

An analysis of decision-making groups in Solihull

Introduction

This task sought to identify formal decision-making groups of children and young people across Solihull. All youth centres, the wider Youth Service, the Connexions Service, Corporate Parenting, CAMHS, Health, Solihull Sixth Form College and Solihull College, North Solihull Sports Centre and voluntary sector organisations were contacted to provide information where possible. Agencies and organisations were also asked to forward the audit onto others where necessary.

Of the organisations contacted, 25 provided some feedback. One organisation reported that they do not involve children and young people in any form of consultation or decision-making, and 13 different organisations (including individual youth centres and the active involvement and democracy team) indicated that they do involve children and young people in consultations and / or decision-making. From these, 17 formal decision-making groups were identified, which are presented below *:

Decision-making groups currently active under statutory agencies:

- ABBA (Anti-bullying behaviour alliance)
- Get It Sorted (Looked After Children)
- Youth Council (Active Involvement and Democracy Team. Youth Service)
- Youth Opportunity Fund (Active Involvement and Democracy Team. Youth Service)
- UKYP (Active Involvement and Democracy Team. Youth Service)
- Kingshurst Youth Forum (Kingshurst Youth Centre)
- Knowle Advisory Committee (Knowle Youth Centre)
- Safe Time Out Group (Kingshurst Youth Centre)
- SMART Committee (Coronation Youth Centre)
- HYPE group (Youth Service / SUSTAIN)

Decision –making groups currently active under voluntary sector organisations:

- Young People’s Advisory Group (The Children's Society in Solihull)
- Decision-making group (Young Carers)
- Service-User Reference Group (SURG: SoLO)
- Disability Consultation Group (The Children's Society Shared Care)
- Fordbridge Children’s Council (Fordbridge Town Council)
- Fordbridge Youth Council (Fordbridge Town Council)
- Castle Bromwich Youth Council (Castle Bromwich Parish Council)

Three agencies, The Care Trust, Fusion and Autism West Midlands have all indicated that they involve children and young people in specific consultation.

Two of the responding organisations indicated that they were keen to involve children and young people in decision-making but require support and guidance with this.

* *The details of all groups are documented in the Appendix to this report.*

School Councils

Alongside the decision-making groups identified above it is assumed that primary and secondary schools have active school councils, however, no comment can be made about the composition and practices of individual groups.

Other Groups

Some of the agencies contacted during this audit could not evidence formal decision-making groups but were able to evidence ways of involving children and young people in consultation and / or decision-making, such as Fusion (neighbourhood sports programme). The Children's Society Active Involvement workers have and are currently working with groups of young people on a less formal basis to ensure that children and young people have the opportunity to have a say about things that are important to them. An example of this is a group of young people at Reynolds Cross School, who are trialling a secure school webpage to act as a resource for young people, families and staff to record reviews of places visited and activities tried. It is hoped that this model could be applied to all Solihull school websites.

