

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

5 JANUARY 2023

MEDWAY YOUTH COUNCIL ANNUAL CONFERENCE REPORT 2022

Report from: Medway Youth Council

Author: Rose Stokes, Chair

Summary

This report sets out the outcomes of the Medway Youth Council (MYC) annual conference 2022 following their research into the impact poverty has on young people. It makes some key recommendations for supporting young people during the current cost-of-living crisis.

1. Budget and policy framework

- 1.1 The terms of reference for the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Chapter 4 Part 5 paragraph 22.2(b) of the Constitution) states; "to fulfil all the functions of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee in relation to children".

2. Background

- 2.1. Medway Youth Council is a diverse youth led organisation that looks to have the young people of Medway's voices heard. Our members come from all backgrounds. We are active in the wider community and often help in many outside events. We help young people to build skills needed for the future both politically and in all aspects of life.
- 2.2. In 2022, the conference was held in July, and we found it clashed with many important days at school so will look to holding future conferences in November. Twelve schools were represented with an estimated 70 people attending. We were able to get a variety of grammar and non-grammar schools to attend which help show the difference in experience within Medway.

- 2.2. This year we decided to run our annual conference around the topic of poverty. Medway is an area of North Kent with some of the poorest places in the UK. The conference focused on the main aspects of food and education poverty as well as discrimination and stereotyping. We were able to gather information about young people's views on poverty and how it affects them on a personal level.
- 2.3. There are 163 neighbourhoods in Medway on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) and, of these, 12 neighbourhoods are in the 10% most deprived in the country and 20 in the 20% most deprived in the country. IMD is highlighting child and elderly poverty as significant issues. The health deprivation measures also show many Medway neighbourhoods in the 20% most deprived nationally and that there are geographical issues for those in the rural peninsula areas with accessing health services.
- 2.4. According to the Medway Council Public Health Report 2019, it is estimated that as many as 18.8% of under 16s in Medway resided in low-income families in 2018/19. It is likely the combined effects of the Covid pandemic and the cost-of living-crisis will have made this far worse.
- 2.5. NHS research has shown that poverty has negative impacts on children's health, social, emotional and cognitive development, behaviour and educational outcomes. Children born into poverty are more likely to experience a wide range of health problems, including poor nutrition, chronic disease and mental health problems, and as a group we wished to explore this further.

Message from the chair:

- 2.6. 'We had to overcome many issues to get our conference ready on time. However, I'm proud to say that it was very successful with almost 80 participants and a wide range of ages and backgrounds. We found it was important to find out information about a very relevant and prominent problem within society, and how this effected young people. It was interesting to see how participants viewed poverty and its external factors. They also showed a wide knowledge and awareness of such issues that could stem from poverty. We are looking into how we can take this information on further. I hope you find the data and suggestions useful and work with us to take the solutions and recommendations forward.'

3. Conclusions of the Campaign

- 3.1. This report provides an overview of responses and outcomes of discussions at the Q&A event and some recommendations for possible future action
- 3.2. The core recommendations from the campaign were:

- MYC to continue working with organisations around poverty to support them in reaching out to young people throughout Medway and provide a youth voice to their work.
- MYC to undertake a survey on how cost-of-living impacts young people and circulate through our networks. The results from the survey would support the discussion and would make sure that this remains on the agenda for local decision making.
- MYC recommends that schools develop a mechanism for students to report and discuss poverty-related concerns that they may have.
- MYC have also discussed that schools should be teaching more Independent Living Skills to include money management. Not all young people feel that they are ready for life after school/college, and this would be helpful. They also suggested schools should have small allotments, where young people can learn to grow vegetables that can be used by the community so that all families have access to fresh vegetables.

4. Risk Management

- 4.1. There are no specific risks resulting from the recommendations of the report.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. There are no specific financial implications arising from the report.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1. There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

7. Recommendation

- 7.1. The Committee is asked to note the Medway Youth Council Annual Conference Report 2022 which details outcomes of their research into the impact of poverty on young people.

Lead officer contact

Roy Smith, Operations Manager, Medway Youth Service
Tel: 07717507140 Email: roy.smith@medway.gov.uk

Appendices

Appendix 1 Outcomes of the discussion of youth poverty within education.
Appendix 2 Responses to the discussion on youth food poverty.
Appendix 3 Responses to debate on poverty discrimination
Appendix 4 Perceived discriminations against people experiencing poverty

Background papers

None