

Report of The Different But Equal event on 27th July 2017

Teresa Brocklehurst-Strategic Co-ordinator, Children, Young People and Families Consortium



Different But Equal



The essence of this quote has formed the basis of how the Different But Equal Board have worked together to plan an event for young people aged 14-25 from across the borough of Rotherham which was held on 27th July 2017 at the Carlton Park Hotel.



Children are not the people of tomorrow, but people today. They are entitled to be taken seriously. They have a right to be treated by adults with tenderness and respect, as equals. They should be allowed to grow into whoever they were meant to be - The unknown person inside each of them is the hope for the future.

— *Janusz Korczak* —

AZ QUOTES

The origins of the Different But Equal Board

Our journey began with the recognition that there was no systematic inclusion of the voice of the child/young person in our systems and structures. In addition where organisations/departments wished to include children/young people in planning and decision making there was no central or co-ordinated way of doing this so the same groups of children and young people tended to be approached to offer their views on a range of issues. The Voice and Influence Partnership (VIP) was formed as a sub group of the Consortium and the purpose of the VIP is to strengthen the voice of children, young people and families and involve them in the decisions that affect them.

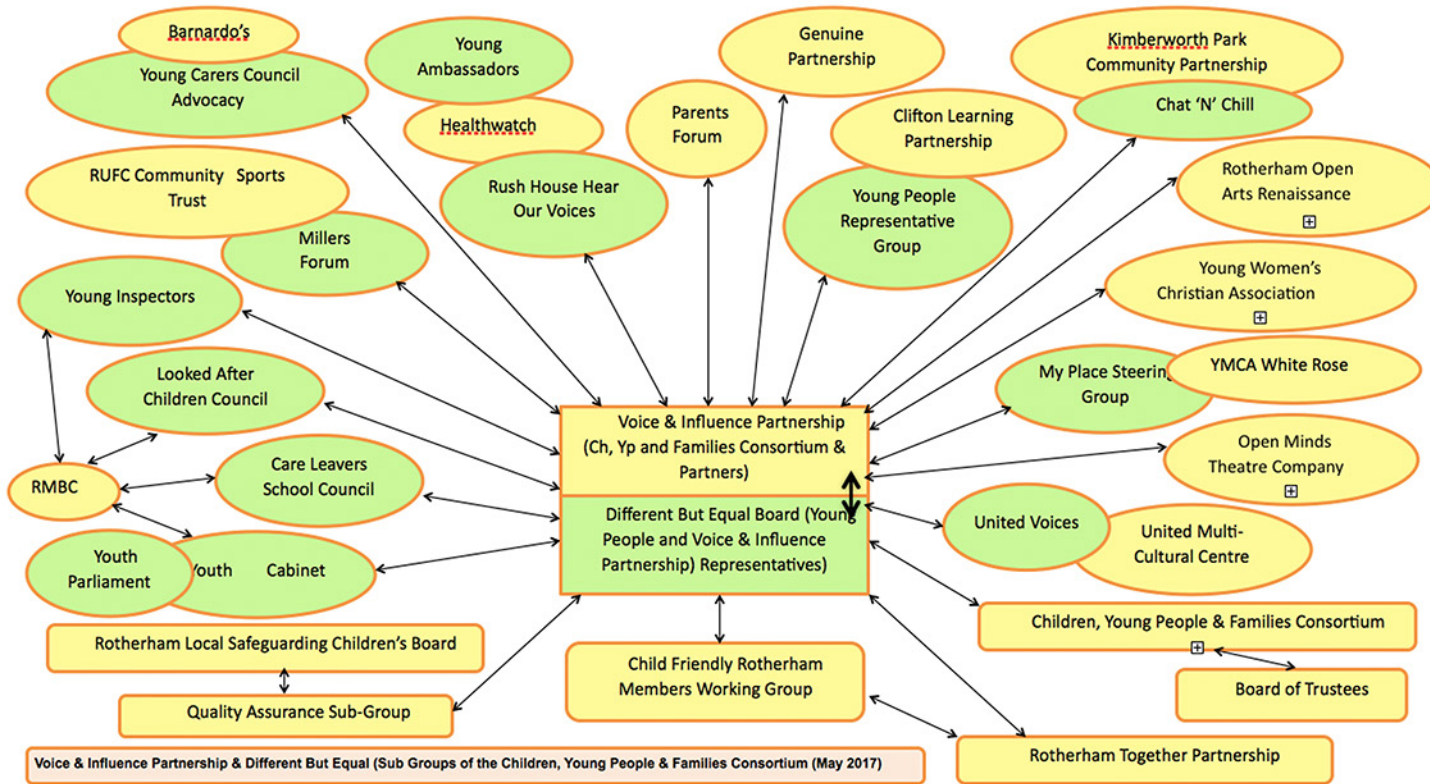
The Voice and Influence Partnership is a collaboration between statutory bodies and the VCS that aims to promote and share good practice (whilst ensuring ethical safeguards) to make certain that, “the right group of people are asked the right questions at the right time” and that children, young people and families remain part of, “all of our thinking all of the time.”