General point

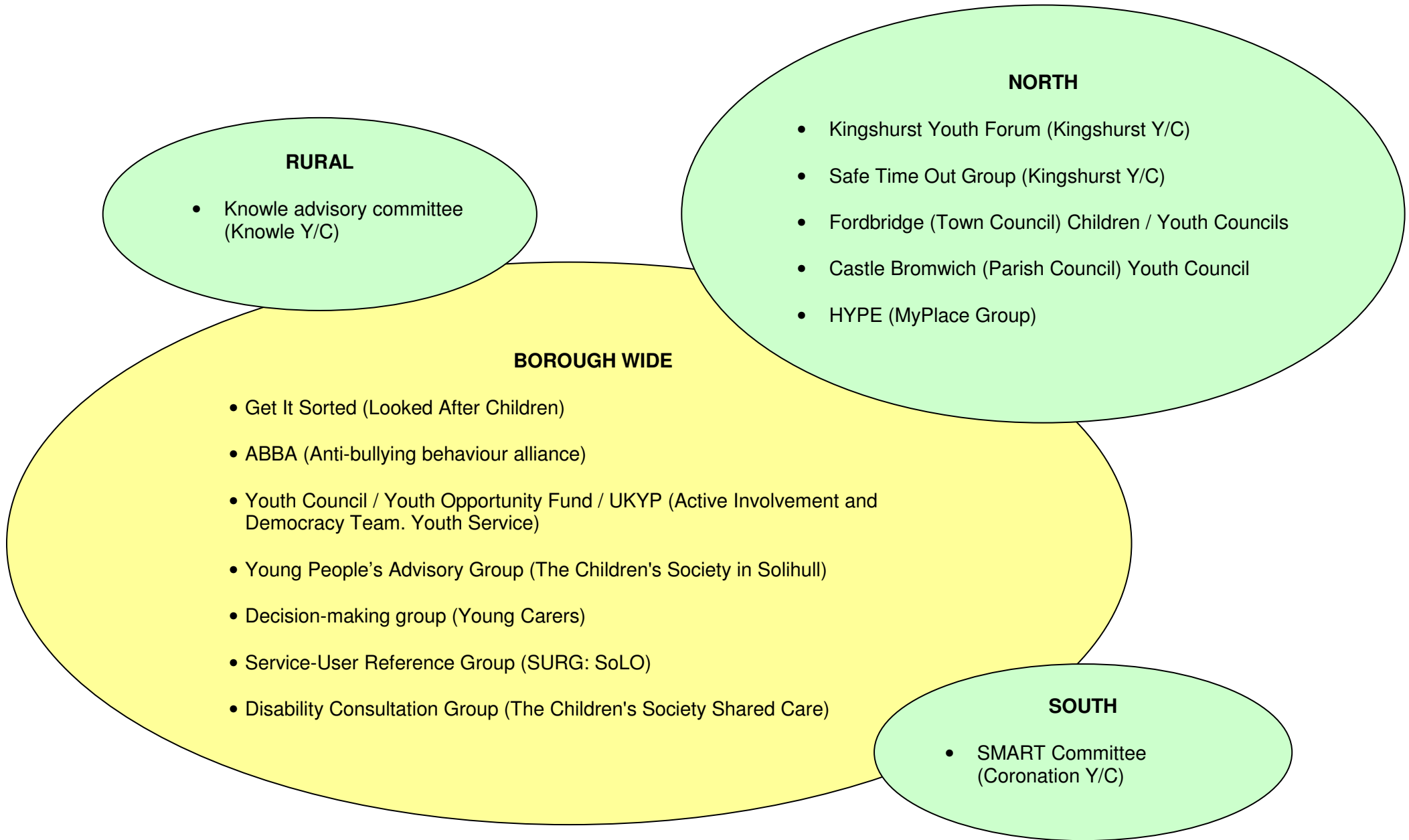
It should be noted that a number of the organisations contacted did not respond, and therefore this list cannot be assumed exhaustive.

AIM Group
Decision-Making Groups Feedback

Table 1. Information about groups identified

Name of Group	No of Members	Age	Specific group	North only	South + Rural only	Both	Activities undertaken					
							Spending budgets	Policy Review	Service Design	Choosing Activities	Recruit - ment	Other
GROUPS ACTIVE UNDER STATUTORY AGENCIES												
Get It Sorted (LAC)	N/K	12 - 15	Looked After			x		x	x		x	
ABBA	13	13 - 19	Anti-Bullying			x	x	x	x	x	x	
Youth Council/UKYP/ Youth Opportunity Fund	20	13 - 19				x	x	x	x	x	x	
Kingshurst Youth Forum	5	13 - 19		x					x		x	Campaign + lobbying
Knowle Advisory Committee	2	13 - 19			x		x	x	x	x	x	
Safe Time Out Group	4	19 +	Disability	x			x		x	x	x	
SMART Committee	4	13 - 19 +	Disability		x		x	x	x	x	x	
HYPE (MyPlace)	10	13 - 19		x			x		x	x		
GROUPS ACTIVE UNDER VOLUNTARY AGENCIES												
Young People's Advisory Group (TCS)	10	11 - 19				x			x	x		
Decision-making group (Young Carers Project)	3	12 - 15	Young Carers			x	x	x	x	x	x	
SoLO SURG	10	19 +	Disability			x	x	x	x	x	x	
Disability Consultation Group (TCS)	Up to 10	15 – 19 +	Disability			x		x	x	x		
Fordbridge Children's / Youth Council (2 gps)	12 / N/K	9-11/13-19		x			x			x		
Castle Bromwich Youth Council	13	13 - 19		x			x	x	x	x		Applying for funding

