

**PARTICIPATION AND ADVOCACY  
PROJECT:  
A CHAZ EVALUATION CASE STUDY**

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The Participation and Advocacy Project (P and A) has provided a new, challenging and exciting development of the Cornwall Youth Service. The new structure is a priority in the Cornwall Youth Service Business Plan for 2000 - 2001. It is also central to the new Connexions and Designated Health Services for Young People (DSYP) developments in Cornwall. The project is jointly funded through the HAZ funded DSYP and the Cornwall Youth Service. The primary focus of the project has concentrated on Youth Forum start up, building in the forums as a whole service strategy within the Youth Service and building links with other agencies for the development of this structure.

The main aim of the project is:

***‘ to create a working structure for meaningful consultation with young people that will directly affect change in service provision for young people in Cornwall. The new structure will focus on key health and exclusion issues’***

Historically (prior to HAZ funding) there had not been a co-ordinated youth consultation and involvement structure or strategy in place in Cornwall. Sporadic consultation work had taken place, for example, Y.Net supported a county-wide structure of information and communication between young people in the county. Funding for the Y.Net project was withdrawn by the Youth Service when the Participation and Advocacy project was initiated. The voluntary sector had previously initiated work with hard to reach groups of young people, e.g. Hear our Voice was developed to work with young people with mental health issues.

There had been a history of local Youth Forums in certain towns and areas. e.g. Padstow and Restormel. Non of these forums, however, were active when the project lead came into post. The Participation and Advocacy post was designed on a similar model from Kirklees, where a P and A brief was supported and funded by Social Services.

Youth Forums are not a new concept, however a co-ordinated structure for Cornwall, with strong agency partnerships and support, and with young people taking a lead is a new concept for the county. For example, the In Touch programme was an innovative approach in which young people trained and informed adult professionals about youth consultation. This is the first time such an approach has been adopted in youth service provision in Cornwall.

This has resulted in developing strong links with partner organisations and agencies. In light of this the P and A project has developed partnerships with Designated Services for Young People, Connexions, Social services, District Councils (in particular Penwith and Caradon) and worked with other CHAZ. The focus for this inter agency collaboration has been the emphasis on the fact the partnerships work best when representatives from agencies work in direct consultation with young people, and furthermore, that they (the professionals) take a lead from young people with regards how best to involve them in service design and delivery.

## 2. CONTEXT

The current context of the Participation and Advocacy project is unique. Never before has there been such an overpowering environment of agencies at local, regional and national level who want or need to listen to and involve young people in decision making. There is undoubtedly a top down drive from central government to involve and encourage the participation of service users in the organisations and agencies that deliver the key services that affect their lives. Young people are one of the largest population groups who need major services for the greater part of their lives in schools, education and training and other social, leisure and welfare services. They are also the group who though well able, have the least power to influence decisions in those services.

The national climate is affecting the local context at a fast pace. Though there is by no means a fully co-ordinated and adequately resourced, strategic approach across Cornwall to young people's involvement in decision-making, the Participation and Advocacy project, managed by the Youth Service, is an important step in that direction. The local agency response to this drive is varied.

The central Government drivers affecting local action in this area are 'Best Value' for local government and 'Quality Protects' for Social Services. Patient participation is high on the agenda of health services, Connexions has young people's involvement in decision making 'at the heart' of its service and the Youth Service has 'Voice and Influence' as a key area of its future development through 'Transforming Youth Services.' Article 12 from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, giving children and young people the right to have a voice in the decisions that affect their lives, is gaining much higher profile, enshrining young people's rights in international law. The establishment of a UK Youth parliament, though loosely co-ordinated and inadequately resourced, also forms part of the national picture along with the long established British Youth Council.

There has previously been an environment that has tacitly accepted that the task of consulting with, and involving young people, is just too difficult and that young people are not interested. This position will no longer be acceptable. In future any central development of agency policy and procedure that affects young people's lives will lack credibility if young people have not been involved somewhere in its making.

Within this current climate, at a local level, some agencies have demonstrated enthusiasm by involving young people in their strategic plans. Conversely, other agencies appear to be unsure as where to start in reconfiguring their service planning strategies to include young people. To many the Youth Forums have seemed an ideal structure to work with in order to meet their agencies requirements.

Sustainable and effective youth involvement can only happen where the individual agency is prepared to commit adequate resourcing and staffing support in order to make it happen. Working in close partnership with the Youth Service, or other youth agencies, with the necessary skills and experience in youth participation is often the most successful way forward. Where there are committed staff with dedicated time to youth involvement, the partnership work between young people and agencies flourishes.

Designated Services for Young People, Connexions, Social Services and the Early Years and Childcare Development Service in Cornwall, have already made clear resourcing commitments to quality partnership work with the Youth Service in order for young people to have a greater voice and influence in their services. This has been achieved through:

- dedicated participation workers
- youth apprentices linked to their own service
- young people involved in staff selection and staff training
- young people involved at strategic and management level.

Nationally, while the Government is influencing local policy to increase young people's involvement in decision making it is also attempting to 'practice what it preaches'. A young people's advisory forum has been created to the Children and Young People's Unit, relating directly to John Denham, the Minister responsible for the unit. The National Youth Agency is taking a lead in guidance for local government in involving young people. This will be enhanced through a new curriculum and skills bank for young people in decision making and effective user involvement (Informed and Involved). Furthermore, Save the Children is promoting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child with significant resources and local support, particularly with Article 12.

The Pand A project has been able to involve young people from Cornwall in these National initiatives regarding youth participation. The skill and achievements of the Cornwall Youth Forum members has now accrued national credibility. As an example of this, three representatives were chosen to represent the South West at the Labour Party Conference, where they asked questions of the Government Ministers for Education, Youth and Social Services concerning a University for Cornwall, the teaching of Cornish in Cornish Schools and the recruitment of Social Workers.

Central government has also framed the new Citizenship curriculum in schools, which is due to become compulsory in the next academic year 2002. Youth Forum work will be able to contribute meaningfully to this initiative and the Participation and Advocacy project will need to be promoted more effectively in schools, in order for young people's involvement to be given better recognition and endorsement. Where schools have been interested and supportive young people have felt valued, which has increased their motivation and ability to be involved.

The creation of a Youth Manifesto for Cornwall is an immediate objective of the County Youth Forum. This relates to working in partnership with key agency leads in writing a credible document for change in Cornwall which will be spearheaded by young people. The local context seems ripe for this to take place, as it will coincide with a national manifesto from the UK Youth Parliament and the creation of a new national Youth Charter.

This summary outlines the current climate within which the Cornwall Youth Forum structures are operating. This environment is probably the most receptive that it has ever been, both in Cornwall and nationally to listen to the voices of young people. Many young people have responded enthusiastically to the challenge and commitment of youth involvement but many, many more young people need to be included, especially those whose voices are least often heard.

