

Results of Falkirk Council's review of youth engagement

A review of how effectively Falkirk Council engages with young people was conducted in March 2018 by the Communications and Participation Unit. The purpose of the review was to:

- Learn how to better engage with young people;
- Find out how young people want to engage with the Council;
- Identify barriers to engagement; and
- Advise on the introduction of a youth council.

An online survey of 12-25 year olds, living in the Falkirk Council area, was carried out in March 2018. The survey was hosted on Citizens Space and was designed to identify *if* and *how* young people want to engage with the Council. It received 627 responses – making it a statistically significant sample.

The key findings of the survey are summarised below:

- 82% of young people agree or strongly agree that they would like to be involved in making decisions that affect them and their local area;
- They have a particular interest in influencing Schools and Education, Jobs, Careers and Training and Mental Health. They are least interested in influencing Bins, Rubbish and Recycling and Community Safety;
- 53% of young people agree or strongly agree they can influence decisions affecting their local area;
- 37% of young people agree or strongly agree that their participation in youth engagement activities would have influence over decisions made by the Council;
- 15% of young people have been involved in Council youth engagement activities;
- 30% of young people are interested in joining the Council's Citizen Panel.
- 28% of young people are interested in joining a youth council;
- 70% of young people said their preferred method of youth engagement is online surveys. Their least preferred method is youth groups;
- 29% of young people know how to get involved in Council youth engagement activities;
- The biggest barriers to involvement are: not knowing how to get involved; not feeling confident enough to get involved; not having enough spare time; and not feeling knowledgeable enough to get involved;
- Young people would prefer to receive information about changes and developments in the Falkirk Council area through: school and college; email; Facebook; and Twitter.

Based on the evidence gathered in this report, the Council have agreed to:

- Develop an online survey platform, similar to the Citizens Panel. Further consultation with young people is needed to determine how this can be designed and rolled out effectively;
- Promote youth engagement activities more effectively using the online channels which are preferred by young people. The Council should better familiarise itself with social media platforms, such as Facebook and Snapchat, and identify how they can better used;
- Work closely with schools and Forth Valley College to provide young people opportunities to get involved in youth engagement;
- Use social media to keep young people informed of changes and developments in their local areas;
- Increase young people's knowledge of local democracy and the issues affecting their communities so that they can more confidently get involved in youth engagement activities;
- Regularly ask young people what issues are important to them and design engagement activities around this. This may be achieved through an annual survey through which an engagement agenda is developed;
- Manage the expectations of young people by being honest about the scope of their influence over decision making processes.