

Meeting of:	Cabinet
Date of Meeting:	Monday, 11 October 2021
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Learning and Culture
Report Title:	Review of Youth Cabinet and Participation Structures
Purpose of Report:	To consider proposals for the future direction of the Youth Cabinet in order to increase participation of young people.
Report Owner:	Councillor K.F. McCaffer (Cabinet Member for Leisure, Arts and Culture)
Responsible Officer:	Paula Ham, Director of Learning and Skills
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	Senior Youth Manager - Universal Provision Head of Standards and Provision.
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for Executive decision by the Cabinet
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Youth Cabinet has been in effect since 2014. In recent years recruitment to the group has been a challenge. • There is a proposal to change the constitution of the Youth Cabinet and the wider structure of participation within the Youth Service to increase the opportunities for young people to access and become involved. 	

Recommendations

1. That Cabinet agrees to change the current Youth Cabinet constitution to remove the requirement for young people to be members of the Vale Youth Forum (VYF) to enable them to be elected to the Youth Cabinet.
2. That Cabinet considers the proposal to develop a Vale Big Voice Forum to support wider access to participation and opportunities for young people (YP) across the Vale of Glamorgan.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. The proposal would increase the opportunities for young people to access and become involved.
2. More young people would be able to become involved in The Vale Big Voice Project.

1. Background

- 1.1 The first Youth Cabinet was elected in 2014. The Vale Youth Service (YS) provided staffing to deliver the Youth Cabinet project. Youth Mayors have been elected as part of the Youth Cabinet over time.
- 1.2 The Youth Cabinet elects its members from the Vale Youth Forum (VYF). The VYF is a registered charity run by a board of trustees. VYF is made up of young people aged 11-25 who attend school, work or reside in the Vale of Glamorgan. The young people involved are called Vale Youth Forum members. The VYF has been the singular Vale wide forum for many years and was intrinsically linked to the Youth Cabinet when the constitution was established. The constitution (Appendix 1) states "The VOGYC (Vale of Glamorgan Youth Cabinet) is an opportunity open to all young people in the Vale of Glamorgan.....", however VOGYC members need to be an active member of the Vale Youth Forum and must have completed the induction training programme before they can be elected as a Youth Councillor or Youth Mayor.
- 1.3 The Vale Youth Service was restructured in 2018. This included significant changes to the delivery of participation within the service and led to a change in Youth Service staff support to the Vale Youth Forum. At this time the Vale Youth Forum discussed becoming a more independent entity.
- 1.4 It became clear by Autumn 2019 that elections were going to be difficult to run due to a lack of young people engaged with the VYF and Youth Cabinet regularly discussed concerns about lack of engagement and the future of the group. Ongoing discussions were held with VYF. At a joint Cabinet meeting in December 2019 it was decided to review the current arrangements and to consider how more young people could become involved. As the pandemic impacted, we took the decision to 'pause' the Youth Cabinet including any elections due to the ongoing uncertainty. The Youth Cabinet continued to meet and worked on a number of successful projects including work to promote votes at 16. The team

and young people restarted consultation work, produced a SWOT analysis and an options paper (Appendix 2).