The Participation and Advocacy Project is now in a position where it will either fall under the weight of the incredible current demand for young people's participation, with inadequate resourcing or it will rise to meet the challenge and opportunity that seems to exist for young people to be genuinely involved in and listened to by the services that affect their lives. Agencies

and organisations in Cornwall now have the opportunity to seize the initiative and prove their commitment to young people through a committed, resourced and strategically implemented response to this demand.

The Youth Service is in a unique position to take a lead in this area of work and is currently consolidating its commitment through a 'Voice and Influence' strategy as outlined in national priorities through 'Transforming Youth Services'. Cornwall Youth Forum members were involved in a national consultation about this document and worked with government Ministers on its development.

However, though the Cornwall Youth Service can play an important role in relation to the bigger picture it will never achieve full success without rock solid partnership commitment from the most influential organisations and agencies. Schools must get a special mention here, being identified by young people as the organisations which are most influential in most young people's lives, and probably the most difficult in which to have a voice on important decisions. Therefore the issue of young people gaining representation on School Governing Bodies will be an important one for the future.

### 3. EVALAUTION STRATEGY

#### 3.1 Building Evaluation Capacity

In attempting to increase evaluative capacity, the University of Plymouth Evaluation Team have translated the Theory of Change Model into a series of ordered questions, which would guide the process of developing a rigorous and robust evaluation strategy. Proponents of this approach stress that a Theory of Change should be plausible, doable and testable. To facilitate building evaluation capacity, the project lead was asked to undertake the following:

- Explore the **assumptions** that underlie the work
- Identify the **aims** of the project
- Ensure that the **activities** planned are likely to contribute to these aims
- Think about the **questions** they need to ask if they are to establish the success of the project and
- Look at the kind of data they need to collect in order to establish baseline **indicators**.

The remainder of this paper draws upon the case study analysis of the Youth Participation and Advocacy project, outlining how this evaluation and monitoring model has enabled the project lead to make an objective assessment of their strategy, and to devise operational plans that are not only capable of evaluation by the stakeholders, but also likely to translate into effective practice.

## **3.2 Evaluation Plan/Strategy**

The project identified the following assumptions at the outset of the project.

### **Assumptions:**

1. There is no co-ordinated and streamlined mechanism for young peoples voices to be heard in Cornwall
2. Young people want to be consulted on issues that impact on their lives
3. The Youth Service management is committed to the effectiveness of the Participation and Advocacy project
4. The development of Youth Forums (both District and County wide) would be an effective way of including young people in the consultation process.

In review, after the project had been operational for one year, it was found that these assumptions were accurate. Therefore it is important to acknowledge that the project had not been guided by false assumptions.

The following project aims were identified in conjunction with specific activities which were implemented in meeting each of these aims.

### **Aim 1: To create a working structure to consult with young people in Cornwall.**

#### **Activities:**

- To establish seven active youth forums
- To create a structure that is sustainable
- To make youth forums accessible by choice of venue, supported transport schemes, expenses for travel and caring and disability access and support

### **Aim 2: To ensure that consultation is meaningful to young people.**

#### **Activities:**

- To involve young people in the forums who can represent and consult with other young people in an informed and balanced way
- To make the forums attractive to young people
- To involve young people through all stages of developing and implementing the new structure

### **Aim 3: To affect change in service provision to young people.**

#### **Activities:**

- To inform other relevant agencies and organisations about the project
- To seek evidence of change to services as a direct result of consulting with the Youth Forums

### **Aim 4: To keep health and exclusion as central forum issues.**

#### **Activities:**

- To identify a wide range of young peoples reference groups
- To ensure that the Youth Service is working in active partnership with other key agencies
- To keep health and exclusion as the main focus through a balance of issues that young people and other agencies bring forward.

## **Research Question**

The project lead felt it was important to link the aforementioned aims with the overall research question. Thus the following question emerged:

Are Youth Forums an effective structure in order to ensure that young people have an active voice in the issues that impact upon their lives?

## **Baseline indicators**

The final component in developing the evaluation strategy, was the establishment of baseline indicators as they relate to each of the project aims. These indicators then became a critical part of assessing the progress of the project against identified targets and outcomes.

### **Aim 1: To create a working structure to consult with young people in Cornwall.**

- There had been no co-ordinated working structure to consult with young people before the inception of this project.
- Youth forums/councils were patchy across the county as well as being poorly supported

### **Aim 2: To ensure that consultation is meaningful to young people.**

- Consultation was very limited before the project began operating
- Feedback loops to young people were almost non-existent
- There had historically been no central co-ordination of these types of services for young people

### **Aim 3: To affect change in service provision to young people.**

- Services to young people have changed over the years, but rarely as a consequence of young people's involvement/participation in decision –making processes
- This had historically only occurred at a very local level e.g. youth club level

### **Aim 4: To keep health and exclusion as central forum issues.**

- The establishment of Youth Forums at a district and county-wide level are new initiatives for Cornwall
- In the past young people's issues, especially as they related to health, have not been led by young people
- The only signs of these issues being addressed were youth organisations such as the Youth Service (including voluntary units) and a few other services dealing directly with young people – but there has never been a co-ordinated strategy to address health and social exclusion

## **4. DATA COLLECTION STRATEGIES**

The following data collection methodologies were adopted.

### **4.1 Quarterly evaluation reporting**

Data was collected through the HAZ Children and Young People's quarterly reportage structures. This data captured various issues such as progress against key milestones and aims/objectives – both at a project level, as well as at a programme level, i.e. how this project was able to feed back in to the larger arena of services for children and young people. These evaluation reports also focussed on identifying examples of good practise as they related to inter-agency collaboration and partnership working, as well as flagging up areas which needed addressing.

### **4.2 Monthly monitoring and evaluation instruments**

The quarterly reporting was complimented by developing a monitoring and evaluation instrument, which was unique to this project. Issues which were identified and captured included: inputs and outcomes per each month, partnership working profiles, identifying relevant training issues, identifying gaps in service provision and developing action steps to address these needs, as well as developing a mapping profile of the various types of services in various districts in terms of : areas profiling, meetings attended, forum meetings etc. (See Appendix 1).

### **4.3 Evaluating the In-Touch Conferences**

These conferences were evaluated in relationship to the perspectives and views of both the service providers and the young people themselves. The In-Touch conferences will be elaborated upon in the discussion section.

### **4.4 Focus Group with young people**

The programme evaluator conducted a focus group with a sample of six young people who had been actively involved in the Youth Forums. The goal of the focus group was to provide service users, the young people themselves, with an opportunity to critically assess the effectiveness of the project. The focus group was guided with the use of an interview schedule (please see Appendix 2), was audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analysed in terms of developing emergent themes from the data. In order to increase the trustworthiness and validity of the data, a consensus discussion was held with the co—facilitator.

### **4.5 Document analysis of minutes of Youth Forum meetings**

Minutes from all of the Youth Forum meetings were scrutinised and analysed with a view to developing emergent themes.

