



COUNCIL

19 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.

At its meeting on 5 January 2023, the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommended that the report be reported to Full Council. The minutes of the discussion at the Committee are set out at section 4 to the report.

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.

- 2.3. 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.
- 2.4. 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.
- 2.5. 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.
- 2.6. 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:

- 2.7. '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. Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4.1. The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny considered the report at its meeting on 5 January 2023 and a summary of the discussion is set out below.

4.2. **Discussion:**

Rose Stokes, the Chair of the Medway Youth Council (MYC) for 2022-2023 presented the report which provided the Committee with details of the outcomes of the annual conference following their research into the impact of poverty on the young people of Medway. The report detailed key recommendations to schools and other organisations to support young people through the current cost of living crisis. The key findings of the research were highlighted as set out in appendices 1-4 of the report.

4.3. Members then raised a number of questions and comments, which included:

4.4. **Support** – it was asked what additional support the MYC needed to enable it to continue the valuable work that was provided to the young people of Medway. The Chair, MYC responded that the average cost of its work for the year amounted to £15000 and they had to fundraise or look for sponsorship to raise the funds to enable it to carry out its work. The MYC would be appreciative of any funds that could be provided by the Council towards this budget.

4.5. The MYC hoped to recruit more volunteers from a wider breadth of Medway and would ask that the Council and Councillors utilised any opportunity to promote the work of the MYC which may assist them in recruiting more volunteers to ensure more diverse representation on the youth council.

4.6. **Practical Skills** – it was commented that the current level of poverty experienced, in particular, by two parent working households were relatively new, and it was suggested that practical skills such as the importance of

budgeting, money management, saving and mortgages should be taught in schools.

4.7. **Financial Management** – it was asked whether youth centres in Medway still provided young people with advice and guidance on money management, such as budgeting advice as this was offered in the past and well received. The Operations Manager, Medway Council Youth service said that youth centres still provided this support to its young people.

4.8. **Poverty and Social Determinants of Health** – in response to a question on how the MYC would continue its research on poverty and social determinants of health, the Chair, MYC said that they were still at the initial stage of this work which would require more scoping. It was planned that a project, utilising the support and skills of the Youth Parliament would develop a survey that would be distributed to schools and third-party organisations to collate information in order to gain a better understanding on the link between poverty and social determinants of health of young people across Medway. It was suggested by a Member that the MYC engaged the Public Health team in the scoping of this research.

4.9. The MYC Chair and Officers were thanked for all the work completed throughout the year and it was stressed how important and valuable receiving the annual reports at Committee was in hearing the voice of young people of Medway.

4.10. **Decision:**

4.11. The Committee noted the Medway Youth Council Annual Conference report 2022 and recommended the report be presented to full Council for its consideration.

5. Risk Management

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

6. Financial Implications

6.1. There are no specific financial implications arising from the report.

7. Legal Implications

7.1. There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

8. Recommendation

- 8.1. The Council 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, along with the comments of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as set out at section 4 to the report.

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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