



The Leeds Voice, Influence and Change Newsletter – September 2020

Welcome to the September edition of the quarterly Voice, Influence and Change newsletter.

We can't believe how quickly the summer has gone and hope that you've found time for some much needed rest and relaxation with their friends and family.

Through this publication we hope to bring you some of latest in voice & influence news, resources, consultations and opportunities. Huge thanks to all the people and organisations who contributed articles for this issue.

As always, we encourage you to share within your teams and if you have any stories, groups or events that you would like us to feature in a future issue or would just like to talk "voice & influence" please get in touch; vic@leeds.gov.uk [@LeedsYouthVoice](https://www.instagram.com/LeedsYouthVoice)

News and updates

The Wetherby YOI Youth Council



At HMYOI Wetherby, a council of young people came up with the idea of introducing an new form of Video Visits (Purple Visits) to support the them during the Coronavirus Pandemic

Secure video calls have now been introduced at HMYOI Wetherby and other prisons as an innovative way of supporting those in our care, helping to maintain vital family contact during the coronavirus pandemic. The benefit of family members having a virtual video call visit has resolved some of the barriers of travel or disabilities, whilst social visits are suspended. (The system video is secure encrypted with facial recognition and verification as protection measures)

One young inmate has family who live close to Wetherby, but due to the travel /meeting restrictions of Covid-19 he has not seen his mother or father for some time. Compounded by the fact that both parents are profoundly deaf, he has only been able to communicate with them by phoning his grandma, who would then relay messages.

Video Visits have allowed him to see and sign with his mother and father during the 30 minutes video call. He was really grateful to staff for accommodating the call and is already planning his next video call, these are now happening on a regular basis.

"It has really up my mood and also made me happy speaking and seeing my mum and very good quality"

This has been a great support for young people, their family and staff with the opportunity to rebuild family bonds. The youth council and Governor are now looking at expanding these types of opportunities to help rebuild family and community connections and assisting ways of reducing reoffending.

Children's Mayor Voting is now live!



At the end of the summer term and despite the complications caused by Coronavirus, the Children's Mayor Team received over 50 entries from Year 5 pupils in Leeds schools. As always, the calibre of entries was high as children were tasked with considering what *they* would do to make Leeds a more child friendly city!

The entries were shortlisted down to a final 12 by a panel of children and young people representing the Leeds Youth Council and Youth Parliament as well the outgoing 2019 Children's Mayor, Wania (pictured) from Harehills Primary School.

Children and young people in the city now have until 12pm on 16th October to visit the [Leeds Children's Mayor](#) portal and vote for their two favourite entries with the winner being announced by the Lord Mayor at the finals event the following week.

She Writes Too: A Getaway Girls project



An [inspiring new film](#) has been put together as part of the launch of the [She Writes Too](#) poetry book, produced by Getaway Girls created to give a voice to amazing young women from across Leeds

"She Writes Too was put together in lockdown - written and designed by a group of young women who first came together to attend a mental health peer support group. Peer support works best when people with lived experience of mental health difficulties come together in a safe, supportive environment, where members feel comfortable sharing their stories and experiences, allowing a group empathy to develop.

It's our 3rd book and is funded as part of our group work programmes for young women within Live Well Leeds. This is a collection our work, and every word written honest and truthful. The pages are our stories, they are important and should be heard. To find out more about Getaway Girls, please visit www.getawaygirls.co.uk - We hope you enjoy our film and book!"

Chair of Leeds Youth Council to speak at European Summit

Charlotte Williams (17), Chair of the Leeds Youth Council, has been invited to speak at the 13th



Annual European Forum on the Rights of the Child this October. Charlotte will be joining panel members including the Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF, Charlotte Petri-Gornitzka and the Leader of Leeds City Council, Cllr Judith Blake who is chair of the Eurocities working group on Children's Rights.

Charlotte has been involved in Youth Voice since she was elected as Children's Mayor in 2013. Since then she has represented Leeds as a Member of Youth Parliament for two years – including speaking at the Dispatch Box in the House of Commons – and has since been elected at the chair of the Leeds Youth Council working group.

