

# Working with Young People

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A key element of Gravesham Borough Council's work around promoting race equality in the borough has been the work carried out with young people.

In partnership with North West Kent Racial Equality Council, Gravesham has developed a series of events specifically designed to bring together young people from different ethnic backgrounds within Gravesham. A Youth Council has been established and is made up of representatives from local schools and youth organisations. Proactive work took place to ensure that minority ethnic youth were represented on the youth council.

A Future Citizens Project was developed which involved working with local secondary schools, to run a series of seminars discussing issues around diversity, good community relations and what promoting race equality means. This allowed young people to become more aware of the work that the council, in partnership with the REC, were doing to promote good community relations within the borough.

Gravesham has also used sports and the arts as a means of engaging with young people. Recent successes include the Connecting Communities Cup, the work done through the Kent Football Partnership, the Big Day Out and the Vaisakhi Education Day.

This proactive approach has allowed the council to not only send out a positive message to the young people around the work it was doing on race equality, but it has also allowed the council to develop a dialogue with schools, youth groups and with young people in the borough, to ensure that meaningful projects are worked on for the future.



Top Tip	Purpose
<b>Set up a youth forum/ youth council</b>	Carry out proactive work with local schools and youth clubs to establish a forum that is representative of the local community. Ensure that the Forum is not dominated by one school or youth club, which could hamper its long-term development and progress. Undertake positive work with young people to promote the benefits of membership. Develop a work plan in conjunction with young people, council officers and other community leaders, which has clear aims and objectives that remain achievable and realistic and that will interest and engage young people.
<b>Workshops for young people</b>	Be proactive and prepared to go out to the local community. Develop a workshop that would highlight issues around race equality and community cohesion that could be delivered to schools, colleges, youth clubs and other community groups etc. Get young people involved in the planning of the sessions and encourage them to dictate the content and pace wherever possible. Be audience aware and where appropriate make subtle changes to content and delivery without losing sight of key messages and target objectives. Extend workshops to involve agencies such as the Police, Race Equality Councils or minority ethnic groups in the delivery of the sessions.
<b>Organise a young people's conference with a difference!</b>	Organise a conference for young people on subjects that interest young people and also meet the local agenda. Hold it in the evening or possibly at the weekend to maximise attendance potential, so that young people who may not be in education have the opportunity to participate. Have a hook to attract the young people. Organise a disco, band or DJ to perform at a special event held directly after the conference. Presentations, workshops and discussion forums should be lively and interactive. The conference can be used as a platform to discuss issues around race equality. By having the party element attached to the conference this not only promotes participation but also demonstrates that the involvement of young people in decision-making processes is valued. Keep the conference element focused with clear boundaries and timings. Ensure the event is promoted in the local community, local shops, internet cafes, and local schools and youth clubs. Encourage young people to take ownership by promoting the event themselves, in addition to their being involved in the planning and delivery.
<b>Hold meetings at a convenient time and location</b>	It is essential to only organise meetings once there has been consultation with young people on what their needs and requirements are, which will encourage maximum attendance. Ensure the location is central, and easily accessible especially from local schools. Alternative meeting points such as the local Pizza Restaurant, Bowling Alley or internet cafe are likely to attract young people and encourage them to attend. More importantly this gives rise to self confidence and also assists young people to be more relaxed.
<b>Don't overload individuals</b>	Be realistic when working with young people. Don't try to overburden them with extra work on top of any school or college work they are doing. Don't expect the young people to do all your work for you. Be prepared to help and support young people who may be working with you through a Youth Council or Youth Forum and remember, work at their pace; this will in turn provide effective and successful forums.
<b>Offer rewards</b>	Offer rewards or periodic incentives to young people to get them involved and demonstrate that their involvement is valued. This could be linked to other council projects around health and fitness for example, by offering day passes to Leisure Centres. Your simple prior consultation will prove useful here to determine what motivates or would be an incentive to them.
<b>Use of sports, music and the arts</b>	Sports, music and the arts are good ways of engaging with young people and promoting race equality at the same time, and do get young people from the different communities together to have fun and share their experiences. This will also provide an opportunity for your organisation to carry out some consultation or inform them of various council projects, involve them in decision making processes, give them the opportunity to affect change and improve accessibility to and delivery of services to young people.