## **5. FINDINGS**

### **5.1 Themes from the Focus Group with Young People**

The following discussion relates to themes and categories emerging from the focus group held with young people from the Participation and Advocacy project. Discussion will be illustrated by direct quotes from the young people who participated in the focus group.

#### **5.1.1 How did you learn about the Youth Forums?**

Respondents offered the following as examples of how they first learned about the Youth Forums and The Participation and Advocacy Project:

- Student council
- Teacher told her
- Went to museum café
- Social services summer conference 2000
- Word of mouth ... one person tells another (“but sometimes friends aren’t interested, because it interferes with their social life”)
- Student council put name forward, and she was voted on.

#### **5.1.2 Difficulties in accessing services**

The respondents in the focus group summarised difficulties in accessing services as: transport, parents, school and homework. As can be seen in these sub-themes discussed below, the difficulties are interlinked.

##### **(a) Transport**

When discussing transport as contributing to difficulties in accessing the Youth Forums, respondents commented that train times are inconvenient. Respondents were obliged to use public transport as some meetings are held far from where they live. Due to train timetables, there are often long waits before and after meetings. This results in delays in beginning meetings (“Sometimes you have to wait up to half an hour to begin the meeting, for one person to arrive”), and meetings terminating prematurely so that people can rush off to meet trains (“Sometimes some people have to leave early”).

Respondents often had to go straight to meetings after school, and only returned home late in the evening (“I get home late from meetings, sometimes 8.30 or 9.20pm”.)

Respondents offered the following suggestions for change. They commented that it would help if there “were more frequent trains, for example running every hour”. It would also help if meetings were held in more accessible (i.e., equi-distant) venues. Restormel Youth Forum has already implemented this suggestion in that in future they will be meeting in St. Blazey, which is more convenient for more people. Respondents also felt that meetings could be held at more convenient times.

## **(b) Parental expectations and perceptions**

The above-mentioned transport difficulties impact on relationships at home, as parents have expectations regarding young people contributing to caring for younger siblings and being home at reasonable hours. Parental perceptions of the work accomplished within Youth Forums are also a source of contention: "My dad thinks all we do is talk crap, but it is NOT".

## **(c) School**

Meetings and related Youth Forum activities sometimes clash with school hours. This can be problematic – "schools are inconsistent with regard to releasing us for meetings and other YF activities". Asking school authority figures for time away from school to attend Youth Forum meetings is sometimes met with resistance: "The headmistress said, I am not sure it is worth it. She was not listening to me when I was answering her questions."

## **(d) Homework**

Schools and parents have expectations regarding homework activities. Completion of homework is often made difficult by young people arriving home late from Youth Forum meetings – "Because we get home late, it is difficult to finish homework"; "Being in my GCSE year makes it particularly difficult".

Youth Forum meetings are held once a month, however the young people involved often hold numerous portfolios in terms of their involvement in the project. For example, 3 respondents were in a district as well as the county wide forum; 1 has 2 portfolios, i.e., health and YF; two young people hold 3 portfolios each.

### **5.1.3 Benefits of being involved in the Youth Forums**

Respondents voiced numerous benefits (both social and personal) attained through involvement in the Youth Forums. Their perception of what they had gained was voiced as: "Mostly good things (except for arguments with my parents)".

#### **(a) Sacrifice and commitment**

Although time constraints were mentioned under difficulties associated with being involved in the Youth Forums, young people also felt that they had grown in their abilities to make sacrifices in being committed to their involvement.

"I have given up some stuff to do this."

"I feel very committed."

"Commitment, which you keep going to, for example, you have to sacrifice some aspects of your personal life, therefore I see this as work. I have never had anything to be this committed to before."

"I am learning how to commit more."

"I have learned about responsibility."

Interest in Youth Forum involvement was maintained because of:

“It concerns us as young people”

“I want to make things easier for myself and my relatives” (i.e., younger siblings)

“I want things to be better”

“We get listened to and adults ask questions”

“Youth forums are very different to school – school is more of a popularity contest”

### **(b) Personal awareness and growth**

Participation in Youth Forum activities has created opportunities for young people to experience a sense of personal growth and awareness:

“A better listener”

“Both speaking as well as listening skills”

“I feel more adult”

### **(c) Social awareness**

Opportunities for personal awareness and growth have also fostered a greater sense of social awareness.

“It is an eye opener” (e.g., “what people do”; “people’s suffering”)

“More tolerant”

“Not as judgemental”

“More opportunities to help people in need”

“An opportunity to help people in awful conditions, for example children in care in Social Services.”

### **(d) Effecting change**

Young people not only became more socially aware, but also expressed a desire to effect real change in the delivery of services for young people in Cornwall:

“Now I am in the right place to do something.”

“I was part of the decision-making process for the personal advisor interviews for Connexions.”

“I can do something and get results.”

“There is a chance that things could be changed by going to different places” (i.e., agencies)

“I’m pissed off about adults making decisions for me.”

### **(e) Sense of importance / self esteem**

Through opportunities created through the Youth Forum to effect real change, young people have developed a sense of importance in their community role. This, in turn, had developed their self-esteem.

“A boost in confidence”

“I know more people now.”

“I feel a sense of importance.”

“I am doing something worthwhile.”

“It has helped me with my confidence and get to know people better.”

## **(f) Increased opportunities**

Youth Forum and related activities have provided increased opportunities for young people, both now and in planning for their future:

“Becoming a youth MP”

“Meeting new people”

“It is a CV builder”

“More skills: computers; public speaking; conferences

“Helps with career options. Youth work is what I want to do someday.”

“There is a list of jobs to do when I am older. Number one is the RAF and number two is youth work”.

“This is preparing me more than anything else for my future.”

“Opens more doors for career options.”

### **5.1.4 Recommended changes in Youth Forum structures and activities**

The young people were not happy with some of the Youth Forum structures and activities, and offered the following suggestions for change.

#### **(a) Misuse of young people for organisational credibility**

Respondents felt that some agencies tend to “use YP members as a young people pool”, in order to boost their credibility in the wider community. Young people had no aversion to being involved in a consultative process, however they objected to tokenism and being asked to attend at the end of a process just to ensure that agencies “look like they are consulting with young people”. For example, although not consulted regarding the selection of youth oriented staff, one Youth Forum member was asked to assist in training receptionists for a health centre. One receptionist was found to be very negative, condescending and interrogative towards the young person (“I felt like I was being interviewed”). The receptionist further questioned why young people should be involved in a consultative process.

Although respondents objected to feeling used as opposed to being consulted, they expressed that they have never felt “forced” to be involved. They do have the power to say no if they are asked to do something. Also, if they are not invited to do something they would like to do, they are able to ask if they can be invited. Furthermore, there seems to be equity in opportunities, as they do not feel that it is the same group who are repeatedly approached – “we are all given a fair chance”.