The VIP acts as a conduit to consulting/involving children and young people in initiatives and asks organisations to complete a good practice template in order to direct the request to the most appropriate groups of young people either in terms of geographical community or community of interest.

As a result of this way of working young people have been involved in recruiting staff (for example; for CAMHS and RMBC Early Help,) developing policies and procedures (for example; RMBC complaints procedure and the development of the RMBC transitions team) and consultations (i.e. around Rotherham as a child friendly borough and the development of a CAMHS passport for young people.) The Voice and Influence Partnership in conjunction with the Different But Equal Board is now being recognised as an appropriate and direct route to capture young people’s thoughts, ideas and expertise.

At the time the Voice and Influence Partnership formed, young people were saying that they wanted to come together to talk about issues affecting them, to look at what services were out there and what the gaps were with a view to impacting upon services provided for them. So we brought young people together, the Different But Equal board was formed and the idea of an event for young people was born.

The following diagram illustrates the relationship between the Voice and Influence Partnership and the Different But Equal Board. Young people’s groups are in green, organisations are in yellow.





The Different But Equal Board is a diverse group of young people who came together at the beginning of 2017 to empower children and young people to have their voices heard and influence planning and decision making so that services reflect those voices.

The Board is made up of between 20-30 members at any given time currently within the age range 11-23 years. The group decided that the best way to hear the voices of children and young people from across the borough was to plan an event specifically for them. The purpose of the event would be to; discuss issues/share ideas and experiences, invite services to share information, have fun, offer peer support and information about young people's groups and celebrate diversity and create pride in Rotherham (we are also hoping to host an award ceremony for young people later in the year.)

Working in an inclusive way the Different But Equal Board consulted with an array of young people's groups in order to ensure that the event reflected a cross-section of the young people population and their ideas and aimed the event at the 14-25 age range (the upper age-range in recognition of recent SEND legislation.)

The young people forming the Different But Equal Board work together from a variety of backgrounds, geographical communities and ages in a respectful and integrated way, valuing and celebrating diversity, challenging prejudice and stereotypes and providing a true example of co-production and community cohesion which the borough of Rotherham itself aims to achieve. In their words: "...showing that by providing a diverse group of young people with time, space and support to unite (promoting their voice), amazing things can happen individually and collectively." (Members of the Different But Equal Board.)

The process of them coming together to plan the event has been just as important as the outcome as they have grown in self-esteem and confidence, have developed new skills and friendships and through supporting each other as young people with varying identities have developed tolerance and understanding, "One young person told me that being part of the Different But Equal Board has made a huge difference to her life, that the process of being part of the co-production involved made her feel equal for the first time."

They have been involved in various processes in addition to planning the event and their input has been valued and has contributed to changing thinking around the importance of involving young people.

Different But Equal Event Programme

11:00 - 11:10

Welcome

Teresa Brocklehurst - Strategic Co-ordinator Children, Young People and Families Consortium.
Different But Equal Board including individual speeches from Ashlea, Georgia and Robert.
Ian Thomas - Strategic Director, Children and Young People's Services (RMBC)

11:10 - 11:30

Drama

Street Dance performance by Fern Stainrod of the Nikki Lynam School of Performing Arts

11:30 - 12:10

My Views

Small tabled groups where you can share your views on Rotherham with each other and there will be artists helping.
What is it like being a young person growing up in Rotherham?
What's going well for you as a young person living in Rotherham?
How could it be better?

12:10 - 12:55

Lunch

Magician

Market place of services including young people support groups and projects and consultation opportunities.

Activities:

Henna

Video Games

Giant Games

Selfie Booth

Big Brother Diary Room

12:55 - 1:00

Introduction to the Afternoon

Teresa Brocklehurst and Different But Equal Board members

1:00 - 1:45

Workshop

4x10 minutes for you to answer different questions in a speed consulting style.

1:45 - 2:00

Break

2:00 - 3:00

1hr Activity Workshop 1

3:00 - 4:00

1hr Activity Workshop 2

4:00 - 5:30

Young People's Gigs

5:30 - 5:45

Where do we go from here?

