than 300 respondents, and will be used to directly inform post-pandemic mental health related service delivery across our area.

Staying in this area, we have also supported the review of the NHS Go-To Website, hosting focus groups for young people and ensuring they have a genuine say in the online support they can access in future.

In October 2020, we organised a Young Person's Devolution Forum with our partners in the NYCC Communications Team. The evening was hosted by Stuart Carlton (Corporate Director of CYPS) and Barry Khan (Assistant Chief Executive of Legal and Democratic Services), who were in the hot seat being quizzed on a range of topics while listening to the issues most important to our children and young people. There was a fantastic turn out including young people from our Care Champions, Flying High, Local Youth Councils, and our Young Inspectors, and even more young people were able to take part thanks to detached outreach work by Sidewalk Youth Project. Our young people showed enormous passion and determination to have their voices heard on these vitally important proposals to re shape local government. The meeting showed the huge value of engaging with young people, who asked a huge number of articulate, relevant and intelligent questions throughout the evening. These included concerns around education & jobs, social care, youth justice, youth work, and transport. The discussions on the night were used to help shape our proposal to the government, as outlined in *A unitary council for North Yorkshire: The case for change*. We look forward to ensuring North Yorkshire's young people remain involved in the devolution project as it moves forward in future.



In September, young people from NY Care Champions, Flying High, Local Youth Councils, and our Youth Cabinet, joined together with our Young Inspectors for a 30 minute takeover of the North Yorkshire Safeguarding Childrens Partnership Development Day. Representatives from each group presented their ideas, concerns, recent achievements, and future plans to the network of partners present, receiving some excellent feedback from attendees and organisers alike.



World Social Work Day Postcard

Other partners of note this year include The Yorkshire & Humber Youth Work Unit, SENDIASS, North Yorkshire Youth, The National Youth Advocacy Service, and North Yorkshire Sport. All share our passion for youth voice and participation, and ensuring children and young people have a real say in the services we deliver and the issues that impact upon them.

Throughout the year we have joined with them on various pieces of work, projects, and virtual events – this will continue in the future as we strengthen our relationships and move forward out of the pandemic.

What to Look Out For in 2021 /2022

Engaging More Children & Young People in Young Person Led Work

Top of our priority list for the coming year is engaging new children and young people with all of our youth voice groups and participation work, most notably our care experienced children and our children and young people with SEND. As the pandemic has continued, there has been an inevitable decline in enthusiasm for virtual engagement from our young people, and a corresponding difficulty in progressing any genuine young person led campaign or project work.



Young Inspectors In Training, East Barnby

This, most important aspect of voice work, is a key delivery outcome for us as we seek to re-engage our existing group members, expand our reach, and add new faces through a determined recruitment campaign in all areas of participation. We are confident that the return of face-to-face working, anticipated by the summer of 2021, will support us greatly in achieving these goals. Central to our plans is the development of new age-defined children in care council groups, with a focus on primary and secondary school-aged children, to complement our existing NY Care Champions Group, which at this time is made up predominantly of older young people.

SEND Voice Development & The Local Area SEND Strategy



A specific objective for the 21/22 period is the expansion of our SEND voice network and Flying High brand into our schools, education, and other partnership providers. This is an existing objective, which has been significantly frustrated by school closures and pandemic restrictions this year.

A SEND Voice Development Plan, designed in accordance with our Inclusion Leadership Team, will be published in the early part of the year. This will include an annual calendar with details of service priorities, SEND voice events, Young Inspector's work, and engagement strategies to ensure we are able to reach the full range of children and young people with SEND in North Yorkshire.

Planning is also underway for a major engagement exercise with children and young people with SEND, to inform the new Local Area SEND Strategy. The strategy will shape how services work together to ensure the best possible outcomes for our children and young people. Their feedback and input around their experiences of living with SEND, and their priorities for the future; will be vital in developing a draft strategy, which will then be subject to further consultation before the final strategy is agreed. Our objective is to reach as many children and young people with SEND as is possible. To do so, a variety of inclusive engagement methods will be adopted, allowing a number of options on how our children and young people can have their voices heard. This will include surveys, focus groups, creative workshops, and 1-1 interviews where appropriate. Following the engagement activity, planned for June 2021, a report will be produced for the Inclusion service to inform the draft strategy, and ensure the voices of children and young people with SEND have a genuine impact upon the future of SEND service provision in North Yorkshire.

Mind of My Own

In March 2021 we successfully concluded a three year contract to bring the award winning Mind of My Own Apps to the children and young people of North Yorkshire. The apps, which can be used on all mobile and other online devices, are co-produced with children and young people, and offer a choice of two platforms including one designed for younger children and children and young people with SEND.



Mind of My Own puts communication in the hands of young people, allowing them to express their thoughts and feelings as and when they wish to do so. Mind of My Own also comes with a service portal, which allows the tracking of information, the audit of performance, and the monitoring of trends based on what young people are collectively saying about the different aspects of the service they receive. These trends can then be analysed to identify areas of development and inform service improvement. With staff training due to commence in June, Mind of My Own will revolutionise how we communicate with the children we work with, giving them more opportunity to have their voices heard and be part of the decision making which affects their lives.

NY Voice Art Academy

Following the leading role our service took in this year's Family Time Development PiP Project, which included numerous focus groups and creative workshops around children and young people's experiences of Family Time, an exciting new *Art Academy* for care-experienced children has just been launched by NY Voice as we enter the new year. Driven by the children's passion for artistic expression, the group already has 14 members aged between 8 and 15 years old. The group will meet weekly, on a virtual platforms for the time being, exploring a range of themes and artistic approaches. As well as providing a forum where care-experienced children can share their experiences and express themselves through art, we aim to use the group to prepare young people for more outcomes based participation work as they grow older.



Tribal Mask making in the first session with the new Art Academy for care-experienced children



North Yorkshire Engagement & Participation Strategy

Work began in 2020 on a new Engagement & Participation Strategy for North Yorkshire, to outline our priorities in relation to children and young people's voice across CYPS; and inform how we intend to achieve long term success. A *Strategy Writing Working Group*, including young people from across our voice groups, met numerous times throughout the year, and began planning the design and content of an engaging and interactive document to inform our strategic approach. Due to the uncertainty created by the pandemic, however, a joint decision was made at the beginning of 2021 to postpone further work on the strategy, until more certainty exists around how and when participation work will emerge from this difficult period. We very much look forward to re-commencing this work, and are confident a comprehensive strategy will be published during 2021/2022.

Meet The Team 21/22

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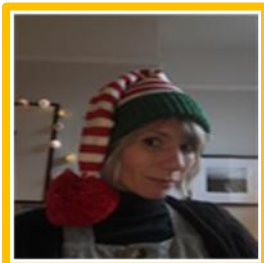
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