



# Kirklees Local Offer

## Young People's Engagement

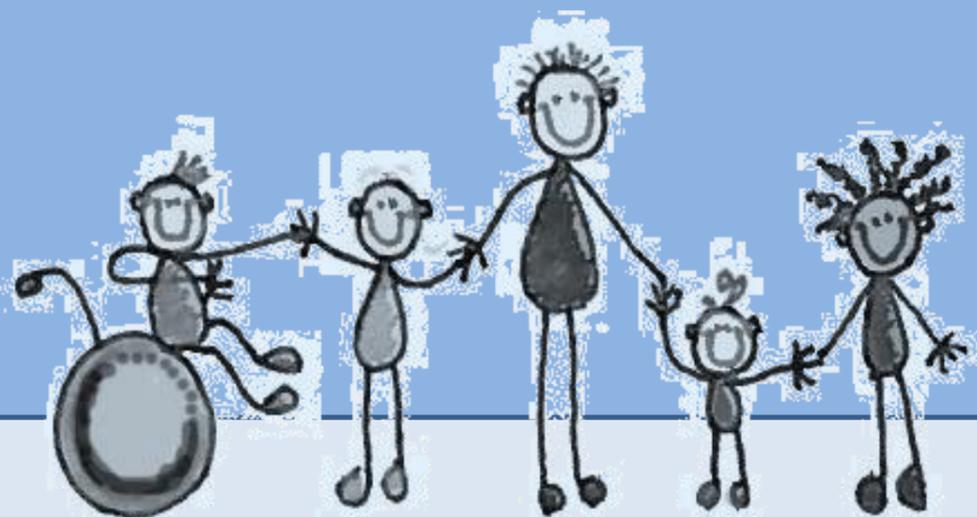
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The **Local Offer website** gives children and young people who have special educational needs and or disabilities (SEND) and their families, **information about support and services in the Kirklees area**

This is a summary of the key messages we've received from Kirklees Young People...

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## The Local Offer: Why ask young people for their thoughts?

**Our Local Offer is being reviewed and the website redeveloped.**

The Local offer should be 'the one stop' for young people who experience special educational needs and or disabilities (SEND). It should be a place where good quality information, guidance and services are available to support them and their families.

The Local Offer is a statutory responsibility of the Local Authority. The guidance is clear that children, young people and families need to be involved in its review and development (SEND Code of Practice 2015)

As Young people have *"The right to an opinion and for it to be taken seriously"* (UNCRC 1989), it's essential we speak to children and young people about what they want to see, from their 'Local Offer'.

**We collaboratively create services, which meet need...**

Young people are experts in their own lives. They frequently tell us, if services and professionals understand their needs and develop an offer that reflects this, then they are more likely to use it.

Providing the right support enables young people to develop resilience and meet their potential.

Well designed and reflexive services are better value. They reduce the likelihood of young people and their families having to explore and access services which don't meet their needs. Resources can be used with accuracy and this can reduce complaints, frustrations and escalations.

**The Childrens Partnership in Kirklees support the development of engaged and empowered young citizens...**

Meaningful participation helps young people learn the skills they need to develop their 'voice' and confidence to be involved in active citizenship and decision making (Children & Young People Plan 2020).

Participation is part of Kirklees Council's ethos of 'doing with, not to'; an integral part of our restorative approach.

## Who did we ask and how did we ask it?

To attempt to capture Local Offer Feedback from as many young people as possible, a number of approaches have been used:

- The Children with a Disability Service Social Workers & Community Care Officers were provided some direct work resources, to complete a child's journey/person centred care planning.
- Community Funded Providers were asked for any possible information they could share, which has been collected and fed back through the existing young people's groups.
- Discussions have been held with young people during outreach session's in parks, housing estates and public spaces.
- An Online 'Quick Link' was made and promoted via PCAN, on the Our Voice Social Media Platforms and a request was sent to all SENDCO's to distribute the participation opportunity across learning provisions.

Completing engagement amidst the Covid-19, Global Pandemic has made reaching young people tough!

Our Voice was re-established the week National Lockdown restrictions occurred. We would usually complete engagement face to face, by visiting local groups and provisions. Online methods would only be use as part of our approach, but not as the 'main tool' to capture the voices of the young people.

Therefore, there has been some reliance on group leaders, facilitators and colleagues to complete the engagement with their known young people. We are still awaiting some feedback.

As lockdown restrictions have relaxed, we have been able to venture out and complete outreach with young people, in parks and open spaces. They have explained that they have been a little 'over immersed' in online activities. This in part explains the lower returns. They look forward to being involved in face to face direct work.

We have received 16 responses to the Local Offer 'Quick Link' online.

The responses were from young people who mainly identified as male (14), from the Valley's area of Kirklees (12). The remaining (4) respondents were from across Kirklees. The ages of the young people varied from 10-21.

The young people who responded in majority had support with their emotions, learning and behaviour. 5 young people said they had an EHCP. Some young people identified themselves as having visual and sight impairments and needing assistance with their communication.

## What did we learn?

Smartphone was the most popular way to access online information. This was followed closely by laptop/pc, tablet and lastly by games console.

The young people who did respond, said they do use websites, especially when they need to 'find out' things that were important to them. Therefore, if the Local Website was useful, they would use it.