6:00

Finish

Choose two afternoon workshops on the booking form.

Workshops:

1. African Drumming
2. Street Dance
3. Arts and Craft - FIMO
4. Arts and Craft - ZINES
5. Arts and Craft - VARIOUS
6. Sports - 7-A-Side Football Competition (14-18 + 19-25)*
7. Sport - Cricket/Rounders*
8. Hair and Beauty / Nail Art

*Clothes and footwear - Sports Stuff deodorant advisable

The Different But Equal Event

The event itself provided a platform for 100 young people from across the borough of Rotherham to share their thoughts and experiences on a range of issues at the Carlton Park Hotel in Rotherham.

The young people were from the following organisations:

United Multicultural Centre
Young Inspectors
JADE
Clifton Learning Partnership
#Who Do I turn to
Youth Work Works
Barnardo's
Barnardo's Young Carers
BME Young People and Carers Group (REMA)
Chat 'n' Chill (Kimberworth Park Community Partnership)
Different But Equal Board
Early Help (RMBC)
Elephants in Steps
Millers Forum (Rotherham United Community Sport Trust)
Looked After Children Council
Youth Cabinet and Rotherham College





The event was opened by Teresa Brocklehurst (Strategic Co-ordinator, Children, Young People and Families Consortium,) members of the Different But Equal Board including Rob Cooper, Ashlea Harvey (Young Inspector Co-ordinator) and Ian Thomas (Strategic Director, Children and Young People's services, RMBC) followed by a street dance performance from a young person from the Nikki Lynam School of Performing Arts (Fern Stainrod.)

The main messages from the opening speeches were that every voice, no matter how loud or how quiet deserves to be heard and as young people use a lot of services in Rotherham listening to them can help make things better.





What's going well for you as a young person living in Rotherham?

The answers to this question formed the branches of the tree and the overriding themes were education; "School life, they help you out with problems. Friendly," support they receive from organisations, "I have become a better person because of the services" and positive relationships including friendships.

What could make things better for you living in Rotherham?

The answers to this question formed the leaves of the tree and safer, cleaner and more activities were heard loud and clear but also there was a strong message about equality: "If we could all be equal to each other," "Less stereotyping and more acceptance," "Some people are racist, this should stop."

"I take pride in how ethnically diverse Rotherham is. It's a shame about its reputation." And of course the wish that Rotherham United would win more matches!



In addition to having the opportunity to play on an x box over lunchtime, visit the selfie booth and big brother diary room, play giant board games, chill out in the sensory room and be entertained by the magician, young people could also visit the market place of services and support which were represented by the following:

Barnardo's
CAMHS
CRISIS
Early Help
Endeavour
Genuine Partnerships/Rotherham Charter
Job Centre
Know The Score
RDASH
RMBC Disability Information Services
RMBC Housing
Rotherham Hospice
Rotherham United Community Sports Trust
Rush House
South Yorkshire Eating Disorders Association
South Yorkshire Police Cadets
South Yorkshire Police, Hate Crime
United Multicultural Centre
Voluntary Action Rotherham
#Who do I turn to
Youth Cabinet
Looked After Children's Council
Young Inspectors
YWCA



Afternoon speed consulting

Afternoon workshops took the form of carousel consultations i.e. young people were assigned a consulting station at the start and then moved round every 10 minutes so that their views could be sought on a range of issues including; Transport, Independent living, Healthy Relationships/cyber safety, Emotional resilience/bullying, Categories /qualities for an award ceremony for young people, Safety and What advice and support the proposed #Who Do I Turn To service should offer.



Transport

Young people were asked about trains, trams and buses in terms of positive and negative features. Using buses seemed to be the most frequent public transport used and there were lots of positive comments about this form of travel:

- * Can get to lots of different places
- * Good bus routes
- * Can get a lot of people on them
- * Come on time most of the time
- * My bus always comes on time
- * Don't have to wear seatbelts
- * Gets you from place to place
- * Gets you where you need to be
- * Frequent x 3
- * Easy Transport x 2
- * Get to different places
- * Having a seat to yourself if the bus is mostly empty

Similar negative comments were made about all 3 modes of transport and were associated with costs, cleanliness and feelings of not being safe because of other passengers. Over-crowding was also mentioned in relation to trains and trams.

Independent Living

Young people were asked things they would like to know in order to live independently. Worries were around paying bills, types of accommodation available and getting furniture. Skills needed included; cooking, getting information about services and budgeting. Young people also seemed to have concerns around refuse collection.