For more information about the event visit the [official site](#)

Leeds Art Gallery – Youth Collective

On 19 March 2020, Leeds Art Gallery closed its doors to our visitors, community and schools groups due to the devastating impact of Covid. At that time, the Youth Collective did not know when we would return back to the gallery. All we knew was if we continued to work together, we would establish a new normal routine which would have a positive on members' mental well-being and creativity.



Therefore, every Saturday afternoon during lockdown, members of the Youth Collective met online to discuss their feelings, create artwork and produce a film documenting their lives and make interesting responses to artists within our collections and exhibitions.

The Youth Collective is open to all young adults aged 14-21 who live in Leeds or have a connection to Leeds. You don't need to have any art experience beforehand, just a sense of humour and willingness to engage in art practice.

'The Youth Collective are such an inspirational group of young adults and I'm extremely proud of their achievements especially in lockdown, all connecting together literally across the world. Together we have co-produced the sessions, selecting artists to focus on and creating photography and mixed media work. All their work has been published on our Leeds Art Gallery Facebook, Instagram and Twitter accounts @LeedsArtGallery. We've also produced this amazing film which you can [see here](#)' Angie, Youth Engagement Officer.

Youth Voice: improving support for young people with medical needs

LEEDS HOSPITALS
YOUTH FORUM



Leeds Teaching Hospitals Trust in partnership with Leeds City Council/Child Friendly Leeds held "In Your Shoes" - a conference for young people with a long term condition called. The event was designed to enable young people to work with practitioners and decision makers to make them more aware of young people's needs and how these can be best supported.

An anonymous survey was also held through the Leeds Teaching Hospitals Youth Forum to enable group members to share their experiences, discuss the findings and outline what they feel should be in place in schools and settings for children/young people with long term medical conditions.

The 5 main suggestions from the young people participating were for;

1. A Link member of staff in schools - understands their condition and needs
2. Individual Health Care Plan (IHCP) to support their needs & shared with all relevant staff
3. All staff to have greater awareness and understanding of the lived experience of different medical conditions
4. Regular two way communication with school when their medical condition requires absence
5. To be recognised for attendance – not excluded from attendance rewards

A task and finish group was established with members from Leeds Children's Hospital and Leeds City Council to respond to these requests and – by working in partnership with parent and carers - a range of new tools were devised to support schools to achieve these recommendations. Check out this [great short film](#) to hear from the young people involved in the Hospitals Youth Form.

Young people also have a voice over healthcare via the Community Healthcare NHS Trust Youth Board who have just produced their latest newsletter which you can read [here](#).



Rein Park revolution

We love hearing about new and exciting ways colleagues find to overcome barriers presented by Covid19. Staff from the Localities Team at Leeds City Council wanted to engage with local children and families to enable them to influence plans for an exciting new play area at Rein Park in Seacroft / Killingbeck.

The Team worked closely with Our 3rd sector partners [LS14 Trust](#) and [Fall into Place](#) to design a map (pictured) which was sent out to local families along with mini play boxes to get children to think creatively about the park and how they use it. The returned maps – full of ideas from the local community – are now being used for the design and creation of the new play area.

Summer at Rainbow



Rainbow House in North West Leeds provides breaks and respite for children and young people with complex needs and disabilities. At Rainbow House, a variety of different methods are used to give the young residents a say over how the house is run and to make them feel part of the family – an approach that helped them achieve an “Outstanding” judgement from their last Ofsted visit in January this year.

Since that Ofsted visit, young people from Rainbow House have been engaged in recruitment for new staff; taken part in an election for a new young person for the in-house committee and they have done direct work in handwashing with young people demonstrating how to stay safe.