#### **(b) Inadequate compensation**

The sense of importance and self-esteem gained through involvement was at odds with compensation received for involvement. Although being asked to perform professional services, young people felt that are not adequately reimbursed for activities (e.g., staff selection). There was a strong sense that financial compensation should be forthcoming:

“We should get paid for what we do.”

“We do professional work and we should get paid for it” (for example, Connexions interviews].

“We work HARD, and we take time out of our free time and study time.”.  
“We never get proper reward for extra work”. [outside youth forum meetings].

It is interesting to note that there was not consensus on getting paid. One respondent commented: “I don’t agree with getting paid.” She went on to comment that when they get invited to residential weekends, they [the youth people] do not have to pay for it. Some see it as voluntary and some see it as getting a job.

Participants felt they were not given enough subsistence money when doing work for the project (“£2.50 for lunch is too little. “It should be about £4 so that you can have a decent lunch”). Participants mentioned having to order “kiddie meals” from a burger chain, when they really wanted a proper burger.

### **(c) Revisiting adult involvement in the Youth Forums**

The number of adults attending Youth Forum meetings was sometimes disconcerting to respondents. They felt uncomfortable when there was an equal number of young people and adults, and sometimes felt that they had to ask the adults to leave so that they could discuss issues amongst themselves ( “On two instances we have asked adults to leave”).

In clarifying why so many adults sometimes attend their meetings, they gave the following reason:

“Because of the foundations of the Youth Forums, we have picked up lots of youth workers.”

Their reasons for not wanting too many adults at the meetings, include:

“It is very hard to get listened to by adults.”

“Adults snap back at comments young people make”

“Adults argue and therefore young people don’t want to speak up”

“Sometimes adults take over”

“Sometimes we don’t like the adults who attend”

“Young people should have more responsibility” [in the youth forums]

“It should be more youth structured.”

“A young person should talk us through the agenda.”

“We can feel isolated.”

A contrasting view regarding the number of adults at meetings was expressed as: “I feel empowered by more adults wanting to come [to youth forum meetings]”.

The current way in which adults are invited to the meetings is that the project lead usually invites adults to the meetings (“[name of project lead] asks if we would mind if an adult comes to the meeting”). If young people did not feel comfortable with a specific adult professional, they could ask for the project lead to restrict their involvement (“if we don’t like the adult, we can ask:-“how can we get on with them” (i.e., improve communication)”; “We can ask [the project lead] to ask them not to come back again”).

### 5.1.5 Trusting adult professionals

The focus group facilitator asked young people to elaborate on which adult attributes they felt uncomfortable with:

“They try to be on your level, but they are not. For example, they are ‘youthful’ or ‘hey I’m trendy’ “.

“They normally wear suits, but when they come to youth meetings, they are in combats.”

“They try to use young people’s words.”

“They try too hard.”

“They talk over the top of you.”

In this context, the young people differentiated between YIP (Young Independent Person) and OIP (Old Interesting Person). Respondents further said that, while some professionals are interesting “some just yap on and on and are so boring”. Respondents felt that it depended on who the professionals were used to working with, i.e., adults or young people.

Although the numbers of adults attending at Youth Forum meetings was sometimes problematic, young people appreciated the interest shown by professionals. There seemed to be consensus that even though adults professionals could be boring, they preferred adults to be their boring selves rather than trying to fake it:

“Mostly the adults who come to our meetings are interested, even if they are boring.”

Young people also struggled with adult’s perceptions of them, in terms of their involvement:

“Adults [not all] don’t seem to want to know what we do.”

“They see it [Youth Forum] as a voluntary play thing, whereas I see it as a JOB! I see this as a smaller county-hall.”

### 5.1.6 Consultation with young people

There was a general consensus that consultation with professionals has been positive and has improved over time.

“Training and experience has helped us to become better at speaking to professionals.”

“Some adults opinions have changed ... we are not just naïve youngsters.”

Generally speaking, young people felt that they have made an impact on adult’s opinions. In clarifying when consultation with adult professionals had not been effective, respondents unanimously commented that their school environment was problematic:

“Schools don’t really care.”

“Teachers don’t really care.”

“Schools are supportive of the citizenship side” (this gives them credibility),  
“but don’t like disruption of school time.”

Lack of sufficient guidance teachers in schools was felt to be a problem:

“There are too few guidance teachers full-time in schools”. Similarly, the age of existing guidance teachers was a concern to young people: “The age of teachers

can also be a problem". However, one respondents commented on the converse of this, in saying: "We have a 24 year old adviser who is really in-touch" (with young people).

Young people offered suggestions for how adult professionals could be more youth oriented in consulting with young people:

"When you talk to us, talk to us on the same level."

"Make eye contact."

"Respond to me and want to understand me."

"Ask questions."

"Adults could listen more."

### **5.1.7 Key issues being debated**

The young people stated that the following four issues are being prioritised in Youth Forum debates, both district and county-wide.

#### **(a) Health**

£1000 has been given to each of the 6 youth forums to address various aspects of health.

The money will be used in various ways by the youth forums, for example:

- drama which looks at STIs, sexuality and teenage pregnancy
- introduction of health ID cards for young people
- substance about substance abuse
- health day at a leisure centre

#### **(b) Young people's manifesto**

This refers to a manifesto that is being developed by the young people, which focuses on a statement of intent for change in services for young people in Cornwall.

#### **(c) Citizenship**

This focuses on young people becoming involved in local issues.

#### **(d) Publicity and recruitment**

The Penwith youth forum is planning to embark on a recruitment exercise in trying to increase the number of young people who attend their meetings.

## 5.2 Themes from the project and programme (strategic) levels

### 5.2.1 Interagency collaboration and partnership working

The following table provides an overview of the range and nature of partnerships and interagency efforts, which have been developed by the P and A project.

**Table 1: Partnerships**

Who	What	Why	How	Activities
Childcare and Early Years Development	Training for young people to train adults in the value of consultation and involvement.	Funding partnership and meeting Childcare and Early Years consultation objectives and P&A training needs.	Training programme planned devised and delivered by Childcare and Early Years Development Worker and Participation and Advocacy Worker. Funding provided through Playwise.	Three 'In Touch' conferences now delivered to service providers. 18 agencies involved. All contracted work and report completed Sept. 2001.
Penwith District Council. Agenda 21 Officer.	Facilitation and effectiveness of Penwith Youth Forum	Joined up and strong local partnership strategy for Penwith Youth Forum.	Shared planning and facilitation of Youth Forum meetings. Creation of multi-agency support group including the police, Penwith Community Development Trust, Youth Offending Team, West Cornwall Primary Care Trust, Sports Development Officer, Regeneration Officer, Area Youth Worker, Penwith College	Partnership currently on hold due to Penwith District Council staff support long term sick.
Caradon District Council. Officer and Councillor.	Face to face involvement with the Youth Forum, participation in Youth Forum meetings.	For effectiveness of Youth Forums and meeting Council needs to consult with young people.	Officer and councillor participate in Forum Meetings, agree to take forum issues back to District Council. The effectiveness of this will need to be reviewed.	Ongoing involvement of Officer and Member of Council. Offer of support To Youth Forum YOUTH02, Youth Action Event Spring 2002.
North Cornwall District Council. Agenda 21 Officer	Support to youth forum, direct consultation on	Forum effectiveness and council's need to	Some involvement in forum meetings, communication	Involvement and support to Youth/Health/Spor