Fig 1: Geographical breakdown of decision-making groups



Profile of the children and young people involved – what the information tells us!

Of the 17 decision-making groups identified a number of conclusions can be made:

Representation of decision-making groups across the Statutory and Voluntary Sector

The majority of decision-making groups are supported by statutory Youth Services (10 groups). Voluntary services that identified having decision-making groups included: The Children's Society, Young Carers' Project, SoLO and two Parish/Town Councils. An apparent gap is the lack of involvement of children and young people in decision-making groups across other statutory organisations.

Age

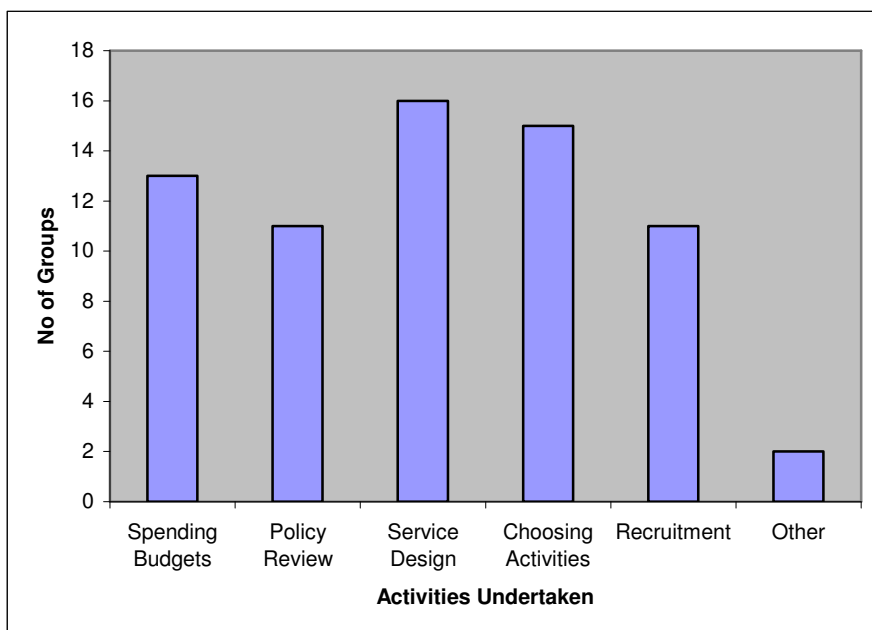
The majority of the groups identified engage young people over 13 (9 groups), and all of the groups engage with secondary-aged young people or above, save for Fordbridge Children's Council. This highlights a gap in opportunities for primary-aged children to get involved in decision-making groups outside of school councils.

Location of groups

Just over half of the groups have a Borough-wide remit (9 groups). However, there are disproportionately more decision-making groups in the North of Solihull than there are in the South / Rural part of the Borough (with only two groups identified). This raises a question around the opportunities young people have in the South of the Borough to have their say on local issues that affect them.

Activity undertaken by groups

Under half of the groups identified reported involvement in all activities (6 groups).



Graph 1: Activities undertaken by decision-making groups.

As shown above, the most common activity undertaken by groups is involvement in service design (16 groups) followed by choosing activities (15 groups). Policy review was the least frequent activity undertaken with only 11 groups reporting involvement in this. Only 2 groups reported involvement with other activities, namely campaigning and lobbying, and applying for funding.