Chris Graefe, Manager of Rainbow House told us; “I am very proud of how we have maintained a direct service to our young people and families when other services have ceased or reduced at a time when I professionally think they need us most”

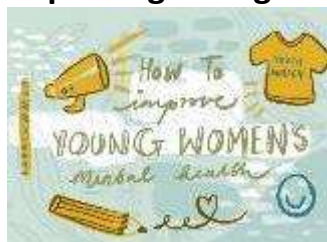


Giving refugees and asylum seekers a voice

Thanks to a continuation funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, The Young Migrants Matter (YMM) project delivered will now be run entirely by [PAFRAS](#) - offering young migrants holistic casework, regulated immigration advice and emotional and wellbeing support.

YMM will also continue to raise the voice of young migrants who are destitute or at risk of destitution, to influence decision makers both locally and nationally and help to make Leeds a more compassionate and caring city. If you work with any young migrants aged 16-24 who you feel would benefit from participating in YMM please shared the attached flyer or visit the [PAFRAS](#) website for more details

Improving Young Women's Mental Health: A conference



Earlier this year, YouthWatch volunteers teamed up with MindMate ambassadors to work with colleagues from the Leeds City Council Public Health Team to plan, chair and facilitate the 'How to Improve Young Women's Mental Health' event in Leeds Civic Hall. You can check out some great pictures under #YWMHLeeds.

For those who couldn't attend but with an interest in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of young women the event report is now available to download <https://bit.ly/32Oi0W2>. It has been shared with the Future in Mind:Leeds Programme Board who make a lot of the decisions about the future young people's mental health services, and some of the themes from the event are being included in their new strategy.

During Volunteers Week in June, Healthwatch Leeds ran a competition asking it's volunteers why they volunteer using photos or video. Most of the entries were from their YouthWatch volunteers. Here's what they said... <https://youtu.be/OX9UuPg2vR4>

Adopteens Youth Council



[Adopteens](#) is a project for adopted young people who live within the Yorkshire & Humber region and is open to all aged 11 and above. It's developed and fed into by our own members who make it what it is today!

During lockdown, we have continued with our Youth council meetings online via Zoom – following the success of previous meetings we feel this is a great way of keeping in touch with and hearing the voice of our members. We also run a WhatsApp group for Youth Council members which is supported by the Adopteen Project workers, this again is running well and the young people are finding it a good way to access support from each other and workers.

We've talked about all sorts from the impact of COVID, loneliness, online safety, mental health, black lives matters, and adoption in the mainstream media. And of course how much we miss face to face meetings!



Voice and Influence in Social Care

Young people in care and care leavers have been continuing to have a voice and influence over local services throughout the Coronavirus lockdown. The Have a Voice Council and Care Leavers council have been using digital platforms to hold weekly meetings and have held over 25 of these since lockdown begun. A sample of things they have done include:

- 2 Voice recording projects
- 3 Q&A sessions with senior leaders
- 7 consultations with local and national services
- 9 surveys

Covered topics such as Mental Health, Foster Carer tips, Black Lives Matter, Advocacy, Identity, the Care Leavers offer

Youth Service: Temple Newsam and Crossgates & Whinmoor Ward



Youth Workers continue to support young people via welfare checks and the delivery of activity packs and more recently with food packs, where young people are selected to take part in cooking challenge.

Young people are provided with a pack that contains ingredients and a recipe sheet and so far we have had: Pizza, Apple cake, Chocolate Marshmallow, and this week's challenge will be to cook cheese and onion pasties. Young people are asked to then take a photo of their finished recipes which we upload to our social media platforms. The challenge has been very successful so far with more and more young people wanting to take part.

Some young people from the Temple Newsam Ward have also taken time to write to youth workers to thank them for their support via welfare checks and youth workers have also received phone calls and txt messages from parents to also thank them for their ongoing support. Youth Workers greatly appreciate that young people have taken pen to paper and posted letters of support.

Student Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership



The [Student LSCP](#) are a group of young people who have volunteered to provide a young person's voice and opinion to the work of the Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP).

Working with West Yorkshire Police's media team, the Student LSCP developed an animated gif to deliver the message '[Running away is not the answer](#)'. Group members chose the images and wording for the animation, which was used as part of a West Yorkshire wide social media campaign targeting teenagers across the region.

