

# CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

5 JANUARY 2023

## CURRICULUM DIVERSITY

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### Summary

The Curriculum Diversity Group was a Task and Finish Group drawn from diverse cultural organisations and schools (see Appendix 1).

Two work strands underpin the work of the Curriculum Diversity group, *Medway's Heroes in Time* and the Medway Cultural Education Partnership (MCEP), *School's Cultural Programming subgroup*.

*Medway's Heroes in Time* is a collection of hidden heroes from Medway's past with an emphasis upon those who have had an inspiring life, often from culturally diverse and ethnic communities. That work is supporting the drive for positive approaches to support diversity and anti-racism in schools.

### 1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1. The Curriculum Diversity work strand sits within the School Effectiveness service. The budget for *Medway's Heroes in Time* project has been funded by the Council, with a total budget of £10,000. The fund is committed to the design and reproduction of resources for schools.
- 1.2. The budget for MCEP is sourced from Medway Council Culture and Regeneration team, and externally from the Arts Council, additional bids and match funding.
- 1.3. Both projects support the Council's commitment "*to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; promoting equality of opportunity; fostering good relations between different sections of the community and improving the quality of life and opportunities for everyone*". See the Council's Fair Access and Inclusion Policy (see Background Papers).

## 2. Background

- 2.1. As recorded in the minutes of the full Council meeting which took place on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2020, Cllr Potter was asked the following question:  
*“I’m looking forward to starting Secondary School in September. One of the lessons I’m looking forward to is History. Could you let me know what focus is given to Black historic figures like William Cuffay in the curriculum and what more you will do to increase the levels of Black history in the curriculum?”*
- 2.2. In Cllr Potter’s response, he stated that *“the Medway Diversity Forum had indicated they would be keen to work with Headteachers in what he envisaged being a broader project focussing on diversity in relation to the whole school curriculum”*.
- 2.3. Following this, the School Effectiveness Service set up the Curriculum Diversity Task and Finish Group, chaired by Cllr Potter, with representation from leaders from cultural organisations and schools across Medway.
- 2.4. The Task and Finish Group had three key objectives to:
  - improve practice by sharing the existing good work that schools already did to promote diversity and tackle racism.
  - identify local heroes so that they could be influence local school curriculum and inspire greater diversity and understanding.
  - develop a set of resources that support classroom research, promotes diversity and understanding.
- 2.5. The *History Heroes in Time* project is a key piece of work from the Task and Finish Group, led by the School Effectiveness service and co-produced by schools, diverse cultural groups, local history associations and residents of Medway.
- 2.6. The intention behind the identification of diverse role models in Medway has been reported on previously. Its aim remains to support schools in promoting curriculum resources that teach local history and role models that made a significant impact, with a specific focus on positive impacts of cultural and ethnic diversity, within young people’s learning. This aim is based on the principle that knowledge and understanding of the past will directly inform behaviours, attitudes and beliefs of our current generation of learners. This work compliments the Council’s drive to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and promote equality and diversity, and to supplement the work that schools already undertake.

## 3. Curriculum Content uncovered by History Heroes Project (to date)

- 3.1. The *History Heroes in Time* project has collected over thirty names of people from Medway who have led inspiring lives and are notable for inclusion in local curriculums.

- 3.2. The key curriculum benefits of studying these heroes can be broadly described as a better understanding of the past, leadership, innovation, systemic racism, and a growing sense of community cohesion. This is a secure platform for teaching positive education strategies that tackle racism and prepares learners ready to be ambitious, active global citizens.
- 3.3. The project was initially launched through *Headway* to all schools, and *Medway Matters*, which was delivered into all Medway homes. The School Effectiveness service valued the contributions, particularly those from local diverse cultural organisations, history groups and Council services, including Medway's librarians, archivists, and museums. Subsequent updates have been provided on the progress of the curriculum diversity initiative to Medway Education Partnership Group and headteacher associations.
- 3.4. The list of heroes represents a range of cultural identities who have been notable in diverse fields, including the arts, humanities, sciences, engineering, politics, social reform, and entertainment. This resource (examples shown in Appendix 2) is designed to enable schools to undertake their own classroom research and make links across the national curriculum subject range. The resource is flexible as a focused unit of study and to supplement schools' existing programmes of study. In this way, the traditional single month focus of Black History in October will be spread across the academic year and embedded into normal curriculum studies.
- 3.5. In making links across the curriculum, this approach aims to increase the awareness of Medway's inspiring *History Heroes* and engage more teachers from a wider continuum of subject expertise, across many subject disciplines. This provides the opportunity to maximise the exposure of the local curriculum content, so that learning about successful role models who have formed modern Medway will have more teaching traction and maximise learning retention. Three extracts from the list of heroes, alongside their initial biographical brief is included in Appendix 2.

#### 4. Next Steps for History Heroes in Time Project

- 4.1. As a regional group of leaders across the arts, culture and education sectors, MCEP is considering extending the work of the History Heroes project to include artists in residence in schools. This would take the form of a pilot to further promote positive beliefs and attitudes that are central to supporting diversity and understanding. The pilot would provide an opportunity to expand this project to potentially all schools.
- 4.2. The aim of the MCEP projects would be twofold:
  - to promote the diversity of Medway through the Heroes project, furthering better understanding of local historic heritage, community cohesion past and present and Medway's diverse ethnic past.
  - explore how a successful project could be scoped up to impact upon a larger number of schools and the viability of largescale funding that it would require.

- 4.3. The MCEP is well placed to co-ordinate the promotion of diversity and equality with a vision for an inspirational and high-quality cultural education offer and to ensure this is available to all children and young people in Medway. By maximising collaborations between the existing cultural, education and youth sectors in Medway, it seeks to increase creativity, and life chances for more of our children and young people.
- 4.4. Regarding next steps in schools, school leaders are being engaged from January 2023 in the co-production of the artist in residency approach to promoting Medway’s history heroes. It is recognised within MCEP’s mission and vision that not all children and young people in Medway have equal access to the creative and cultural opportunities available locally, and therefore, they have different understandings of equality, cohesion and diversity.
- 4.5. Therefore, MCEP will prioritise the needs of the least engaged young people in Medway and, as a first step, are conducting research to map the existing local cultural offer and identify the places in Medway which need more targeted provision.

## 5. Advice and Analysis

- 5.1. The continued focus on curriculum diversity, through the projects outlined above, provides an opportunity to ensure that all children and young people in Medway have access to a curriculum offer which represents their own cultural background and celebrates a diverse group of important people of history.

## 6. Risk Management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk
Lack of commitment or support to continue the work of the Curriculum Diversity projects.	Should there be a removal of commitment and support that allows these projects to continue, this could limit the diversity of learning for children and young people and equally limit the resources that schools are able to access to develop their curriculum offer.	As the report states, there is currently continued support and commitment for the further development of these projects.

## 7. Climate Change Implications

- 7.1. There are no climate change implications arising from this report.

## 8. Financial Implications

- 8.1. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

## 9. Legal Implications

9.1. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

## 10. Recommendations

10.1. The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider and comment on the contents of this report.

## Lead Officer Contact

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## Appendices

Appendix 1 – Curriculum Diversity Task and Finish Group Membership

Appendix 2 – Extract from History Heroes in Time

## Background Papers

Link to: [Medway Council Fair Access and Inclusion Policy](#)