

# Executive Summary:

## A Young Voice In Drug and Alcohol Issues

### *A Briefing Paper into Consulting Kent Young People*

#### **Background**

The paper aims to review current models of young people's consultation in service delivery across Kent and suggest ways of engaging young people in the commissioning process of the Young Peoples Joint Commissioning Group (YPJCG), whilst providing a voice on relevant issues affecting young people in relation to substances, which arise within the Under 19's forum.

The involvement of consumers in service planning, development and policy is endorsed in a range of local KCC documents including:

*\*Active Lives, The Future of Social Care in Kent – a ten-year vision*

*\* Children's Bill*

On a national level the Health Advisory Service (2001) state that it is important that young people become fully involved in issues of policy, commissioning, planning and delivery of services. Furthermore, legally as stipulated in the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child young people have the right to express their views on issues that affect them and to be listened to.

A range of benefits in consulting young people have been identified these include:

▶ **Better Services**

▶ **Promoting Citizenship and Social Inclusion**

▶ **Personal and social education and development**

### *Principles of Consulting Young People*

1. Give **clear information** on what you want consultation on.
2. Ensure the process is **inclusive**.
3. Provide **choice** where and when young people want to meet.
4. Young people are **not a homogenous group**.
5. Consult in **various ways**.
6. Keep **records** of consultation.
7. **Co-ordinate** consultation.
8. **Support** young people to be involved. Adults should be **sensitive** to the inherent differences in status, power, knowledge of resources and language.
9. Be clear with young people about how much **influence** they can have.
10. Youth participation should be **beneficial** for young people. *What are they going to get out of it?*
11. **Enjoyable** – fun, exciting and challenging.
12. Consultation should be **relevant** to the young person.
13. Avoid **tokenism**. Young people must be provided with real roles and tasks.

### *Young People's Involvement in Service in Kent*

A selection of relevant young people's services across Kent were consulted, on how they engage young people in the development and delivery of service, to inform model development through local good practice and to identify potential consultation networks.

Profiles of the following services young people's consultation are contained in the full report:

- ▶ **Connexions**
- ▶ **16+**
- ▶ **KCA**
- ▶ **Grey Zebra**

### *Places Of Young Peoples Voice In Kent*

A brief mapping exercise of pre-existing forums that young people are consulted on in a range of community issues was conducted. Across Kent are borough specific Youth Councils exist. These youth councils make important contributions to the greater involvement of children and young people in decision-making. At a local level representatives work along side elected councillors at meetings giving the views of their peers.

In addition to these borough specific Youth Forums/Councils, there is the Kent Youth County Council, whereby young people are elected for a 2 year term. This group aims to get the views of young people and pass them on to K.C.C. The Kent Youth County Council is divided into East and West Kent and meets monthly.

For children of a younger age in Thanet, The Children Participation Project exists. This project is a non-statutory local children's society working in partnership with the Kent Children's Fund. The purpose of the project includes; to increase children's participation in their local neighbourhoods, to influence the development of children's district planning groups, to empower young people and have their views heard and to improve services so they are effective. The young people involved are aged 5 to 13 years and include young carers, socially excluded and vulnerable children, children with special educational needs, refugee children and mixed ethnicity children.

### *Consultation With Young People Regarding Future Involvement*

Two young people (Spangle Patton and Stephen Ferguson) from the Kent Youth County Council were consulted on their views of young people's participation regarding drugs issues and the commissioning of services.

