



Yorkshire Planning Aid

Involving Young People in the Planning System

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Section 1: Involving young people in an Area Action Plan - Leeds Youth Council

Summary



32 members of Leeds Youth Council between the ages of 13 and 18 participated in an hour-long workshop to consider the future development of Leeds City Centre. Working with representatives from Leeds Development Department, the Youth Service, and Yorkshire Planning Aid, the young people gave their opinions on some of the good and bad points about Leeds City Centre, and made suggestions about improvements. Their comments were then taken into consideration by planners

from Leeds Council as part of the consultation process on the Leeds City Centre Area Action Plan.

Seven of the young people at the event volunteered to meet again to form a Planning Sub-Group of the Youth Council. Yorkshire Planning Aid (YPA) will provide them with support and training to help them to better understand the planning system. This will assist them to provide further input to the City Centre plan, and to other development plan documents relating to the Leeds area, and hopefully will help to identify ways of getting involvement from other young people in the area.

All the agencies involved felt that this had been a very positive session, and were delighted with the interest shown by the young people. The opinions of young people are often overlooked, but even in this short introductory session the planners at the event agreed that a number of very relevant issues had been raised.

Format

- i. Links made by YPA Community Planner with the Youth Worker who supports the Youth Council.
- ii. Agreement from Youth Council Executive Group to devote an hour of the next Youth Council meeting to discuss the City Centre Area Action Plan.
- iii. Questionnaire prepared by Leeds Development Department for distribution to all Youth Council members (Appendix I). Their role was then to distribute these within their own schools, collect responses, and summarise these to bring to the Youth Council Meeting.
- iv. Format for session agreed between YPA staff, Leeds Development Department, and Youth Worker. An updated version of this is attached in Appendix II, which takes into account improvements from running the event.
- v. Session undertaken, with facilitation from YPA worker, two Leeds Development Department Planners, and Youth Worker. Seven volunteers identified to continue working with Leeds Development Department on the City Centre Area Action Plan, with YPA support.

YOUTH COUNCIL QUESTIONNAIRE

What is the CITY CENTRE AREA ACTION PLAN?

It will be the new development plan for Leeds City Centre. There will be a map of the city centre showing the area affected, what different parts of the city will be used for and a document with planning policies. These policies will let landowners, developers and the public know the way development will be controlled in the city centre over the next 10 years or so. For example, these policies will guide what buildings will look like, where they are built and what land uses (shopping, offices, open spaces and entertainment etc) can go where.

The City Centre Area Action Plan will take several years to write as it needs to have 3 stages of public consultation. The Council is at Stage 1. At this first stage the Council is asking for your help to create OPTIONS on the most important issues facing the future of the city centre.

What will the CITY CENTRE AREA ACTION PLAN do?

It will control how the city grows, what new buildings look like, what uses they contain, where they can be built, how high they are, how people can access the city centre, transport around the city, housing, shopping, open spaces, entertainment, leisure and environment.

How can you get involved?

The council is consulting people with an interest in Leeds City Centre on ideas for the City Centre Area Action Plan. To get you involved in preparing the plan, the council would like you to answer the following questions:

Q1: Your post code or street?

Q2: Your age? _____ years

Q3: For what reasons do you visit Leeds City Centre?

Q4: How often do you visit Leeds City Centre?

- More than once a week
- Less than once a week but more than once a month
- Less than once a month but more than once every six months
- About once a year
- Never

Q5: When do you mostly visit the city centre?

- Evening
- Day time

Q6: What is the most important thing stopping you from visiting the city centre more often?

Q7: What do you think is good about city centre?

Q8: What things would you improve in the city centre?

Q9: What changes to the city centre would make you visit more often?

Hand your completed questionnaire back to the Leeds Youth Council representative

**LEEDS YOUTH COUNCIL MEETING
SATURDAY 15th OCTOBER 2005**

Leeds City Centre Area Action Plan Session

Purpose of session:

- To obtain views from young people about Leeds City Centre, making use of any questionnaire responses collected, in order to inform the content of the City Centre Area Action Plan.
- To identify volunteers for a subgroup to have further meetings with Leeds Development Dept.
- To present an information pack from Yorkshire Planning Aid which explains ways in which the organization can work with schools or youth groups.

Agenda:

A) Introduction to Planning System & how YPA can help - Yorkshire Planning Aid (5 minutes)

B) Explanation of the City Centre Area Action Plan - Leeds Development Department (5 mins)

C) Group work (40 mins)

- a) Groups of no more than 10, each assigned a facilitator from YPA, Planning Department, or Youth Service.
- b) Group to nominate a note-taker who will feedback to rest of the members, unless other facilitators are available to do this.

It is suggested that groups focus on two main questions from the questionnaire:-

- **What is good about the City Centre**
- **What things would improve the city centre for young people**

- c) Facilitator to help explore issues, e.g. if something has been identified as particularly good, or works well in the City Centre at present, state why it is good, or why it works well; if there is a problem, what might be the solution; is there consensus on the comments made – for example, we found in discussions that some young people knew more about cheap travel options than others, which meant that transport problems mentioned were not in reality as bad as some of the young people thought, although certainly there were still other issues. Also, encourage young people who have questionnaire summaries to feed comments in from those.

Note: *Young people offered the opportunity to use post-it notes on maps of the city centre to make comments on problem areas or areas which they liked if they didn't get the chance to make comments in the discussion*

D) Re-group for brief feedback session and agreement of next steps (10 mins)

E) Questionnaires collated for analysis by Leeds Development Department.

Section 2: Further Case Studies

Case Study 1: Youth input to Community Plan

Yorkshire Planning Aid (YPA) helped to ensure that young people's views were included in a Community Plan which was being developed by a local Housing Association and a Regeneration Agency in an ex-coal mining area near Wakefield.

Mike Dando, YPA's Community Planner, worked with youth workers and the student council from the local secondary school to engage with the 1800 students at the school using a modified version of a questionnaire which had been sent to the wider community.

Mike helped the young people to make the questionnaire more relevant to young people, and advised on ways to distribute and collect them back in. He then assisted with the analysis of the questionnaire and helped students to prepare a Youth Action Plan based on the results.



An impressive 1280 students replied to the questionnaire, and the final Youth Action Plan was presented to the Community Plan Steering Group in the presence of the local MP. Two young people from the Student Council are now members of the Community Plan Steering Group, which means that young people continue to have a voice when decisions are made about how to act upon the many ideas in the Community Plan.

Case Study 2: Corby town centre masterplan

East Midlands Planning Aid worked with three separate classes of students at a Further Education College in Corby, near Northampton, to introduce them to the planning system, and help them to understand how they could influence the development of the Masterplan for the town centre. Each training session was tailored to the subject the class was studying:

- Construction Students: This session focused on planning regulations linked to new buildings;
- Hairdressing Students: This session considered running a business from home, and the question of whether planning permission would be needed to do this;
- Mechanics Students: This session looked at the special requirements about noise control in relation to motocross activities.



Each class was asked similar questions to encourage them to think about how they used the town centre, what they liked and disliked about it, how they used the public transport system and what leisure facilities they currently use.

They were then asked to think about how they would improve the centre and the surrounding areas. A number of interactive techniques were used, such as designing posters, making comments on maps, and filling out questionnaires.

All the comments from the sessions with the young people have been fed into the Corby Masterplan, which is still developing. The young people involved now understand what the town centre masterplan is all about, and know how to get their opinions heard. They also now are more aware of the planning system and how it relates to their chosen subjects.