None of the young people, who responded had accessed the current Local Offer website. The reason why? They didn't know about it.

Young People tended to look online for homework or study.

One young person stated they only had access to the internet at school.

Two thirds of young people preferred the idea of a site specifically for those who experienced special educational needs and or disabilities. The other third preferred an inclusive offer.

YouTube was the most popular site that young people accessed. They liked the design, content and 'video' based approach. It was seen as informative and entertaining.

Games and Videos are the key to engage with these young people.

The site needs to be fun and easy to use. It's great when there is audio too.

Only one young person liked 'writing' on websites. Photo's were not very popular either. Traditional approaches don't engage this audience.

'Staying safe online and when out and about', was the key issue young people would like to see on the site. Knowing where to find out about 'Things to do' was also very important

Managing friendships, being healthy, developing life skills/future planning, alongside playing and sports, were also key issues, for these young people.

Young people would be more likely to access the Local Offer Site, if they knew where to find it, it had content that interested them, it featured games, videos and audio and it was easy to use.

These current messages are echoed in our previous engagement projects, with children who have Special Education Needs and or Disabilities

# How does this complement and develop the key messages we already know?

Over the past 10 years, Our Voice has completed various direct work projects with over 150 young people who have Special Educational Needs and or Disabilities\*. The following themes have re-occurred:

- Maintaining friendships & managing disputes.
- Personal safety, support with challenging prejudice and hate crimes.
- Having accessible, inclusive, safe and fun activities.
- Being healthy, strategies for positive physical and mental health.
- Understanding how to develop life skills, Post 16 options and employment opportunities.

\* Short Breaks Activity Session (2010), About Me @ Amaze (2012), Kirklees Youth Council various sessions (2010-2015), Our Voice Youth 4'EM's (2012-2015), Ongoing visits and Engagement to Central Stars & Saturday Live Youth Clubs (2010-2015), High Needs Strategic Review (2017/18) and School Transitions for young people with SEND (2019)

We also know from older young people, who engaged in the previous projects, that the following things are also important:

- Inclusive information on intimate relationships and sexual health. This includes dating, contraception and sexual health screening. It's really important this includes advice, support and guidance for people from the LGBTQ+ community too.
- Understanding Our rights, responsibilities and social justice.
- Safe Travel: the skills and knowledge required to travel independently (including confidence to buy tickets, plan a journey, who can help in difficult situations and in understanding the safest and most economical travel options).
- Financial awareness and support in how to 'manage money'.

Information provided by Community Funded Activities & Children with a Disability Service:

*"The key messages communicated in the funded activity participation groups are that young people who experience SEND, want to feel accepted and safe. Friendships are the key thing younger children speak about in play sessions. Friendships, fun and play are the repeated messages"*  
Darren Tordoff-Inclusion Officer

Social Workers and Community Care Officers are currently collecting information from any young people who wish to participate. Any information provided, will be added here as an update.

## Recommendations and Next Steps...

We are not claiming this engagement is representative of all children and young people in Kirklees. It's a snap shot; a starting point. Something to initiate conversations and further develop. However, when combined with previous messages, it indicates that re-design and improvements to the Local Offer Site should consider the following:

### Marketing is important!

The young people will only use a site or service if they know about it. They need some encouragement and guidance about what it offers them and where to find it. The best way to ensure meets their needs, is to invite and involve young people in developing its look and content.

Working together and having the support of our partnership agencies, to promote the local offer and share the link, on their web pages, would offer the young people assurances the information is 'trusted'.

### Ease of use is key

To enable young people to benefit from the site, it needs to be easy to navigate and visually appealing.

Any Information needs to be concise, relevant and of good quality.

Videos, games and audio should take precedence over writing and photographs. They should be short and snappy. Not only would this be the young people's preference but would also aid communication and inclusivity.

### Include content that matters to us.

Young people ranked these key content themes, in this order of preference.

1. Staying Safe
2. Navigating Friendships
3. Knowing About Accessible Activities
4. Having a Healthy Body & Mind
5. Life Skills (including finance, learning, independent living and employment)
6. Rights and Social Justice
7. Sexual Health and Relationship
8. Planning journeys and Travel

### Next Steps:

As the Covid-19 restrictions are further relaxed and the opportunity to visit young people in their Schools and Social Clubs expands, Our Voice will be re-developing ongoing engagement opportunities for Kirklees Young People. This will include the offer to work in partnership with our Specialist Provisions and further support young people who experience SEND to be further involved.

To improve the Local Offer further, there is also a need to complete more 'meaningful advocacy' with the key support staff and carers of young people who are unable to communicate their wishes, feelings and needs verbally.

## Acknowledgements & References

Completing engagement at this time is a challenge!

Therefore, we would like to say a **BIG THANK YOU** to...

Alison O'Neill

The Team at PCAN

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The Children with a Disability Service, Tracy Ritchie, Maureen Mears-Williams & Louise Charlesworth

Darren Tordoff and the Commissioned Services who have completed engagement with their groups (Shabang & Sports Works)

### References:

Kirklees Children & Young People Plan (2020)

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years (2015)



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The Our Voice webpage is here: <https://www.kirkleessafeguardingchildren.co.uk/young-peoples-voice/>  
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