

The Wakefield Beacon

Enabling Positive Youth Engagement

UNITED KINGDOM YOUTH PARLIAMENT

ELECTION PROCESS IN WAKEFIELD

Background

The UKYP is an independent national charity, which receives the support of over 300 MPs from across the political spectrum and the personal endorsement of the three party leaders. The UKYP aims to give young people in the UK an opportunity to be involved in a democratic process at a national level and to empower young people to take positive action within their local communities based upon their issues of concern. Currently, the UKYP have over 400 elected MYPs, aged between 11 and 18 (inclusive).

MYPs represent both young men and women, including young people from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, and with physical and learning disabilities. Each Local Education Authority (LEA) represents a UKYP constituency, and 90% of the LEAs across England are currently represented on the UKYP. Agreements are also established with Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to ensure that the young people in those countries are represented by the organisation.

Wakefield MYP's

This is the 6th year of MYP elections in Wakefield and the process has engaged more and more young people each year. Over 11,000 votes were cast in 2006. Young people vote to elect two MYPs and two deputies to represent Wakefield District for a period of 12 months.

The Project Team

The election process in Wakefield is facilitated by a group of officers from across the Council, which includes representation from Partnerships and Performance, Elections, Education Advisory Service and the Youth Service as well as additional officers working in ICT who acquire the data from schools, develop the register and issue IDs and passwords.

Each year the UKYP election process gets underway with the drafting of a Project Plan by one of the Council's Project Managers. The plan details all the tasks

required to complete the project and each task is allocated to the appropriate people within the Project Team.

Electoral Register

The Electoral Register is built by combining data from a number of sources, which include Primary Schools, High Schools, Private Schools, Special Schools, Wakefield College and New College Pontefract. Each person on the register is allocated a voter id and password to enable internet and text voting. In 2006 there were over 26,000 young people on the register to enable them to cast their vote.

Role of Elections Team

The role of the Electoral Services Team is to try and ensure that, wherever possible, the UKYP Elections follow the procedures that would be carried out during an 'official' election timetable.

The points listed below give a brief overview of the work carried out by the Electoral Services Team during the election process:

- Prepare and distribute Notice of Election.
- Prepare and issue nomination papers and guidance to candidates.
- Receive and check nomination papers.
- Produce Statement as to Persons Nominated (list of candidates).
- Assist with the preparation and printing of the voting letter (ballot paper).
- Liaise with Design and Print re the printing of the letter. This also involves working closely with the machine room operators to ensure that the correct letters go to the correct schools within the given deadlines.
- Make personal contact with all senior schools prior to the start of the election period re the delivery of the letters and ballot boxes.
- Arrange for the courier service to deliver the letters and ballot boxes to all Local Authority schools in the District.
- Deliver letters and ballot boxes to the private and special schools.
- Arrange for the collection of the ballot boxes from all participating schools.
- Manage all arrangements for the counting and recording of the ballot box votes.
- Participate in the road shows and candidates workshops.
- Deal with telephone calls and enquiries from candidates, voters, school staff and parents.



Role of Citizenship and PSHE Advisor to Schools

A key feature of the Wakefield UKYP election process is the way in which it works with Young People and Schools. The advisors role in this process is to help ensure that schools have the information and resources that they need to both provide an opportunity for young people to stand as candidates, and to allow every young person eligible, to cast their vote. This contributes directly to a schools provision of National Curriculum Citizenship through active participation, and allows children and young people to make a positive contribution to their communities.

The initial aspect of advisor support to schools is the provision of a resource pack for schools to be used in Citizenship lessons and assemblies which outlines what the UK Youth Parliament is and the process for those who wish to stand as a candidate. The resource pack also contains video clips from current and previous MYPs, as well as publicity material. This resource pack is supported by 'road show' visits from members of the UKYP project team to schools that require a higher level of support.

A second resource pack is also issued to schools immediately before the election date to allow schools to build the election process into their Citizenship curriculum. This resource pack contains lesson plans and ideas as well as the manifestos and video clips of all the candidates standing for election. Also included in this is the publicity material for the election date.

Alongside these resource packs the advisors role in the UKYP project team is to support the link with schools where there may be communication issues to follow up or advice relating to school procedures. This may be making sure that schools have the information they need, targeting support on schools where they may be a low turnout, or following up individual school related issues. As part of the curriculum support to schools the advisor incorporates discussion around UKYP election matters into network meetings and individual support for Citizenship coordinators.

Incentives to Vote

As an incentive and encouragement, it was decided to offer a prize draw for all young people who registered a vote in the UKYP election. A letter asking local companies for sponsorship is sent out, around 40 letters last year. With less than 12 responses, some were negative, some positive. Some of the large national organisations, responded that they already had a chosen charity for that year, such as Child Line, Shelter etc. This is worth considering for the future. However, some of the local branches of large national organisations did contribute prizes or vouchers. A relationship with these contacts has now been made, so for future years, a telephone call or email can be used, instead of the formal letter.

The main prize was purchased by the Council/Wakefield District Partnership, together with some vouchers to supplement the donated prizes.

Publicity

It is important our good work with young people receives the positive publicity it deserves.

Our Press Office forward plans and coordinates the appropriate promotion at critical times. This includes advance press releases about the local media event for the UK Youth Parliament, photo calls, radio interviews and information for Local Democracy Week.

Publicity giving feedback on the success of events further improves the Council's reputation and raises its profile. It also helps to celebrate its achievement in engaging with young people.

Candidate Support

As part of the election process we run workshops for the candidates around confidence building, public speaking, developing their manifestos. The young people really enjoy their workshops and the filming session, which follows, where they record their key message for the web site. As part of the process for the candidates we also run a Local Media Event where young people from Wakieshout (the support group for the MYPs) plan the morning with facilitated workshops. Local MPs are invited and as a result of the 2006 event, all the candidates were invited to Westminster by Ed Balls MP and Mary Creagh MP. They all had a really great time being shown around Westminster, sitting in on business and meeting with Ed and Mary for a question and answer session.

The process finale is a Celebration Event where the results are announced.



This information is a brief overview of the UKYP election process in Wakefield. If you would like more detailed information, would like to discuss any aspect further or request a copy of any literature referred to in the guidance note, please contact Andrea Golding, Community Planning Officer, Partnerships and Performance tel: 01924 305745, email ajgolding@wakefield.gov.uk