Representation of specific groups

A number of the groups identified represent a particular body of children and young people: those who are looked after, those who are disabled and those who are young carers. There appear to be no specialist services at present in Solihull for young runaways or for gypsies and travellers. Solihull's unaccompanied asylum-seekers are accommodated in Birmingham, and take part in a consultation and / or decision-making group at The Children's Society Midlands Refugee Project in Birmingham (often in partnership with the UASC team within Solihull).

No conclusions were made about the representation of different groups of children and young people at the non-specific decision-making groups identified, as detailed information was not provided consistently. However, some groups did report representation from looked after children and children and young people with disabilities.

Cross-representation on groups

It was generally impossible to identify young people who took part in a number of groups, as the information was not supplied. There are some, but the number is believed to be small. If School Councils are taken into consideration, it is thought likely that some young people take part in consultation / decision-making groups outside school while maintaining a place on their School Council.

Conclusions

The information included in this report cannot be deemed complete, and there is likely to be other consultation and engagement going on with children and young people across Solihull. However, from the information provided it seems there are a range of opportunities for young people aged 13 plus to get involved with decision-making groups. It also appears that there are various opportunities for young people with disabilities to get involved. This report highlights an apparent gap in the opportunities available to those young people living in the south of Solihull, and is inconclusive in terms of how well-represented different groups of young people are in non-specific groups. There is also an obvious gap in opportunities for primary-aged children to engage in non-school based groups.

Report written by

Lianne Barnett – Active Involvement Worker, The Children's Society
Mick Pace – Active Involvement Worker (Disabled CYP), The Children's Society

Appendix - Responses received

A. Decision-making groups currently active under statutory agencies

1. ABBA (Anti-bullying behaviour alliance)

13 active members aged 13 – 19 years: (11 white British and 2 black British). Three of the young people are looked after, one young person has disabilities and two are young carers. Young people are involved with spending budgets, reviewing policies and procedures, service design, choosing activities and recruitment and selection.

Contact: Ben Yates
Number: 07834548349

2. Get It Sorted! (Looked After Children)

Meetings are held about 4 times a year and different meetings target different ages of looked after children (8 – 15 years) and are attended by DCS & lead member, as well as other members of the Corporate Parent Project. Children and young people can also feed into anything via our KiC email address, questionnaires, events, KiC magazines and specific projects.

Contact: Liz Moore
Number: 0121 704 6392

- 3. Youth Council (Active Involvement and Democracy Team, Youth Service)*
- 4. Youth Opportunity Fund (Active Involvement and Democracy Team, Youth Service)*
- 5. UKYP (Active Involvement and Democracy Team, Youth Service)*

About 20 active members aged 13 – 19 years (with representation spreads across the three groups). Meetings are held at least twice a week. The groups get involved with spending budgets, reviewing policies, service design, choosing activities and recruitment and selection.

Contact: Ros Glover
Number: 0121 704 8074 or 0121 704 6597

6. HYPE (MyPlace Group: Youth Service)

10 active members aged 13 – 19 years (white British, mixed heritage and disabled members). The group have been meeting 2 years, and are specifically involved with the development of the MyPlace bid, focused on building a world-class youth facility in Kingshurst. The group is involved with deciding how to spend budgets, choosing activities and service design.

Contact: Rachel Pearce
Number: 0121 788 2408

7. Kingshurst Youth Forum (Kingshurst Youth Centre)

5 active members aged 13 – 19 years, all white British with one or more of the young people being Looked After. The Youth Forum are involved with service design, campaign and lobbying, and recruitment and selection.

Contact: Navlett Pink
Number: 0121 7171 5807

8. Knowle Advisory Committee (Knowle Youth Centre)

This is a long-standing multi-agency group (15 years) and meets quarterly. 2 young people attend and take a full part in each meeting. They have been involved in spending budgets, reviewing policies and procedures, service design, choosing activities and recruitment and selection.

