



## **Report of the Young Parliament**

The B&NES Young Parliament took place at Broadlands Academy on Thursday February 11<sup>th</sup> 2016. Over 80 young people attended from 11 different secondary schools, one special school and from a range of settings including Project 28, the CAMHS Young People's Participation Group, the Youth Forum, Off the Record, SPACE (LGBT Group) and prospective candidates for the B&NES Member of Youth Parliament. There were 20 accompanying staff and workshop facilitators and 15 guests, including the Chair of the Council, Cllr Ian Gilchrist.

The event was organised by staff and students of Broadlands School Council in collaboration with the Local Authority.

### **Introductory Speeches**

After short welcoming comments by Broadlands students and the Headteacher, Dean Anderson, there were keynote speeches by members of the Youth Forum and members of Chew Valley Mental Health Team, who discussed the inspirational work they were undertaking to make a difference to the lives of young people locally.

### **Workshops**

There were 4 workshops, co-facilitated by Broadlands students and adults from the Local Authority, Public Health, Off the Record and CAMHS. Following workshop discussion and debate in the morning, students presented their recommendations and action points in the afternoon as follows:-

#### **A. Social media and its impact on mental health**

*What to do if you are a victim of online abuse/harassment*

- Depending on the situation, not responding might be an appropriate course of action
- Speak to someone – friend or adult (teacher, parent or police) depending on the circumstances
- Use online reporting tools
- Challenging the behaviour directly with the person if known – “I don’t like it when you....., it makes me feel.....”

*What actions we can take as an individual / group / school to improve things*

- Raise awareness of what tools and courses of actions are available to everyone
- Set up a Cyber Mentoring scheme as they have done in Norton Hill
- Take part in Safer Internet Day
- Encourage all to know the affect online communication can have
- Help people to develop better online communication skills (be aware of how things may be interpreted)
- Raise awareness of the Bystander effect

## **Sexual Health & Social Media**

One group also discussed the impact that sex can have on mental health and that the following should be covered in PSHE. Anxieties around:-

- Sexually transmitted infections
- Peer pressure / anxiety about having sex , (feeling their friends have done it and they don't want to feel left out)
- Getting it right (pornography paints a very unreal picture of the reality of sex)
- Issues of diversity (ensuring that LGBT issues are covered in Sex and Relationships Education)
- Issues related to pornography and sexual coercion and violence
- General emotional guidance re sexual relationships (not rushing into it and doing it with the wrong person)

## **B. Keeping mentally healthy and reducing stigma**

This group decided on the following recommendations :

- All schools (staff and students) to sign up to a pledge which covers confidentiality (nothing will be shared unless someone is at risk of significant harm)
- Slurs of any type are not acceptable - students and staff will challenge this when they occur - there will be consequences for not following this.
- Diversity will be actively celebrated and each young person's individual needs catered for.

## **C. Ways to increase self esteem**

This group wanted schools to promote kindness and compassion both to fellow students and towards themselves as they believe this leads to better mental health and improved self-esteem. They would like these issues to be included within PSHE but would also like students to be involved in deciding how their school can promote kindness and compassion. They discussed and identified a range of ways to promote kindness towards themselves and others, such as:-

- Random acts of kindness
- Doing something nice for someone new every day
- Smiling at people
- Having a happiness book for people to write things to make them happy
- Doing activities which make you / your friends happy
- Getting outside
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## **D. Where to get help and support on mental health issues**

**Suggestions were:-**

- All schools to have PSHE Lessons to address what to do if you are worried about a range of issues
- Access to a safe, peaceful space to go if they feel stressed and anxious. This place could be staffed with a counsellor or someone that has the time to listen to what they are feeling. Or it could be run by young people

themselves. It should be able to signpost to leaflets posters or websites for further support and be a comfortable space to relax in. This could inform the Secondary resilience hubs being piloted in our schools. The transformation plan talks about having such hubs in all BANES secondary schools and the college.

- Schools to provide ideas on self-help. Have posters and/or lessons with lots of ideas to support you if you are feeling down.
- We mentioned music, pictures, text messages or emails to yourself, having a happiness book to go and read (or make your own).
- School planners as a source of information for websites and phone numbers etc.
- Website links on school websites for them and for parents and schools helping them with strategies for helping themselves etc.
- Assemblies from people who have mental health problems and or work in services like CAMHS

### **Taking action points back to schools / settings**

Delegates were reminded to take the list of action points back to their schools and settings and arrange a meeting with the School Leadership Teams to discuss the issues that had been raised at the Parliament. A follow-up meeting of young people representatives will be held in the near future.

### **Member of Youth Parliament Elections**

The afternoon session also provided an opportunity for the 6 prospective MYP candidates to give short presentations based on their manifestos and for Becky, the current MYP, to explain about the process and importance of the election.

### **Questions to the Expert Panel of adults**

The final session was a question and answer session: delegates to the Parliament had decided on questions to ask the adult panel during their workshops. The panel consisted of Kate Murphy and Judy Allies (School Improvement), Clare Laker (Public Health) , Gill Welsh (CAMHS) , Lisa Benham (Off The Record) and Mike Bowden (Deputy Director , Children and Young People Strategy) . Questions ranged from issues of funding for mental health services , ensuring the reduction of stigma, how to ensure that Sex and Relationships Education takes account of the diversity of relationships (LGBT), providing mental health resources to schools and ensuring that we promote the idea of being kind to yourself (self-compassion) in all settings. There were also questions from the floor about support for parents / carers and CSMHS services.

### **Closing Words**

The Chair of the Council closed the Parliament and thanked all who had attended but especially Broadlands for their excellent organisation and hospitality.

K. Murphy  
February 2016