

Portsmouth's Young Inspectors Programme

Young Inspectors is a project where young people with a disability or special educational need visit services on the Portsmouth Local Offer and co-produce a report about that service. Young people engaged receive payment for their time.

A team of 9 young people has been recruited, with the aim to growing to a rolling team of 12 (recruiting new young inspectors as some move on). Young Inspectors are mainly recruited through the other youth participation projects being delivered in the area. Young people engaged are from a range of backgrounds, with a range of disabilities. Each member attends an informal interview with the project facilitator and Portsmouth Disability Forum (who manage the project).

New recruits attended a training day, some of which is co-delivered by established young inspectors who have worked with a local theatre company to develop short drama pieces to explore ideas around accessibility and how staff should treat young people using services. The training also covers common jargon, safeguarding and the importance of the Local Offer.



"The training day was shared with a participation group from a neighbouring authority who were hoping to start a similar project."

Portsmouth Young Inspectors have now inspected several services, aiming to undertake 3 inspections every 2 months. Initially focus was given to the Leisure section of the Local Offer with the hope to expand it out to other services. Other inspections include a local college's open evening.

"The potential young inspectors saw the interview questions before hand and the questions focused on ensuring that inspectors were reliable, were happy to express their views even

if they differed from other inspectors and also to inform us how best to support them.”

The inspection process involves young people reviewing the service information included in the Local Offer, noting how easy this is to understand and whether all required and useful information is included. The service itself is then visited, with providers aware that the visit is to take place but with no special arrangements made. This offers a “real” experience of the service.

Following the visit the group gather to co-produce a report, covering 5 distinct subject areas. The report also offers a star rating. The draft report is checked over by Young Inspectors to ensure it is accessible and accurate. Reports are then sent to services for comment and presented to the SEND Strategy Board before being published on the Local Offer.



Outcomes and Impact

Reports are hosted as part of the Local Offer website, allowing other people insights into services from a young person’s perspective. The reports also provide direct communication from young service users to commissioners.

Further work is being undertaken with services who have received inspections to see how the process has influenced services.

What advice, recommendation or key learning

The Young Inspectors project is working within the context of all of the work undertaken by the host organisation.

The Local Authority commissioned the programme and has been fully supportive of it. The ongoing support has been integral to the growing success of the project.

Our training addresses concerns young people have expressed around not understanding information and evaluating services openly and honestly. This allows participants to realise that if they don’t understand information given to them that it isn’t necessarily their fault and that it may be that the information wasn’t being given to them in an accessible way.

Young people have shown that with suitable training, support and empowerment they can be part of evaluating services and impacting the development of the local offer. Young people engaged report having gained valuable skills which will help them in the future as well being part of their community. This experience has been very positive for everyone involved and young people, staff and the local authority are all excited about the future.

This resource is part of the Making Participation Work programme, a joint partnership between the Council for Disabled Children and KIDS, and funded by the Department for Education. For more information about the Making Participation Work programme, visit us at:

<https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/our-work/participation/practice/making-participation-work>



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