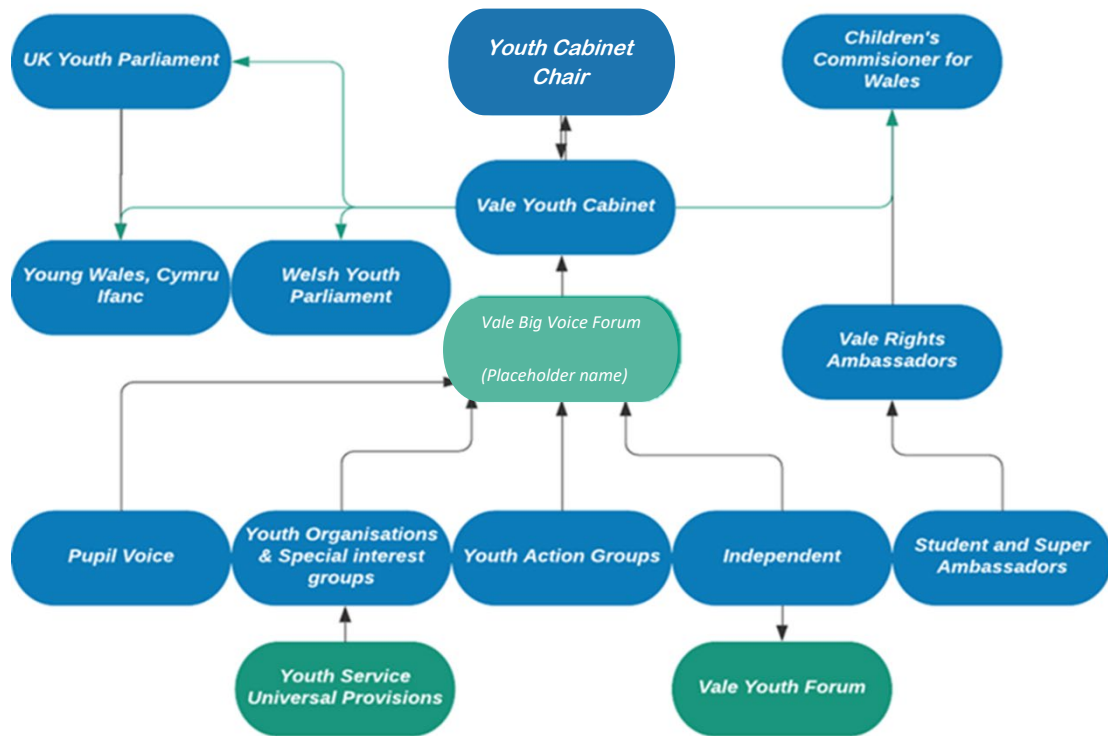
- 1.5 Local Authorities have a duty to promote and facilitate participation of children and young people in decisions which might affect them under Annex B of the Future Generations Act.
- 1.6 Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 also outlines a requirement for a Local Authority participation strategy and discusses the need to promote and provide assistance arrangements for registration as local government electors.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1 As of April 2021, the Vale Youth Cabinet (YC) have two remaining Elected Members which leaves the YC without sufficient core membership to operate. This naturally has implications regarding the quoracy of meetings.
- 2.2 Young people involved in the Youth Cabinet have indicated they want a change to their meetings. Representatives from across the Youth Service participation groups (Youth Cabinet, Penarth Youth Action, Llantwit Youth Council and the Rights Ambassadors project) fed into a SWOT analysis which also indicated that a change was necessary for more young people to gain access to the projects. The current organisational arrangements have shown to no longer be effective. A pool of young people who could be elected to the Youth Cabinet is presently not available.
- 2.3 We have found that as the YC is a small group, there can be a significant time commitment for the young people involved which, along with other interests, can be difficult for them to manage. This also means that the same small group of YP are asked to get involved in a lot of consultation or developmental work. A broader group of YP to develop work streams would be beneficial.
- 2.4 There are increasing opportunities for YP to work on local and regional initiatives such as Starting Well Partnership or Public Service Board that we currently do not have the capacity or access to young people to support. In the same way, our capacity to support work on national participation projects such work with Young Wales, Welsh Youth Parliament and UK Youth Parliament is limited.
- 2.5 To address these concerns, we make the following proposals:
 - We propose that we retain the Youth Cabinet (YC), but a constitutional change is made to allow young people from outside the Vale Youth Forum to become elected. The Cabinet would remove the Youth Mayor function but elect a chair annually. The YC would continue to focus on LA priorities, supporting scrutiny committees / other council departments and providing feedback from young people they represent. In addition, we propose that the Vale Youth Service runs a 'youth led forum' (Placeholder name – Vale Big Voice Forum). Members of the BVF would be elected to sit on the Youth Cabinet and feed the wider views of the BVF into cabinet discussion. This forum would operate under different terms to the Youth Cabinet. This model was favoured by the 2019 – 2020 Youth Cabinet.