The key messages of the campaign were to:

- encourage young people to seek help and support rather than run away from home or care
- reassure young people that running away isn't the answer and that help is available, regardless of the problem
- sign post young people to organisations who can offer help and support.

The animation looks at the issue of arguments at home as a potential reason that a young person may have for running away. Clicks on the advert took viewers to the LSCP website for helpful information: www.lscp.org.uk/runningaway

The campaign ran for 1 month and successfully achieved 1726 clicks. Young people who run away become more vulnerable to exploitation or at risk of violence and therefore it is important to encourage young people to seek support if they are considering running away

The Student LSCP have also just published a video version of their [annual report](#) – a great way to find out more about the achievements of the group

A shout out to The Market Place participation group



face work (until restrictions eased.)

[The Market Place](#) is known for its long term, face to face support with young people so when lockdown struck, it was a difficult decision to close the building and face to

Mindful it would be difficult for a lot of young people across Leeds to have a place to talk, openly without judgement something had to be done! TMP sprang into action and opened up a telephone support service to offer a safe, confidential space for young people during this time. Our Voice and Influence group SHOUT has helped us understand how young people would like to receive support while our building is closed. SHOUT was consulted on moving our support services (counselling, MyPlan, workshops) into an online format and how it feels to be shifting our face to face services to online. We discussed which online platforms they regularly used to stay in touch with friends and family and explored avenues for support.

SHOUT have been at the forefront of trialling our online groups, and speaking out about what they need and would like from our service during this time. As lockdown restrictions have eased, they have shared their personal experiences of using public transport and travelling into the city centre during a global pandemic and helped inform staff on the things they have found helpful and unhelpful returning to the outside world. This was then fed into the management team meetings to help inform the 'return to face to face' planning to enable The Market Place to offer a space that adheres to government guidelines but is still young person friendly and welcoming to those who might want to access our services when we can open face to face again.

The SHOUT group are an incredible bunch of young people, who speak with astounding transparency. They have told us about their preferences of PPE, what they would like to see and expect when they arrive to the building and how they would like to be treated when they visit again.

MindMate : Young Bloggers wanted!



[MindMate](#) is a website dedicated to supporting the mental health and emotional wellbeing of young people in Leeds. Involved at every step of the site's development, young people have approved all the resources, content and design on MindMate, along with clinical experts.

We want to hear from more young people in the city! Our popular [MindMate blog](#) is a great place to have your say, to speak your truth on something that matters to you.... And we'd love to hear what you think. We have a growing library of blogs and podcasts from under 25 year olds on a wide range of topics, with a wide reaching audience. Your blog could be about anything related to young people, Leeds, mental health or emotional wellbeing. Check out our [MindMate Blog page](#) to see some examples, and how there really is such a diverse mix of topics and styles of blogs.

Any worries, concerns or needs you may have... we are able to support you in many ways to help you write your blog.

If you want to learn more or send us your idea, please get in touch at megan@commonroom.uk.com

We look forward to hearing from you!

Youth Service: Rothwell, Garforth, Swillington & Kippax wards



Youth Workers in the Rothwell ward, Garforth & Swillington / Kippax & Methley wards responded to complaints from residents and intelligence from the Police that large groups of young people were meeting up at the local Marina and nature reserve. These groups were not adhering to social distancing guidelines or staying in small bubbles/household groups. They were swimming in the canal and lakes, causing ASB, littering and intimidating other canal users.

While our building based youth clubs were closed due to the lockdown. The Youth Workers came up with the idea of engaging with the groups on detached sessions using mountain bikes. The bikes were donated and this enabled the teams to cover a larger area than they would on foot. The Youth Workers could also access areas that our mobile provision couldn't get to.