Healthy Relationships/Cyber Safety

Discussions centred on young people's understanding of what constituted a healthy relationship including the use of social media. Young people were able to identify the elements of a positive relationship stating that these were what they aspired to and included the words; kind, caring, helpful and supportive. Young people demonstrated an ability to question some of the statements presented to them and could see how they could be either positive or negative e.g. 'checking your messages all the time'.

Emotional Resilience/Bullying

Young people were asked how they managed their emotions, what was important in terms of staying positive and who they would turn to if they were being bullied. Friendships are very important for young people; "you can all be there for each other" and a strand running through each workshop and indeed throughout the day was the need to create support mechanisms and opportunities for young people to make friends such as the Different But Equal Board and event; "through being part of the Different But Equal board, I now have a best friend." Young people stated that listening to music was a popular way of making them feel better as well as talking to people and eating and sleeping! They wanted understanding and help from schools with bullying and wanted young people to keep sight of their aspirations and dreams for the future and not limit themselves.

Safety

Young people were asked how to make Rotherham safer for young people. Again the appearance of areas featured strongly as a message around safety: “Add nice decorations to give off a warm feeling.” along with adequate lighting particularly in places like woodlands. Gangs were seen as intimidating: “Offering more opportunities for gangs etc. instead of them being on the streets” and young people suggested more visible police officers on the streets at night might make them feel safer as well as more events such as the Different But Equal event (presumably because events such as these give young people the opportunity to talk about and gain support around issues which affect them.)

Categories/qualities for an award ceremony for young people

Contained within the Highlight report, “Voice of the Child: Participation and Engagement Groups and Organisations in Rotherham” (Blakemore 2016) is the suggestion by Barnardo’s, Rotherham Young Carers of an awards system or a celebration night for children/young people.

The Different But Equal Board would like to progress this and so used the Different But Equal event as an opportunity to consult with other young people about what this award ceremony could look like. Based on the comments from young people the following could be categories for the awards:

Supportive, Resilience, Kindest, Most Uplifting/Most Smiley Person, Best Friend, Perseverance, Volunteering, Most Inspiring, Dedication, Courage, Team Player, Sports Person, Most Motivating and Most Passionate about the Voice of Young People. The Different But Equal Board will now look at these categories alongside some which they themselves had already suggested and begin the process of planning and consulting with other young people about an Awards Event.



#Who do I Turn To

A new service run predominantly by young people for young people is being planned for Rotherham by a group of young people (some of whom are members of the Different But Equal Board) with staff support. At the event, the group gained ideas around what gaps there were in services for young people particularly within the areas of advice, information and support in order to plan their service accordingly. The major gap identified was that services weren't always accessible to young people because of opening times and they would like services that are open after school until 9pm and open at weekends. They would like a space which is; safe, “ours,” cosy and a service which offers friendship, help and support.

Activity workshops

Following the consultations, a number of activity workshops took place including; African Drumming (run by Amy Cawthorn of Open Minds Theatre Company,) Street Dance (Fern Stainrod from the Nikki Lynam School of Performing Arts,) 3 Arts and Crafts workshops (run by Crisis Skylight and Sally Thomas, RMBC Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information and Advice Support Services,) Nail art/hair and beauty (run by young people from Rotherham College with staff support) and football and cricket (organised by Rotherham United Community Sports Trust.) What was really encouraging was that through offering young people the opportunity to sample these activities they could then look at pursuing these themselves in their spare time which some young people stated they wished to do.



A free raffle took place towards the end of the day which was made a little more special as two Rotherham United Football players popped in and presented the football ticket prizes!

Young people then took to the stage to perform in their bands to round off the day.



Evaluation

The Different But Equal event was very positive, energetic and enthusiastic. There was a real buzz in the atmosphere. Why was that? Probably because the event was organised and facilitated by young people with staff support rather than the other way round: “It’s like saying something, people listening and something gets done from it. It’s like affirming as a person” (a member of the Different But Equal Board.)

Young people owned the event and the space and that was because they had been involved in every aspect of planning it and had been meeting as a group figuring out strengths and interests in order to allocate the right roles to the right people. The young people who attended the event were equally positive probably because the Different But Equal Board had consulted with a range of young people prior to the event to ensure it catered for as wide a group as possible and so those attending could physically see that their ideas had been incorporated into the event. Young people felt valued in that their ideas had become a reality and their involvement in every aspect has been a true example of co-production and partnership.

The following are quotes from the Different But Equal Board:

“Before I came here (to the Different But Equal Board meetings) I had really low self-confidence. After meeting like, a lot of different people from different backgrounds, I’m more confident in speaking to others and more confident in school I guess.”

“People need to realise that together is what it’s all about. This experience has given me the confidence to share my ideas openly.” “I’m a lot happier personally. I have got a reason to get up in a morning.”