another officer and Chief Executive.	specific issues. .	consult with young people.	with P&A worker for support to forum meetings. .	ts consultation input of Events Co-ordinator and use of Leisure Centre
Designated Services for Young People. Health Promotion Officer, Programme Management Board, Programme Manager.	Involving young people in Programme Management Board, branding consultation for service, selection of staff. Staff involved in young people's training conference.	Key HAZ partners. Clear objective to involve young people In the development of new service.	Involvement at Management Board level. Forum reps. Directly involved in other work particularly ICT and staff selection. New Health Reps. Involvement at different levels to include paid trainee post.	Much higher level of partnership with new Programme Manager. Clear targets for health development in P&A project with additional funding resources for health participation workers. Health Participation Workers included as part of DSYP staff team.
Connexions – Involving Young People.	Involvement of young people in Local Management Partnership and young people's panel for pilot area. Liaison with Personal Advisors. Rural Outreach Advisor linked to North Cornwall Youth Forum.	Key partnership for youth forums. Involving young people is a key strategy of Connexions Pilot	Ongoing participation of young people at different levels of new Cornwall service. Capacity to be built by the appointment of three apprentices to link Connexions and Youth Forum work.	Forum members fully involved in the selection of Personal Advisors for Schools, County wide. Forum members involved in training all Connexions staff on the Young People's Charter.
Social Services	Linking with Social Services Planning and Development Officer for consulting with 'looked after' young people. Other staff through 'In Touch' training. Links with Social Services research worker, consulting with young people about Child Protection conferences.	Forum commitment to involve young people from socially excluded groups. Social Services need to consult with users of their services.	Strong partnership work for Summer Seminar. Working to keep and expand involvement of Social Services linked young people in forums. Partnership appointment planned dedicated Participation worker for 'looked after' young people.	Facilitated young people's planning and delivery of Summer Seminar bringing together 'looked after' young people and senior managers.

Young People Cornwall – Zebedees, Clay Partnership and Hear Our Voice.	Partnership work with Zebedees for Youth Forums and Clay Partnership Connexions. Partnership work with Hear Our Voice for Inter-agency Support Unit.	Youth Forums involving socially excluded young people. Hear Our Voice specialist contacts with young people relevant to Support Unit.	Zebedees – shared involvement Connexions. Plan to link Young People Cornwall projects to Health Reps. And continue to encourage Youth Forum involvement.	Only links through Connexions in this period, support to County Youth Forum Launch.
SW Association for Education and Training.	SW Participation Group and Regional Youth Forum.	Young people’s representation at regional level.	Young people involved in regional events – Local and Vocal seminar in conjunction with Save the Children and The National Youth Agency. Regional Youth Forum event.	No activity this quarter but Local and Vocal success for young people has led to lots more National involvement opportunities.
UK Youth Parliament	Cornwall Members of Youth Parliament Involvement in all developments.	Increasing democratic voice and representation for young people from Cornwall in national and regional developments.	Involvement of Cornwall Members of Youth Parliament in regional and national UKYP events.	No activity this period, lack of movement from national. Two local MYPs involved in exams and summer employment.
Healthy Living Centre Co-ordinator	Grant opportunity for Youth forums	Keep health focus within forum development	Ideas firmed up peer sexual health and drama projects, pilot health card linked to DSYP, Sports/health consultation and alcohol information poster.	All grants allocated. Clear plan of action for Restormel, Carrick, Caradon, North Cornwall and Penwith
Teenage Pregnancy Co-ordinators.	Consultation with young people about draft Teenage Pregnancy Strategy. Involving young people in debate	To seek young people’s responses to draft strategy before launch. Raise young people’s awareness of importance of involvement	Participatory consultation workshop, no clear strategy about how young people’s views would influence strategy. County Forum members involved in County Council debate..	Consultation workshop facilitated by Teen pregnancy co-ordinators and P&A worker. Young people involved from Zebedees, Tribe and Carrick Youth Forum. Young people witness County Council debate and comment to press.
Cornwall and Devon Constabulary	Youth forum involvement in Police	Young people’s experiences and ideas influencing	Partnership with planned Police consultation	Strong Police presence at County Launch.

	<b>Consultation Process. Chief of Police attends County Launch Crimebeat involvement.</b>	<b>local Policing policies.</b>	<b>process inviting Youth Forum and other local groups of young people. Link Forums to District Commanders</b>	<b>County Youth Forum link and Caradon initiative</b>
<b>Other National Initiatives – Children and Young People’s Unit, National Youth Agency.</b>	<b>CYPU Young People’s Advisory Forum, NYA – ‘Informed and Influential’, Young People and Democracy and Youth Charter, Transforming Youth Services.</b>	<b>For the voices of young people from Cornwall to influence National Policy and Practice and raise awareness of the needs of young people in Cornwall.</b>	<b>Young people attending National meetings and training events, involving National representatives in Cornwall.</b>	<b>Meetings in London and Birmingham, June – Sept. 2001.  National Speakers at County Launch.</b>
<b>Save the Children</b>	<b>Involving young people from Forum in National Initiative And funding and supporting local conference</b>	<b>Organisation impressed with abilities of Cornwall Youth forum members to promote young people’s involvement.</b>	<b>Representation from County Youth Forum, Conference to launch Manifesto.</b>	<b>Sept. planning, October 2001 national event, March 2002 local event.</b>

As evidenced in the above table, the project has had extensive interagency collaboration with a variety of partners, both statutory as well as voluntary. This table further provides numerous examples of good partnership practise.

The project has found that the most effective partnership are those wherein other agencies and organisations are expected to put in more resources i.e. funding and/or staffing resources. This also facilitated a greater level of commitment to the project by various partners. A case in point is the three In -Touch conferences, in which the P and A project linked up with the Childcare and Early Years development project, in both the planning and delivery of the conferences. There are also examples of specific agencies making one single contact with the project in order to tick off “consultation with young people” in their agencies performance management tick box. Therefore issues of continuity with partners is often times an issue – and one which also makes it difficult to build the trust of young people if they feel that they are “just being used” by agencies and organisations.