While visiting the locks, lakes and canals across the three wards, Youth Workers discussed the dangers of swimming in the water, interfering with the operation of the lock or obstructing canal boats navigating the lock, littering, mental health, sexual health, illegal drug taking and underage drinking. A large number of young people recognised that their behaviour was disturbing the residents, damaging the wildlife and often illegal. The Youth Workers have been giving the groups information so they could make positive informed choices about their behaviours.

Some young people completed a litter pick with Youth Workers at the Marina. The work is on-going on a daily basis throughout the lockdown and until our provisions are reopened.

An update from the Vocal Girls project



Hello again! We wanted to share a little update from us here at Vocal Girls. For the past couple of months we have been meeting over Zoom with the aim of consolidating our campaign idea to make Leeds the first women and girl friendly city in the UK.

After discussing issues such as safety in the City Centre, the lack of gender specific activities in Leeds and sexist attitudes in schools; the Vocal Girls have decided to create a campaign around mental health with a specific focus on the anxiety girls may face through various life transitions. For example the move from primary school to secondary school.

We would love to collaborate with any individuals or organisations who have done work in the mental health space or have campaigning experience. If this sounds like you, please contact us at either martha.adebambo@getawaygirls.co.uk or Kianna.leader@getawaygirls.co.uk.

What's been happening at Hamara?



The youth team at Hamara have been working hard to keep youth involved in activities during the current pandemic. We have enabled youth to get involved with volunteering at the centre to help with the hub as it has been providing many services to adapt to the current situation.

At the centre we have had around 15 dedicated young people that have taken turns to come in and support the provision.

Every young person has felt like they have had an opportunity to feel empowered and felt that they have also inspired other young people to actively volunteer and express the importance of it. We have had an article feature on Doing Good Leeds from Voluntary Action Leeds that highlighted a story of our youngest volunteer Billy who is 12, titled *Volunteer Stories: The 12 year old volunteer making a difference in the response to COVID-19*.

We also have a new project 'Positive Destinations' engaging with young people 16-18yrs who are (NEET) not in Education, Employment or Training. We are offering a free friendly service to young people in supporting them to reach a positive career path. We have been doing this through 1-2-1s via telephone calls, text messages, video calls, social media and most recently face-2-face following social distancing procedures. Positive Destinations has its own Facebook page and Instagram, we share a variety of information on the platform for young people to get involved in such as, events, workshops, activities and much more.

We have also been contacting young people to offer 1-2-1 help, advice and guidance during the crisis to help with mental health and other issues that may be concerning to them. This has been done via telephone call and group zoom sessions.

Stand Together 4 Refugees – ST4R



The Children's Society ST4R project seeks to empower young refugees and give them a voice. We asked young refugees and asylum seekers about the problems they have had, the things that have helped, and their ideas about what needs to change to make things better for young people in Leeds and the UK.

We got responses from 61 young people.

Although everyone's experience was different, we found some clear themes that we have focused on:

- Mental health and sleep
 - Housing and independent living
 - Knowing your rights and how to get help
 - Language, education and careers
 - Supportive communities
- We have made this booklet so that young refugees' voices and ideas can be heard, and to make a difference in the long run for other young people.

All of the results and findings have been collated into this excellent and visually stunning [booklet](#) that we highly recommend you checking out

Voice, Influence and Change Team 2019/20 Annual Summary



We've just published our latest annual summary that brings together the key achievements from across the VIC Team including the Children in Care and Care Leavers Councils, Recruitment Panels, Parent and Carer voice, Takeover Challenge and much more.

The summary report can be downloaded [<HERE>](#)

As always, thanks for reading and don't forget to get in touch if you have anything you would like featured in the next edition. In the meanwhile we'd like to encourage you all to stay in when you can, stay safe when you're out and we look forward to seeing you all again in person soon.

Kayleigh Harvath
Richard Harvath
Rajesh

The Voice, Influence and Change Team
Children and Families Directorate
Leeds City Council

vic@leeds.gov.uk

www.breezeleeds.org/haveyoursay

Learn more about parents & carers having a voice and influence in Leeds:

<http://tinyurl.com/LeedsPCFVoice>



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