

## **Guidance 12 - The benefits of having a young person on your Community Council**

There is a significant body of evidence which would suggest that not only do young people want to be involved in decisions which affect them, but also that in those areas where this happens effectively the community benefits. Young people, as the adults of tomorrow, contribute towards the economic and social development of their communities today.

Young people make up a significant proportion of the community. They can bring unique perspectives and experiences to the table and also bring innovative ideas and dynamic perspectives about the future

Organisations can serve young people better if they have a good understanding of the needs and aspirations of this group. This also improves the image of the organisations that engage with young people.

Creating a young people-friendly organisation inspires the confidence of young users and enhances the reputation and credibility of the organisation.

Involving young people as decision-makers signals that the organisation is serious about dealing with young people respectfully and encourages young people to assume a variety of roles.

### **FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

The young people benefit from undertaking decision-making roles as it enables them to plan their careers, build CVs and gain skills that will be valuable in their future working lives.

Involving young people in decision-making also assists with the inter-generational partnerships that benefit the whole community. It also builds the young person's commitment to a whole range of organisations that serve communities in so many different ways.

### **HOW DO WE MAKE THIS HAPPEN?**

There are two places available on your Community Council for 14- and 15-year olds. It is up to each Community Council how they engage with the community to fill those spaces. If a young person approaches your Community Council, there is a duty to engage with them and fill the spaces on the Community Council. If a Community Council is in the fortunate position to have more than two young people willing to join, then it is for that Community Council to decide how to deal with this situation.

What else can we do?

- Be certain that members of your Community Council are willing and able to collectively support the young people participating.
- Create an environment that is welcoming, friendly and accommodating to young people.
- Schedule meetings at times when young people can attend and ensure that the location of the venue is not a barrier to their participation.
- Check that the young people have their own transport available or can use public transport to take them to and from the venue if required. Travelling expenses could be offered to ensure this is not a barrier to their participation.

- Dedicate a slot in the agenda of the first meeting the young people are to attend. This will allow time for an introduction, provision of some background information about the Community Council, its membership, area covered, and type of business discussed at meetings.
- Designate a member who will ensure the young person can get advice or help if required and knows who to ask.
- Ensure that the young people are fully aware of details of the role you are inviting them to take on and what this will involve.
- Provide them with a copy of the Community Council's Constitution and Map.
- Include them in the circulation of Community Council Minutes and Agendas and other relevant documents.
- Be prepared to listen to and value the voice of young people.
- Be prepared to treat young people as equal participants in the decision-making process. Young people must feel that their active participation is welcomed and respected and that they are not merely token representatives.
- Discuss and inform the young people about the issues they will be asked to make decisions about.
- Recognise that there is likely to be a turnover in young people and that it may be necessary to replace them more frequently than their adult counterparts. The young person may well be able to help find a replacement once they are ready to move on.
- Evaluate your success in terms of the impact on the Community Council, the young people and the community.
- Ensure that the contributions of young people are generously acknowledged both publicly and privately.
- Recognise that when they turn 16 years old, they can become a Community Councillor of the Community Council, this is an opportunity to add to membership numbers.

Involving young people in meetings of the Community Council does not require members to join the Protection of Vulnerable Groups scheme, however, should circumstances change and the young people become involved in project delivery or other activities, guidance should be sought from Disclosure Scotland before the Community Council proceeds. Here is the link to the Disclosure Scotland website:

[www.disclosurescotland.co.uk/disclosureinformation/guidance.htm](http://www.disclosurescotland.co.uk/disclosureinformation/guidance.htm)