Evidence has also demonstrated that both the direction and the purpose of the intended collaboration significantly influence the strength and effectiveness of partnerships in this project. For example, if an agency initiates contact with the project with the sole purpose of ticking boxes, and with no clear spin-off for the young people, then these partnerships are very difficult to foster and encourage. Similarly, there are numerous examples of young people making contact with partner organisations with a view of effecting change, but often with little success. However, those partnerships that are dualistic in direction and mutually beneficial to the agency and the young people, usually achieve much higher levels of success and co-operation. Therefore it is important for future work in this field to consider that collaboration is more likely to be unsuccessful when the contact is either solely youth or agency driven. It must be mutually advantageous to both parties in order to effect

constructive and sustainable changes in the way services are delivered to young people in Cornwall.

## **5.2.2 Development of the Youth Forums**

The starting point for the development of the Youth forums was contact with all agencies who might be interested in linking with or informing and involving young people in Youth Forums, and identifying young people who might be able to be involved in steering the project from the outset.

There was an implicit pressure to establish the structure as quickly as possible, with only two years initial funding. This allowed one year to establish the structure allowing enough time to evaluate its success before new funding would need to be sought before the end of year two. The establishment process would have been differently paced had the initial time scale of the project been longer. The involvement of young people at the beginning was patchy and inadequate with little to motivate young people in a structure that was at this stage theoretical and adult driven.

Time pressure was a major issue in the early stages of the project. Four older young people from Carrick and Restormel advised in the early stages of the project with one being heavily involved for a short period as a Millennium Volunteer.

### **5.2.2.1 District Youth Forums**

In order to initiate the District Youth Forums, written invitations were sent to all local authority secondary schools, Youth Service and Voluntary Sector projects. With a county- wide brief there was insufficient capacity for the Participation and Advocacy worker to have personal contact with all the groups of young people which were targeted. Thus the project was heavily reliant on local youth workers, agencies and school support. This meant that the initial response varied in each District depending on the local agency responses. The following discussion will outline the development of Youth Forums in each of the six District.

**Penwith** began with a large multi-agency interest, stimulated by the Penwith District Council involvement and who already had plans to set up a Youth forum for the District. A strong shared responsibility developed between the Agenda 21 Officer for Penwith and the Participation and Advocacy worker. The Penwith Forum has struggled with a mixture of very able and politically motivated 'older' young people and earlier representation from the Treneere Recrew (young people whose voices need to be heard). Both groups had very different expectation from the Youth Forum. This Forum currently needs to recruit more young people as several key members have left for university.

**Carrick** has had strong involvement from Falmouth School representatives and support for young people's involvement from Zebedees. With mainly younger members they have formed a strong group who have had time for considerable commitment to expanding Youth Forum work. This group delivered the 'In Touch' training for adults, which was a considerable achievement. The group now needs representation from the Truro Schools.

**Restormel** began with an initiative of the Mayor with year ten students from each secondary school. There was a precedent (pre- Participation and Advocacy) for these Youth Forum meetings to be held during school time. This ensured regular commitment from Forum members. Ultimately the Forum came under pressure from interfering with schoolwork (from some schools and some young people). The local youth work team has well supported this Forum. Now that meetings are held out of school time, attendance has been reduced, however there is still a small group of committed and enthusiastic young people involved in the Forum.

**North Cornwall** has struggled as it has been operating in a large rural geographical area, with very limited public transport. While the Forum has been small in numbers attending, the young people are very able and committed. Young people from outlying areas have attended from time to time. This has meant that there have been significant representation demands upon a few young people. North Cornwall representatives have provided significant representation at high levels for young people in rural areas. This is likely to be an ongoing problem unless a solution to the transport dilemma is achieved.

**Caradon** has flourished in numbers, with particular commitment from the Liskeard Youth Project, which also attracts young people from outlying rural areas. The group also attracts representation from Callington and Torpoint. The Forum has been disappointed in not attracting Saltash representation. They have been insightful in inviting adult representatives from the local services. They have also benefited from regular involvement of the District Council, at officer and member level.

**Kerrier** has suffered from being the last Forum to become operational. There was a lack of continuity of members with no committed central group of young people, which every other forum has achieved. With a mixture of different young people, of different ages, from different backgrounds and areas passing through, it has been very difficult to move forward. Several young people have come to meetings and then not come again. A new funding commitment, with a dedicated worker in this area, should provide a fresh approach to an area that is currently swamped with new initiatives that affect young people.

#### **5.2.2.2 County-wide Youth Forum**

Young people representing their District Youth Forums came together in March 2001 to form a county group to try to influence change at a higher level. Two of their first tasks were to publicise themselves and build links with high level decision makers. To this end they planned a high profile County Youth Forum launch, which took place in County Hall in July 2001.

The mission statements of the County Youth Forum are twofold:

- (a) *To get young people's views over to those in authority and work in partnerships.*
- (b) *To take action on issues raised by young people in order to make positive change in local communities*

This launch was a result of a concerted effort on the part of the young people

Involved and the youth workers supporting them. It is important to note that while the project lead offered advice and support, planning and preparation and delivery of this launch was completed solely by the young people themselves. Many professionals on the day commented, as to how thorough and well organised the launch had been – another positive for the young people. This is yet another example of young people taking the initiative and sharing with adult professionals exactly how they should be consulted in the planning and delivery of future youth oriented services in Cornwall.

The launch was also placed within a national context as two of the guest speakers were from the head offices of the National Youth Agency, and the Children and Young People's Unit – both nationally driven initiatives. The County Launch focussed on presentations from the youth forum members regarding the aims and objectives of the youth forums, the work of the members of the UK Youth Parliament, as well as outlining the achievements made thus far. Furthermore, young people facilitated small action groups with professionals around various key issues (environment, transport, health, Cornish matters, education, crime and safety). From these action group discussions, the young people mapped out the way forward and encouraged the represented agencies and organisations to make statements of intent and provide structures for young people's involvement in decision making on key issues.

It is encouraging to note that the County Youth Forum launch was attended by approximately 70 professionals representing a host of various statutory and voluntary agencies, including: Cornwall Youth Service, County Councillors, Health Action Zone, Project Amethyst, Chief Constable, District councillors, Local Education Authority, Clinical nurse managers, Social Services, Young People Cornwall, CHCT, Community Colleges, Teenage pregnancy project, amongst many others. This serves to reinforce the earlier discussion which demonstrated that the P and A project has made significant progress in procuring and sustaining partnerships with other key players in the field of youth services. However, it is worth noting that there were a few notable absentees from the launch.

The County Youth Forum are now working on a programme for writing a Youth Manifesto for Cornwall within which they will draw upon the support of the decision makers to write and implement.

### **5.2.2.3 Themes**

The themes that have emerged from the first eighteen months of youth forum development (both at district and county level) will now be discussed.

**Local support** – A county development for local involvement is very dependent upon local support from youth workers, District Councils, schools and others to encourage and support young people's sustained involvement. This has been evident in the Cornwall Youth Forum developments, with Caradon being a positive example.

**Support and resources to young people** – Young people need to feel valued for their voluntary commitment; and as such travel expenses, refreshments and comfortable venues are essential. Payment for additional work performed by young people for other agencies is becoming a positive precedent.