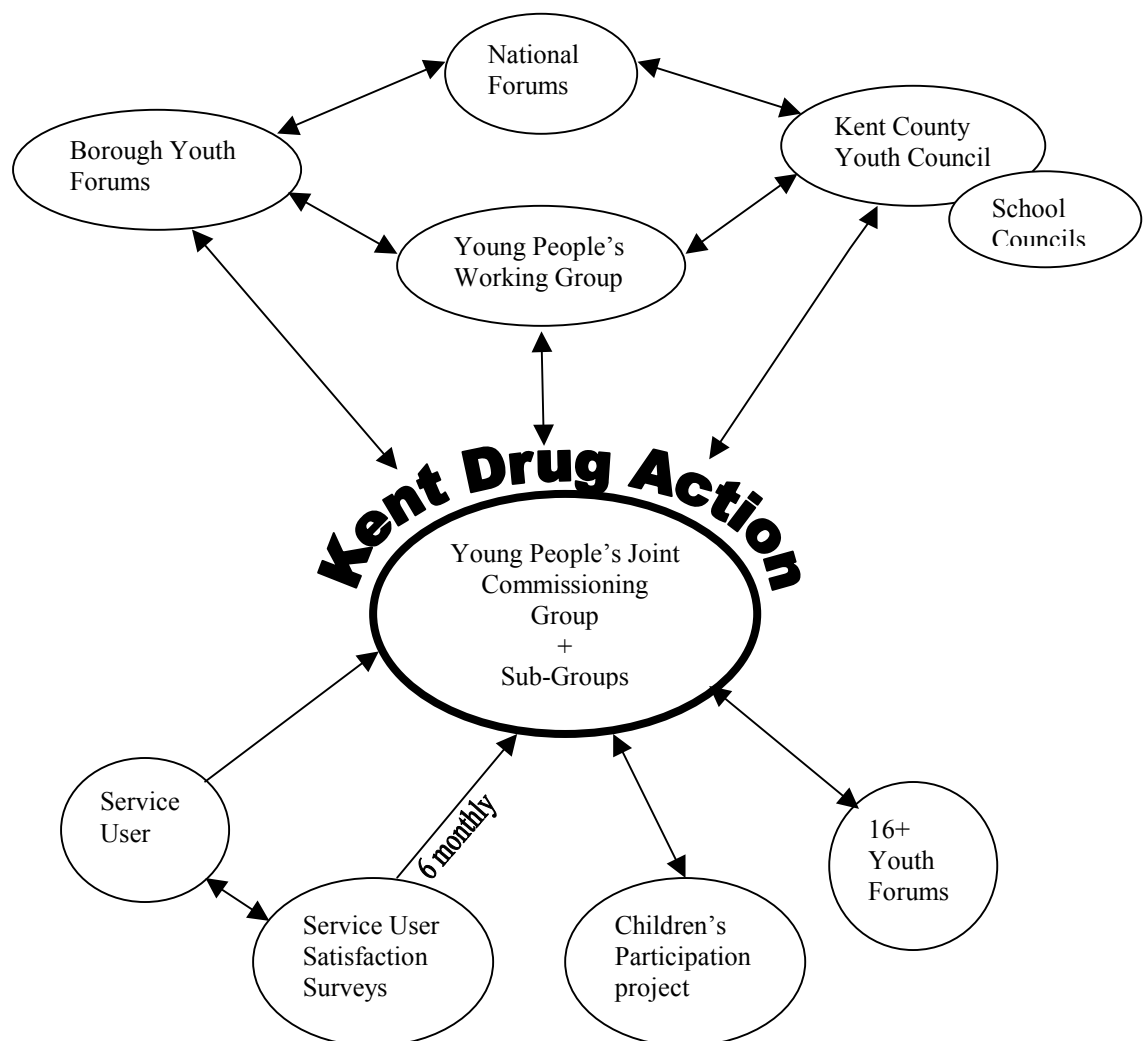
Both Spangle and Stephen indicated that simply attending the Under 19's reference group might not be the most productive use of their time. They indicated that these styles of meetings could be "boring" and indicated a preference of working on more specific issues with smaller groups of people.

The young people suggested that they could bring issues to their associated youth forums and councils for a wider view, support strategies to obtain wider views of young people outside youth councils and be engaged in small working groups around specific issues

### *A Proposed Model of Young People's Consultation in the KDAT*

The figure below provides a suggested model for the consideration of the Under 19's Reference Group and Young People's Joint Commissioning group incorporating the principles of good practice and existing sources of potential young people's consultation as reviewed in this paper.

*Figure 1: Model of Young People's Consultation on Drug Issues*



#### Principles Include:

- ☺ Multiple Methods
- ☺ Inclusive of young people from a variety of backgrounds
- ☺ A mutually beneficial relationship

### *Issues For Discussion*

💬 **Payment?** To consult with young people of 16+ payments of £15 per young person is required. Children of the children's participation project are rewarded with vouchers. However it has been decided by the Kent Youth County Council young people that they should not be paid. The elected adult county councillors then decided that they should receive a £10.00 voucher for their attendance. The young people have accepted this. A decision is required regarding our position on this

💬 **Policy?** Is a policy required regarding when consultation is required by the Young People's Joint Commissioning group?

💬 **Model improvements/alterations?** Are there any additional groups that should be incorporated into the model or other methods to consider? E.g. Parents? Are there practical implications to service providers? For example establishing regular methods of consumer feedback e.g. development of a questionnaire.

💬 **Co-ordination Roles?** Is an identified person required to take lead and co-ordination with regard to consultation with young people?

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