- 2.6** The Vale Big Voice Forum (BVF) would act as a central meeting point for young people involved in participation. Anyone aged 11 – 25 from across the Vale of Glamorgan could join the BVF. These meetings would be open access and have activities facilitated by youth workers. Additional personal needs such as transport and dietary requirements would be addressed by the Youth Service.
- 2.7** Recruitment would be managed by staff who will explore diverse methods of promoting the project such as: word of mouth, working with organisations to promote the projects and support young people to access, promotion through social media, promotion via staff fora and the Youth Service’s universal provisions. Promotion could be further undertaken by engagement with existing pupil voice organisations and communication with specialist groups.
- 2.8** A young person would chair the meetings and YP would be tasked with bringing discussion points to the meeting. A young person would be elected to fulfil the function of chair. Staff will also be able to provide input into the agenda items and support the chair.
- 2.9** Key national and local consultations could be addressed. There could be involvement with the Electoral Registration service to encourage voter registration and feedback on key council agendas. Task groups could be formed for specific areas of interest and could also be directed by Make Your Mark results (Make Your Mark is an annual opportunity for young people to vote on key areas of interest for UK Youth Parliament to focus on in the coming year). We would be able to access local votes to understand key issues for young people in the Vale. Pre-Covid, almost 4000 Vale of Glamorgan young people voted, so this provides a good evidence base).

VOG Participation Tree



- 2.10** It is envisaged that these changes will support widening participation by maximising inclusion from across youth groups, fora and communities across the Vale of Glamorgan including independent groups such as Urdd Cardiff and Vale Youth Forum, and special interest groups such as Vale Young Carers and Vale People First
- 2.11** Although there are benefits to these changes, they will also present challenges. Dedicated staff members will be vital in supporting the development of these groups.
- 2.12** The creation of Vale Big Voice Project may create confusion to external partners with regards to who to contact when looking for an authority-wide forum. It could be considered that there will be two groups that may now fulfil this function. Clear expectations of both Vale Big Voice Project and Youth Cabinet will be important to ensure they have different functions. It is also important to consider providing a structure that looks and feels different to the Vale Youth Forum.

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

- 3.1** The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 (“the 2015 Act”) requires the Council to think about the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities and each other and to prevent persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change.

3.2 The Council has committed as part of the Corporate Plan 2020-2025 to achieving a vision of 'Working Together for a Brighter Future'. This plan is reflective of the Welsh Government's Well-being of Future Generations Act and is comprised of four Well-being objectives to deliver this vision:

- Objective 1 - To work with and for our communities
- Objective 2 - To support learning, employment and sustainable economic growth
- Objective 3 - To support people at home and in their community
- Objective 4 - To respect, enhance and enjoy our environment

3.3 To make sure we are all working towards the same purpose, the 2015 Act puts in place seven well-being goals on the Council. The 2015 Act makes it clear the listed public bodies must work to achieve all of the goals, not just one or two, these being:

- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales
- A healthier Wales
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A Wales of vibrant culture and Welsh Language
- A globally responsible Wales

3.4 Youth Service participation opportunities contribute to achieving the wellbeing goals by:

- Supporting young people in decision making processes of the Council.
- Providing personal and social skills development opportunities

3.5 The 2015 Act imposes a duty on all public bodies in Wales to carry out "sustainable development", defined as being, "The process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the well-being goals." The action that a public body takes in carrying out sustainable development includes setting and publishing well-being objectives and taking all reasonable steps in exercising its functions to meet those objectives.

3.6 The 2015 Act sets out five ways of working needed for the Council to achieve the seven well-being goals, these being:

- The importance of balancing short-term needs with the needs to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs.
- Considering how the Council's objectives impact upon each of the wellbeing goals listed above.

- The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the Council services.
- Acting in collaboration with other persons and organisations that could help the Council meet its wellbeing objectives.
- Acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse.

3.7 This proposal meets the five ways of working by:

- Considering a long-term plan for youth participation in the Vale of Glamorgan.
- Continuing to involve young people in the design of projects to ensure it meets their needs.
- Supporting active engagement of young people in the wider decision-making processes within the Council.
- Working with partners to support young people to meet objectives.

4. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 4.1** The service recognises that to run the Youth Cabinet and a Vale Big Voice Project will require significant youth worker support. As such recruitment of up to three new youth workers will ideally be required to ensure the proposed structure functions effectively. With potential savings during the present financial year, we would employ one (25hr per week, 40 weeks per year) post until March 2022. From the 1st of April onwards, further consideration will be given to prioritising resource and wider recruitment into this area. Funding could be redirected from external grants to fund the posts and/or colleagues within the YS may be re-purposed. Appointments will be made on a temporary basis until permanent funding can be identified.
- 4.2** The Youth Cabinet currently receives £2,000 from the Democratic Services Department within the Council to support resources and activities associated with their work.