## Young People's Achievements

- (a) It is important to note that young people have self reported that they feel they have made specific achievements. For example, the Carrick Youth Forum felt they have achieved something because of their involvement in the three In Touch Conferences. On the other hand, young people from the Restormel Youth Forum felt that although they have been actively involved as individuals, they feel frustrated as they feel that as a forum they have not achieved as much.
- (b) Young people felt that they have been able to gradually achieve more influence in service planning and provision. They have specifically referenced the fact that "adults listen to them more," and they are seeing more evidence of change, for example, in providing consultation training to Social Services, the young people felt that their confidence had grown.
- (c) The countywide Youth Forum launch, is perhaps the best example of young people feeling that they have achieved significant progress, especially as the launch was given national priority as well as media coverage.
- (d) Furthermore, the young people involved in the district youth forums have had numerous opportunities to place Cornwall on the national agenda. This has been achieved by local young people being exposed to national initiatives and strategies, for example:
  - The local youth MP represents Cornwall at the national UK Youth Parliament
  - Youth forum members have attended the Labour Party conference
  - Local young people have been involved in work undertaken by the statutory agency involved in youth initiatives in a national context, namely: the Children and Young People's Unit in London
  - They have also been able to present the work done by Cornish young people in terms of the work around youth democracy, which is being driven by the National Youth Agency.
  - Local youth forum members have also met with national ministers for example, Michael Meacher, in which they discussed the Rural Environment White Paper
- (e) User involvement  
Young people have identified the fact that they have been involved in the entire process of this project - from planning through to delivery and finally through to evaluation – as a significant achievement.

## Lack of resources

Lack of administration support staff has been a major barrier to the work of this project. This issue became more prevalent as the district youth forums became operational and the workload for the project lead exponentially increased. This issue will need to be addressed in planning for the future of this project.

This was compounded by the fact that the project lead was not granted human resource capacity in terms of additional youth workers who could have worked exclusively for the project.

It is evident that as the project becomes more operational and the number of activities associated with both the District and County Youth Forums increase, that there will be a greater need for additional human resource capacity and support.

### **Professional adult involvement**

While numerous examples have already been cited as to the importance placed on professional involvement in the project, this has not always been a positive picture. Initially adult professionals were hesitant to be trained about consultation by young people themselves. In many cases this was the first opportunity that adults were exposed to “being trained by young people”. This resistance has gradually reduced and been replaced with an increased commitment to youth participation and consultation by adult professionals in both planning and delivering services. Therefore it has taken quite a long time to achieve authentic adult involvement in the project, and a gradual shift from “youth involvement tokenism” to effective and participatory consultation with young people.

### **5.2.3 Management/infrastructure support**

Management support is critical to the success of any project. It is perhaps more important when considering the diverse nature of this project’s aims, and the increasing number of young people who are beginning to access its services. The following discussion will highlight both the strengths and limitations of management support which has been afforded the Participation and Advocacy project.

#### **5.2.3.1 Strengths**

- Senior Youth Services managers have been effective in promoting this project with other agencies.
- In terms of their own organisational infrastructure, the Youth Services have prioritised this project, and have served in promoting the project as part of their strategy.
- There has been effective and positive day to day hands on support from the line manager.
- The recent training, which was initiated by Social Services, and presented by young people themselves, is a good example of supportive management at a strategic level.

#### **5.2.3.2 Limitations**

- Managers (both Youth Service and the Health Action Zone – via Designated Services for Young People) had not sufficiently thought through the needs and anticipated resources at the outset of the project. They did not identify the amount of resources, which were needed to ensure that this project ran smoothly (for example, they did not budget for administration support staff or youth workers).
- If youth services managers had directed youth workers at the outset as to what was expected of them in assisting the development of the youth forums, this would have made things a lot easier. This was further compounded by the fact that there are varying levels of input from youth workers into the youth forums, depending on the different Districts in the county.
- Initially there was hesitant and varied support from the field for P and A. This was unexpected, given that the Youth Services model advocates that they deliver a whole services approach.
- While commitment has been a strength for the project, the lack of consistency in terms of management support has been problematic.

- It is fair to add that managers did not anticipate the volume of demand being made upon the project and have therefore struggled to maintain adequate resourcing.

#### **5.2.4 Young People consulting with Adult professionals (Social Services, In Touch and Connexions)**

An innovative development of the P and A has been young people taking a lead in planning consultation and involvement events for adult service providers. The three examples of this are:

- ❖ The 'In Touch' Conferences
- ❖ The Summer Seminar for Looked After Young People
- ❖ The Connexions staff training conference

In all these events, youth workers and other agency staff have worked intensively with a core group of young people to assist them to plan and prepare for these events. On the day itself young people have taken on full leadership capacity, with staff only offering background and domestic/technical arrangement support. The young people have also been paid to carry out this work which has enhanced their level of responsibility and commitment.

##### **5.2.4.1 'In Touch'**

This programme was a partnership pilot between the Childcare and Early Years Service and The Participation and Advocacy Project of the Cornwall Youth Service. It was a response to the EYCDP Audit requirements to enhance the participation and involvement of children and young people, with 11-16 year olds being a specific target group. In Touch was designed to pilot training and paying young people to deliver training conferences to service providers interested in involvement and consultation with young people in their own services. The programme worked with twelve young people in the 12- 18 age group and involved 18 agencies, in three conferences.

Although the programme was successful (please see full report in Appendix 3) the main learning points were-

- ❖ the intense and sustained commitment that such a programme requires of workers and young people.
- ❖ the difficulty of obtaining adult service provider commitment to a programme lead and driven by young people
- ❖ the significant confidence and skill development for those young people involved in the consultation process.

Please refer to Appendix..... for the completed evaluation of the 'In Touch' Conferences.

The following are just a few quotations from young people and adults participating in 'In Touch' conferences.

*'I thought the day was a brilliant experience. All the adults (cool young people) were great, they listened to all our points of view and then gave feedback to us'*

*'The experience in working with a group of young people and professionals has been of great benefit to coming up with ideas and plans for the service.'* (Child and Family Service)

*'People didn't turn up and didn't tell us. They've shown themselves up and embarrassed other adults. If we'd done that to them, they'd be jumping'*

*I have gained more self-confidence and the ability to 'talk' with other young people and adults, which I can use when I'm older and working, or at job interviews'*

#### **5.2.4.2 Summer Seminar for Looked After Young People**

This was a partnership project between Social Services and P and A, in response to Social Services need to involve young people in the improvement and development of their services for looked after children and young people, as well as responding to 'Quality Protects'. Although the framework of the two day event was set by adults, three young people, all with experience of being 'looked after' and two who were also Youth Forum members worked with youth workers to plan the detail and programme of the days.

Approximately 15 additional looked after young people participated in day 1 of the event. With a balance of interactive activities and focussing on the serious issues at hand, the young people were able to raise issues regarding change. The first day was a success, though some of the young people did become distressed and some were less able to participate than others.

