

HousingNorthwest

Salford City Council: Young People Lead on Council Consultation Process

The Sustainable Regeneration Directorate of Salford City Council incorporates strategic housing services and the planning department. One of the roles of the strategic housing arm of the directorate is to develop strategies in order to meet the future housing needs of Salford people. In 2007 work began on the development of a Young Person's Housing Plan for the city. This would be a first for Salford, there had not been a plan about the housing needs of this group of residents before. We took this as an opportunity and tried to view the development of this strategy using new and creative methods...

One of the ways we did this was to work with a group of young volunteers from a local scheme called Project 24/7. Project 24/7 is funded by Salford Council and run by Action for Children. It provides housing support and homelessness prevention for young people in Salford aged 14 to 25. The aim of the project is to prevent youth homelessness in the city through Peer Education and Mentoring and provide support mechanisms for young people experiencing homelessness issues. The volunteers share their experiences with each other in regular group sessions and also give talks to young people in schools, challenging some of the myths and stereotypes around homelessness.

We were able to 'recruit' a group of volunteers from the project who were keen to help with the consultation that would inform the plan. Officers worked with the volunteers on ideas for a session that they could take out to engage with other groups of young people in the city. The group also took part in a facilitation skills course run by the City Council to help develop their skills.

During a packed 3 month consultation period the group facilitated a series of consultation sessions with the young people's groups – these included general young people's groups, a group of young people not involved in education or training, young people who had experienced homelessness, a local disability group, a young parents group and a BME young people's group.

The group also devised a drama production to engage young people at a Christmas Party event. The drama depicted scenarios of how a young

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person might find themselves homeless and gave the opportunity for the audience to 'stop the action' and comment on what was happening.

Throughout the development time for the Young Person's Housing Plan the volunteers helped shape the content, look and emphasis of the final document. Along the way they also presented their findings to our Lead Member's briefing meeting (rubbing shoulders with senior managers and politicians) and attended the North West Homelessness Forum in the summer of 2008. Here they were able to take part in workshops and discussion forums with officers from other local authorities and housing providers. They also had an information stand at the event.

The young volunteers are still working with the department on various aspects of the Action Plan that resulted from the final strategy. They are going to be helping us develop 'young person friendly' information, including a web site in the near future. The group has been, and continues to be, a great asset to the department!

For more information about Project 24/7 please see

<http://www.salford.gov.uk/living/housing/housingadvice/homeless/housingproject247.htm>