Employment

- 4.3** There is a possibility that up to three additional roles will be required to support the development of the project, as indicated in paragraph 4.1, above.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 4.4** There are no legal implications.

5. Background Papers

None.



Appendix 4b

Constitution of the Vale of Glamorgan Youth Cabinet

Name

The name of the body shall be the **Vale of Glamorgan Youth Cabinet** (VOGYC), and hereafter in this document shall be referred to as VOGYC.

The VOGYC will receive development and administrative support from Vale of Glamorgan Council Youth Service and aided when appropriate by the Vale Youth Forum (VYF).

Terms of Reference

- To promote and encourage activities, events and opportunities for young people from the Vale of Glamorgan.
- To encourage and initiate communication between young people and local and national Government.
- To raise the profile of young people in a positive way.
- To gather the views of young people in the Vale of Glamorgan by using a variety of consultation methods such as surveys, focus groups, consultation events and by using social media.
- To ensure the Vale of Glamorgan Council (VOGC) is aware of the needs of individuals or groups of young people who may experience disadvantage or are unable to speak for themselves thus representing their views.
- To be a voice for the young people in Vale of Glamorgan and to represent their views to decision-makers within the VOGC.
- To inform the VOGC Cabinet of young people's views so that they can make decisions about young people more effectively.
- To take an active role and present a young person's perspective on VOGC events, decisions and grant-making activities.
- To meet and work with groups and agencies that work with and around the issues affecting young people to ensure the needs of young people are addressed.
- To form subgroups as and where appropriate to carry out the work of the VOGYC. These subgroups will report progress and conclusions to the full youth Cabinet.
- To participate in national and regional initiatives, such as Funky Dragon and UK Youth Parliament events.
- To celebrate the achievements and successes of young people in the Vale of Glamorgan.
- To plan, organise and deliver 'thematic' events for young people in the Vale of Glamorgan that explore issues and enable young people to share their views, ideas and opinions.
- To inform young people in the Vale of Glamorgan of the work of VOGYC by using various communication methods such as local newspapers, social media and Swoosh.

VOGYC Membership

- The VOGYC shall consist of a maximum of 7 youth councillors including the Youth Mayor.
- All VOGYC members must be between the ages of 11 – 25 years inclusive on their acceptance to VOGYC and will be called 'Youth Councillors'.
- VOGYC members must be residents of the Vale of Glamorgan.
- The VOGYC is an opportunity open to all young people in the Vale of Glamorgan however VOGYC members need to be part of the Vale Youth Forum before they can be elected as a youth councillor or youth mayor.
- Vale Youth Forum members cannot stand as a candidate for VOGYC after their 25th birthday.
- A cabinet of youth councillors and the youth mayor position is elected annually by secret ballot during 'Local Democracy week' in October. All young people in the Vale of Glamorgan should be given an opportunity to vote for the youth mayor position. The number of votes received by candidates in any election will not be revealed.
- The term of office for each youth councillor and youth mayor will be one year from the election event. VOGYC members are eligible to stand for re-election.
- A member of VOGYC may resign at anytime by informing the youth mayor or Youth Participation Trainee in writing.

VOGYC positions

- The Youth Councillors and the Youth Mayor will have a role description outlining their duties and responsibilities and will be consulted on their development and training needs. They will also develop a Code of Conduct that they all must agree to abide by. Once developed, Youth Councillors will need to act appropriately in line with the agreed Code of Conduct.
- The VOGYC will elect a Youth Mayor and a Deputy Youth Mayor. The appointment of the Deputy Youth Mayor will be undertaken at the first meeting of VOGYC.
- The Youth Mayor will assume the lead and chair of the VOGYC; in his/her absence the Deputy will chair the VOGYC meetings.
- Youth Councillors once elected will be appointed for a term of office of a minimum of one year. Elections for the VOGYC will be scheduled to coincide with Local Democracy Week in October each year.
- The VOGYC may identify and appoint other roles for its members as it considers necessary to meet the work needs of VOGYC. This could be as task and finish groups, researchers and/or advocacy roles.
- The VOGYC members will be assisted and supported by the Youth Participation Trainee.