Contact: Tracy Bryan
Number: 07917 158220

9. Safe Time Out Group (Kingshurst Youth Centre)

This has 4 members, all white British, disabled, and over 19. It has been meeting for 5 years, with involvement in spending budgets, service design, choosing activities and recruitment and selection. There are a number of specialist groups set up for fixed purposes or periods, including decision-making, healthy eating and music.

Contact: Neil Murray
Number: 788 2408

10. SMART Committee (Coronation Youth Centre)

This has had a membership of 4; all white British, 2 aged 13 – 19 and 2 aged 19+. They have been involved in spending budgets, reviewing policies and procedures, service design, choosing activities and recruitment and selection.

Contact: Louise Pinnock
Number: 430 3949

B. Decision-making groups currently active under voluntary sector organisations

1. Young People's Advisory Group (The Children's Society in Solihull)

10 active members aged 12 – 19 years (all white British or white other). One young person has disabilities. Young people are involved with service design and choosing activities. Young people were recruited from across Solihull and the group had representation from five secondary schools.

Contact: Lianne Barnett
Number: 0121 788 5200

2. Decision-making group (Young Carers)

3 active members aged 12 – 15 years (2 white other, 1 Asian). Young people are involved with spending budgets, reviewing policies and procedures, service design, choosing activities and recruitment and selection. Young people self-refer to the group, which is advertised across the Young Carers' Service.

Contact: Jamie Stevens
Number: 0121 788 1143

3. Service-User Reference Group (SoLO)

There are 10 places, and YP are self-nominated, with an election process following. They are all disabled, are white British, and are 19+. The group are involved with spending budgets, reviewing policies and procedures, service design, choosing activities and recruitment and selection.

Contact: Maria Brown
Number: 788 3469

4. Disability Consultation Group (The Children's Society Shared Care)

Young people have been recruited from across Solihull, and now represent 5 different schools or colleges, with several not currently in education or training. There is a core membership of 6, with regular attendance now likely from 4 more. They have been involved in reviewing policies and procedures, service design and choosing activities.

Contact: Mick Pace
Number: 708 2610

5. *Fordbridge Children's / Youth Councils (Fordbridge Town Council)*

These two groups meet throughout the academic year and include pupils from primary and secondary schools in the Fordbridge area.

Contact: Neil Millard } Children's Council
Number: 770 0001 }
Contact: Bhpendra Patel } Youth Council
Number: 329 4600 }

6. *Castle Bromwich Youth Council (Castle Bromwich Parish Council)*

Thirteen young people from the local area represent young people's voices for Castle Bromwich Parish Council. The group act according to their constitution and standing orders. The group has been established for nine years.

Contact: Cathy Tibbles
Number: 747 6503

C. Organisations requesting support to develop involvement of children and young people in decision-making groups

1. *Fusion*

Children and young people are regularly consulted about activities to be undertaken. Young people have requested an after-school/evening multi-sports club and they will be involved in the planning. Fusion would welcome the chance to extend and formalise consultation and decision-making.

Contact: Justyn Price
Number: 704 8274

2. *Enable*

Their SURC (Service-User Reference Committee) has been meeting for 2 years, with the current involvement of 1 YP, aged about 20. SURC is involved in reviewing policies and procedures, service design, and consultation on a wide range of disability issues. They would very much welcome the chance to involve more young people in Enable's work, currently having few using their services.

Contact: Kay Donaghy
Number: 788 1544

D. Organisations that have consulted with the young people they work with

1. Solihull Care Trust

They have sought to include young people in NHS consultation, via questionnaire and face-to-face work, including Youth Club visits. They would welcome the chance to add our contacts to their mailing list so that future consultation can be extended. At the time of writing, they were unable to supply information specific to Children's Services.

Contact: Linda Lee
Number: 713 8796

2. Autism West Midlands

They have surveyed YP about summer scheme activities.

Contact: Julie Keen
Number: 450 7590

3. Fusion

See above