“The best thing is so many different people have come together to create something absolutely amazing.”

In terms of young people who attended the event the following were quotes written on the evaluation canvas and/or gathered during film interviews; “more events to happen, more stuff like this to happen so we can all interact with each other.”

“I enjoyed meeting new people.”

“Spending time together to change things: Love it!”

“Enjoyed seeing lots of young people working together.”

“I liked today because I’ve learned that you don’t need to change for people.”

“Enjoyed meeting new people and being a part of this.”

“We can achieve change when we listen to each other.”

“Really great to see other young people participating in activities, having a chance to express their voice, views on their future. Absolutely loved the event.”

The Different But Equal board have also evaluated the event and will use the learning to plan the Awards Event which will take place in early 2018.

There will also be a film and report launch in November 2017 for the participants and organisers of the event.

Go to: www.cypfconsortium.org.uk to view the film of the event.

Next Steps

The DBE will communicate their findings from the event in a variety of arenas including:

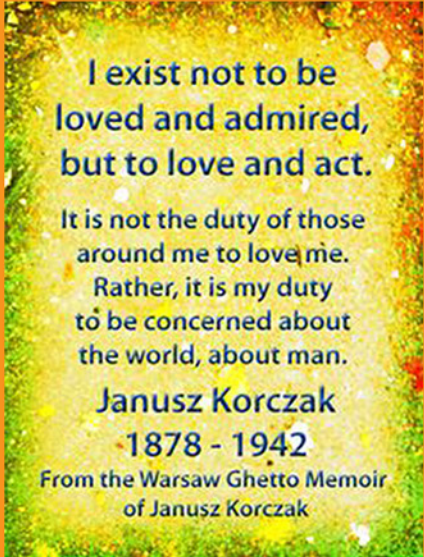
- The Children and Young People's Partnership Board
- Early Help Steering group
- The Children, Young People and Families Consortium
- The Local Safeguarding Children's Board
- The CSE/Missing sub group of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board
- The Performance and Quality Assurance sub group of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board
- The Learning and Improvement sub group of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board
- The Child Friendly Working Board
- The Rotherham Together Partnership
- CAMHS Local Transformation Partnership

These boards/partnerships have representatives from a variety of organisations and RMBC departments i.e. Housing, Police, RMBC Children and Young Peoples services, RMBC Policy and Partnerships, CAMHS and elected members etc. The Children, Young People and Families Consortium and Different but Equal Board will work with these organisations and departments to effect change and impact upon services and facilities as a result of the information received from young people. The findings from the event will contribute to shaping the direction of the Child Friendly Borough strategy. The Different But Equal Board will work with RMBC Commissioning to shape its co-production strategy and ensure that service providers are working in partnership with children, young people and families in order to provide better services.

This will change the way services are selected and delivered. Already we are seeing a sea change in terms of recognising the value and input of hearing and including the voice of children and young people within lots of different processes for example; the recruitment of staff, shaping of policies and procedures and development of services. Practitioners are now attending young people's meetings and arenas rather than the other way round to engage young people in initiatives. The Different But Equal Board and Children, Young People and Families Consortium will continue to promote the voice of children and young people and offer support and best practice in doing so and will put children and young people at the forefront of decision making. The priority will be to ensure that children and young people are effectively involved in the planning and decision making that affects them and that opportunities continue to be provided in order for young people to come together and do so and this will be an evolving and ongoing strategy.

Conclusion

It isn't easy to relinquish power and step back from a "practitioners know best" perspective. However when we share power, skills and experiences we are all better off for doing so. We learn from each other, develop tolerance and understanding and improve our self-esteem and confidence as both young people and practitioners: "I love coming. It's been a challenge for me as I struggle socially but I feel I am slowly starting to understand others and so I'm developing social skills...I am always smiling when I leave." The essence of support for young people is that it needs to be connected and they to connect to it...relationships and connections. Through being valued and included our self-worth improves enhancing social, emotional and mental health and well-being: "a shared ethos that every voice counts and clear expression of that ethos." The Different But Equal event was a true example of partnership working, co-production and good old-fashioned teamwork and it achieved what it set out to achieve and then some...we are all different...but equal.



I exist not to be
loved and admired,
but to love and act.

It is not the duty of those
around me to love me.

Rather, it is my duty
to be concerned about
the world, about man.

Janusz Korczak

1878 - 1942

From the Warsaw Ghetto Memoir
of Janusz Korczak

Our thanks go to all those involved but particularly the Children, Young People and Families Consortium and members of the Different But Equal Board as follows:

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