The main areas of change that they wanted to look at were –

- ❖ The reliability, commitment and communication of social workers
- ❖ Difficulties and changes with foster carers and placements
- ❖ Transport and isolation from family and friends
- ❖ A confidential counselling service for 'looked after' young people

On day two, although fewer young people returned, those who did were committed to working in partnership groups with senior managers who had the power to change things. These groups worked together positively and constructively, concluding with managers and a young people's Action Plan.

The feedback after the Summer Seminar from young people and managers was positive and constructive. It now needs a really active drive to follow up the energy for change that was created.

#### **5.2.4.3 Connexions Staff Training Day**

Youth Forum members and Zebedees young people who had been involved in Personal Advisor interviews were invited to train the whole of Cornwall Connexions staff on key aspects of the Young People's Charter for Connexions.

Connexions, Zebedees and P&A staff worked with young people in planning this training day.

This was a difficult task, especially given the fact that a different group of young people had developed the Charter, so young people were not so familiar with it. This meant that the initial planning phase was very adult led. The workshops were split up between small groups of young people working separately all over the County. It was time and labour intensive to support this training, and therefore a great deal of the planning occurred "in the moment."

The young people delivered their presentation and workshops with their usual confidence and flair. Though presenting four workshops in a row was hard work for the young people, they were very well received and appreciated by the Connexions staff.

The workshop areas included:

- ❖ Confidentiality
- ❖ Access to Services
- ❖ Listening to young people
- ❖ Quality and standards of the service

All of these aforementioned examples emphasise the recurring themes of allocating adequate and quality time for planning, appropriate rewards for young people, commitment and appreciation of adult participants, and the opportunity for young people to develop their skills and abilities.

#### **5.2.5 Sustainability and mainstreaming (changes in Youth Services)**

The Participation and Involvement of young people under a Citizenship theme was a key development of the Cornwall Youth Service in its business plan for 2000. Following an OFSTED inspection in March 2001 the Youth Service is now going through a process of restructuring. This reconfiguration focuses primarily on consolidation of, and redirecting existing resources in the areas of work that the Youth Service is best fitted to deliver, in the fast changing environment of Children and Young People's Services in Cornwall.

The Participation and Advocacy work is being re-framed within the new service paradigm of 'Voice and Influence'. Thus, the P and A project will be mainstreamed within the Youth Service, with its specific remit being the development of initiatives, which provide young people with a Voice and an Influence in future service delivery.

Within this restructuring the project will retain a full time level three post, and attach two half-time, level two workers to the development of this area of work. If this proposal is agreed, which is likely, Voice and Influence will become a mainstreamed county -wide development of the Youth Service. This will include the sustained development of the current Youth Forum structure and increasing young people's impact on current services. Voice and Influence will seek to better manage youth consultation, advocating for young people's Voice and Influence with other agencies and offering training for young people and adults to improve the quality of participation and involvement work. Links with Regional and National initiatives will be maintained and consolidated

## **5.2.6 Gaps/Barriers in service provision**

### **5.2.6.1 Lack of youth representation in schools**

This is an issue which has been constantly raised by the young people, in both the district as well as within the county-wide youth forums. They feel that their ability to effect meaningful and sustainable change within their schools settings is limited, and in many cases non-existent. Even in those instances where Student Councils are present within specific schools, young people feel that this is mere tokenism and that their voices are seldom respected or "listened to."

### **5.2.6.2 Homophobic bullying was taken off the agenda**

The young people were requested to brainstorm various issues which they felt needed prioritising, and then decide on one issue which would then be taken forward by working with the Barbican Theatre. The issue of homophobic bullying was raised and identified as an important issue by three different youth forums. However, a 'cool' response was received by some professionals and that the issue would be difficult to raise in schools. The youth forum members changed their minds through fear of stigmatisation and bullying and chose an alternative issue. This speaks to the very issue of 'Voice and Influence,' for marginalised young people which will be a key issue for future work with young people, both Nationally and locally.

### **5.2.6.3 Making a real difference at agency and strategic level**

While the aforementioned discussion (In-touch conferences, Training Social Service and Connexions staff) provided examples of good practise in terms of adult professionals being willing to be trained on issues of consultation by young people, this is not a fait-accompli. It should only be viewed as a starting point for future work in this area. Young people still feel that there are inherent barriers (in both statutory and voluntary services) which limit their ability to effect change at a strategic level in service planning and delivery.

### **5.2.6.4 Transport**

A theme which has emerged from all of those CYPP HAZ funded projects working with young people (ACHE, Young Carers, Positive Minds, Hear our Voice, Zebedees, TRIBE, P and A, etc) has been the issue of transportation. This issue was

discussed in great detail in the focus group analysis (please refer back to section 5.1)

#### **5.2.6.5 Authentic involvement**

Linked to issue of trying to effect constructive and sustainable change within service reconfiguration, young people have raised concerns as to the “authenticity” of adult involvement and commitment. They expressed that they still have reservations about being “used” by agencies in a mere “tokenism” manner. Thus, they need to be made to feel that consulting with them is authentic and that their views will be seriously considered, as opposed to being asked to consult on issues simply so as to ensure that agencies can tick box “consulted with young people.”

#### **5.2.6.6 Social Services**

Young people expressed disappointment in not being involved in the selection and training of foster carers. Furthermore, they feel that a great deal of work still needs to occur in improving communication between young users and social workers. The Youth Forums have thus identified on-going training in this area in partnership with Social Services as a key priority issue.

#### **5.2.6.7 Health Authority**

Young people have identified significant levels of inconsistency in the way Sexual Health and Drugs Education is delivered in schools. They expressed receiving “mixed and different” messages from the various agencies presenting this information and education.

#### **5.2.6.8 Education (LEA)**

As stated previously young people feel that they have no power to influence change within their school settings. Young people will welcome the opportunity to assist with plans in this area, in particular young people's views on school exclusion should be considered as a key exclusion issue.

## 6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It can be concluded that young people's participation and involvement is here to stay and that it will continue to be an area of rapid growth and expansion. All services that provide for young people will need to respond to the agenda of involving young people and consider an appropriate strategy.

- ◆ The Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership will be best placed to plan a co-ordinated, cross-agency county-wide response to young people's representation.
- ◆ The Cornwall Youth Service could take a lead in a strategic approach in this area under their 'Voice and Influence' and Youth Forum structure.
- ◆ All agencies need to take responsibility for delivery in their own service, by providing dedicated resources or staffing to contribute to an individual or partnership approach to involving young people.
- ◆ School's can best support by recognising young people's representation activities through the Citizenship curriculum, and consider the involvement of young people on School Governing Bodies.
- ◆ Young peoples representation needs to have direct links to senior management as well as integration into appropriate levels of the service, in order to be fully effective. It is important to recognise that quality partnership working with young people depends upon an openness and willingness to change, and organisations need to consider the implications of this before engaging with young people