VOGYC Meetings

- The VOGYC will meet at least once per month.
- The VOGYC may hold additional meetings to address specific issues and tasks as and when it considers necessary.

- The Youth Councillors are VYF members and will therefore also attend the VYF meetings.
- The VOGYC may invite individuals or interested parties having special knowledge or experience relevant to any matter under consideration by the VOGYC to participate in VOGYC meetings. These parties will have no voting rights.
- All decisions taken at the VOGYC meetings are by a simple majority vote; a secret ballot can be asked for at any time. If there is an equality of votes then the Youth Mayor will be permitted to exercise a casting vote. Decision-making by voting can only take place if 3 of the current members are present. The minimum number of members required to hold a meeting will be 3.
- VOGYC members will be required to feed back the content of their discussions and decisions at VYF meetings and share the minutes of the VOGYC with all VYF members. Administrative, organisational tasks and preparation of papers will be completed by the Youth Participation Trainee in tandem with members of the VOGYC.
- Members of the VOGYC are expected to attend all VOGYC meetings. Where this is not possible they must send their apologies to the Youth Mayor or in absence the Deputy Youth Mayor. Such will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.
- If a Youth Councillor is absent from three or more meetings then contact should be made by the Youth Mayor or the Youth Participation trainee to enquire the reason.

Relationship with the Vale of Glamorgan Council Cabinet

- The VOGYC will meet once per school term with the full VOGC Cabinet.
- The Youth Mayor may meet with the Leader of the VOGC separately from the VOGYC.
- Minutes of the VOGYC meetings will be reported to a meeting of the VOGC Cabinet.
- The VOGYC will jointly agree with the VOGC Cabinet on areas of mutual work and policies that they wish to be consulted upon or engaged with as jointly deemed appropriate.

Political Views

- The VOGYC is a non- political group.
- VOGYC members may hold allegiance or membership of a political party, but cannot express their political views as a VOGYC member or on behalf of VOGYC.
- VOGYC members can meet with any political party at any time as long as it is not used in any way to gain votes for that party.

Equal opportunities

- All members of VOGYC are equal in status regardless of sexuality, race, age, gender, religion, ability, culture, lifestyle or background.
- VOGYC are committed to pursuing Equality of Opportunity for all. VOGYC will ensure fairness is built into all they do.

- All those involved in the work of VOGYC will be expected to promote equality and justice at all opportunities and will ensure that no-one is treated unfairly or discriminated against.
- All those working with VOGYC will be expected to challenge any forms of prejudice or discrimination.

Finance and Budget

- The VOGYC finances and budgets will be administered under the same policies, guidelines and financial procedural rules as the VOGC.
- The Youth Participation Trainee will take responsibility for the monitoring of any finances and budgets, including any funds raised by VOGYC members or any external funding received for the VOGYC.
- Any funds raised by the VOGYC members will be placed in its bank account by the Youth Participation Trainee.
- VOGYC members may be reimbursed travel expenses when undertaking particular tasks for the VOGYC.

Alterations / Dissolution

- The VOGYC Constitution may only be amended by a majority decision at the first annual meeting of the VOGYC or at a special meeting called for that purpose.
- The VOGYC may be dissolved by a majority decision at a meeting of all its members together with the Leader of the VOGC and the Chair of the VYF trustees, called for this specific purpose.
- The reasons for the dissolution must be made in writing and sent to all Youth Councillors and VYF members, the VOGC cabinet and VYF trustees two weeks before the date of the meeting.

This Constitution was ratified by:

Leader of the Vale of Glamorgan Council:

Date:

Chair of the Vale Youth Forum trustees:

Date:

Youth Mayor:

Date:

Appendix - Vale Youth Forum Information

VYF Membership

The Vale Youth Forum (VYF) is made up of young people aged 11-25 from all over the Vale of Glamorgan County; the young people involved are called Vale Youth Forum members.

The VYF aims to be representative of all young people and will encourage statutory and voluntary youth groups and provisions as well as secondary school councils to elect representatives onto the Forum at any time. If a youth forum member “drops out” then the organisation they came from can send a replacement.

Independent young people who do not represent a school or organisation may wish to become part of the Forum however the number of independents will be limited.

