



Involvement

Youth Forum

Background

The Youth Forum is made up of young people from the south and provides an opportunity for our young clients and customers to influence Home Group, challenge stereotypes about young people and make a difference to our services, neighbourhoods and communities.



“ The forum is about bringing young people of different backgrounds and cultures together to discuss issues important to customers and clients of Home Group. We help other people understand the value of young people in a positive and constructive way. We come together at meetings to make a difference!
Aaron, Brett and Steph, Clients ”

“ We believe that one of our most important responsibilities is to challenge the belief that young people don't want to be involved.
Youth Forum members ”

“ Older people think we're 'druggies', 'asbos', 'hoodies', vandals, crazy, 'chavs' but...we know stuff that other people don't and we bring a new perspective.
Brett, Client ”

What happened?

Since our first Youth Forum meeting in February 2013 we have:

- Involved 142 young people from across the south
- Delivered 11 Youth Forum meetings, a youth conference and leadership training day
- Tried and tested a new model of involvement.

The forum operates in a unique and flexible way enabling new young people to get involved at each meeting. It has a core membership of six young people who help lead and shape the meetings and events.

“ The young clients were full of determination to improve and enhance our services. They listened and discussed ideas, and made swift decisions, which was so refreshing!
Rachael Byrne, Executive Director Care and Support ”

There's no application and assessment process for the Youth Forum or membership requirements. Clients and customers attending the meeting on the day are members of the Youth Forum. Young people can choose to attend one meeting or get involved in them all.

This model makes it easy for colleagues to encourage new young people to get involved. It also helps to keep the meetings alive with new perspectives and fresh ideas every time. There's no hierarchy and young people can get involved knowing that their ideas will be listened to. Clients and customers who try it out often end up coming back and getting really involved.

Youth Forum members 'own' and co-deliver activities within meetings that suit their skills and confidence from running the 'ask the forum' session to contributing ideas for creative forms of consultation.



What changed?

In the last 12 months, the Youth Forum:

- Raised issues important to young people with the Board and executive team through monthly reporting
- Shared their experiences and ideas and advised staff and other customers and clients about issues relating to young people
- Improved communication between clients and colleagues and set up their own Facebook page called Family@Home16-25
- Provided feedback and advice to colleagues across the business on 15 separate issues through their ask the forum sessions including how we can deal with anti-social behaviour, how to raise awareness of equality and diversity and challenge prejudice, and how we can involve or encourage more young clients and customers to volunteer or work within housing or social care
- Co-delivered Involvement Works training to colleagues
- Assessed our client services as part of our independent scrutiny work
- Helped shape national policies including our Support Practice policy set and Safeguarding Children and Young People policy
- Increased visibility of young people by co hosting and presenting our national Working Together Conference 2013 and national customer and client awards 2013.

“ We are making decisions, where previously we didn't have a strong voice. One way we do this is 'Ask the Forum.' We are also consulted on agenda items from the customer and client panels and this ties us into Home Group's governance structure. We link in with other involvement opportunities and are the 'go to' group for the voice of young people. From being involved in the forum we are also involved in scrutinising services, at KISS communication groups where we review documents, in policy consultation, in staff training and in promoting knowledge and involvement in equality and diversity.
Youth Forum ”

Impact

On Home Group:

Involving young clients and customers at our Youth Forum increases their visibility at Home Group, giving young people a strong voice in everything we do across the business and putting youth involvement firmly on the map.

“ The Youth Forum has shown young people that they have a voice at Home Group and that we listen to what they have to say. From being under represented, the Youth Forum is now leading some areas of involvement at Home Group. They have been speaking and presenting at conferences, hosted the customer and client awards and are giving great advice to colleagues through their ask the forum sessions. They are an inspiration to us and their influence grows daily.
Mark Henderson; CEO, Home Group ”

The Youth Forum influenced an increase in the involvement of young people across the South East. Young people now represent at least 50% of attendees at all regional involvement workshops and activities including major incident review groups (What Happened Here?), client and customer communication groups (KISS) and the South East client assessor team.

Their involvement breaks down barriers between clients, customers and colleagues and influences positive changes within our services, neighbourhoods and communities.

“ What struck me about the Youth Forum was the way they operated together. The speed in which they made decisions was incredible. Colleagues in customer service had forwarded questions they wanted advice on; how to solve local issues about antisocial behaviour. They came up with creative solutions to the problems and agreed ways forward, put it in a plan and sent it back to the Customer Service Partner with astonishing energy and speed.
Rachael Byrne, Executive Director Care and Support ”

In addition, the work of the Youth Forum supports our national approach to equality and diversity and the delivery of our equality and diversity action plans through targeting and involving one of our 'need to reach' groups.

On clients and customers:

Youth Forum members developed new skills, gained confidence overall and the confidence to speak up and are now involved in other groups and involvement activities as a result.

“ Being part of the Youth Forum isn't about what we've done in the past, it's about what we can achieve now!

Youth Forum member

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Their involvement has also improved their engagement with support colleagues and their behaviour at their services.

“ The amount of warnings being given out in our service is going down. This is because clients want to go to Youth Forum meetings so they're behaving better in our service.

Mia, Client

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Following a 12 month pilot the Youth Forum voted on a new name. They will now be known as Youth Action.



Cost

Total cost for the Youth Forum is £4397.72

Average cost per Youth Forum meeting or event is £338

This cost includes:

- Room hire
- Transport
- Out of pocket expenses
- Lunch

Is it value for money?

Our independent group of customers and clients said that involvement in the Youth Forum represents:

- Low cost
- High impact
- **High value for money.**