To ensure that the views and voice of minority groups and harder to engage young people are represented on the VYF; young people from these groups may be co-opted onto the Forum. These may include: looked after children, young carers, young people with disabilities, young parents, young offenders, homeless young people, and young people from ethnic minority group, LGBT young people, refugees, asylum seekers or young people from travelling communities.

Youth Service staff SWOT analysis of current participation structure

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Lots of staff involved who can dedicate time to groups Collaboration between staff and young people Groups well established Variety of groups, young people have a choice, Groups in a variety of locations Variety of young people involved Youth-led campaigns and Examples of meaningful participation Staff and young people adapting to new digital way of working during COVID-19 Links with partners /organisations Young people given opportunities to make new friends and socialise Staff and young people encouraged to try new things, outside of comfort zone External consultations/surveys Local groups work well (e.g. YAG) Well run Youth Mayor election campaigns / MYM campaigns VOGBlog as a platform to connect groups</p>	<p>Too much chop and change in support / reporting to SYW / inconsistency in reporting to SYW, manager Where does RAP sit? Not enough promotion of work Overlap of young people Recruitment Attendance due to digital working Lack of participation embedded in other Universal areas No project in Barry / more rural areas Vale Youth Forum membership Unable to elect YC 20/21 and Youth Mayor20/21 Limited requests from VOGC to hear from young people – capacity related Investment in new links with community v partners Lack of involvement in national participation work Inconsistency in support from Town Councils / Councillors Young people not always interested in some consultation topics, consultation documents / surveys not young person friendly Lack of county wide platform</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<p>Termly participation update to managers etc. Digital new member training Digital voting (needs to be anonymous) Improved networking with partners Standards Kitemark / Charter Youth Achievement Award</p>	<p>COVID-19 Schools can feel attacked by young people Schools/teachers not on board with participation work Recruitment Funding</p>

Young people SWOT analysis of current participation structure

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Participation helps us to be informed about Penarth and what we can do to make it better. Participation improves our social skills and teaches us how to interact with other people. It helps us to improve our confidence. Being PYA chair helped me to learn about presenting in front of people and how to be more organized. Participation allows us to be a part of our local community which is good. Still being able to</p>	<p>Participation work takes a long time Sometimes participation feels a bit pointless, have we really done anything or changed anything? For example the Kymin mural is now on a building on the other side of Penarth and nothing has really happened with the anti-social behavior element of the project. Sometimes it just feels like a tick box exercise for adults to say yeah we got young people involved. This can be really discouraging.</p>

<p>meet digitally Have the opportunity to work on video to raise awareness of rights Gaining skills in communications / speaking out New opportunities to meet new people and groups Personal development Volunteering opportunities Good for CV Make friends Increased understanding of your community Youth Cabinet allows young people to have a voice Brings all groups together in one place / Very good at distributing information back to groups Lots of events Get stuff done and affects the community.</p>	<p>Not being able to go into schools due to Covid Unable to deliver workshops which is one of the main purposes of project. No local platform in Barry for young people to discuss/ work on things they matter like a forum Unable to make contact with VYF Communication especially when working digitally Barry doesn't have a youth action group Are young people represented at BTC? Numbers have been low for two years / More people that join Youth Cabinet the better Recruitment Current issues with constitution preventing recruitment as permission needed Trying to get stuff done such as Vote @ 16 but haven't completed as much Issue with following with an idea then moving onto the next one</p>
<p>Opportunities</p>	<p>Threats</p>
<p>Collaborative working e.g. Period Poverty Join new groups Co-opted members More needed for young people to hear about Youth Cabinet More promotion of work as lots of young people not really aware. More opportunities needed for young people to find out about what is available in the Vale and how to join groups. To learn new skills and try new experiences Promote to future recruitment to school councils Social media posts to promote topical issues affecting young people More roles so members can speak to more people such as ministers and governors on 1:1 basis Helps in future e.g. UCAS applications Young people presented well in the media & community Diversify Develop communication, leadership, teamwork and organisational skills.</p>	<p>Nothing specifically raised, although adjusting to working with Covid has meant that the project isn't really working as it normally does, harder to do things set out last year. To avoid recruitment of the same 'type of person' more diversity as its not currently diverse Needs to reach out to groups in society Time, as there feels like there's lots of time but it's not enough Less numbers as those moving on are a similar age.</p>