

Showcase event celebrates the work of Norwood's Young People's Focus Group

9 December 2009

Norwood's innovative Young People's Focus Group (YPPG) was showcased at a special event held at the National Children's Bureau in Islington, on Monday, 30 November. It was attended by Norwood staff, Trustees and five young people, as well as representatives from schools, local authorities and bodies including the Children's Society and 11 Million – an organisation led by the Children's Commissioner for England.

The aim of the event was to demonstrate the development of the YPPG project since it was launched in 2005, following a grant from the Big Lottery Fund. The YPPG ensures that the voices of children with disabilities are heard and are able to influence organisational strategy. While celebrating the story so far, the event also considered the next stages of developing this crucial area of Norwood's work.

Guests were welcomed by nine-year-old YPPG committee member Leah, followed by presentations from Norwood Chief Executive Norma Brier, Norwood Development Manager, Sonia Muscovitch and YPPG Participation Worker, Hayley Shenholds.

They also heard from 15 year-old Michael, another YPPG committee member. "I like meeting with the other children and sharing ideas," he said. "We listen to each other's opinions and have the chance to express ourselves."

He told the guests how the YPPG has planned and arranged a number of events and activities for all the young people who use Norwood services. "I am very pleased that I have been able to make children happy – it makes me happy as well," he said. "Going to the YPPG has improved my confidence as I have met people I did not know before. It has helped me to feel more grown up and independent."

The morning's programme included a screening of a film about the YPPG, group discussions and a panel question and answer session. One of the panellists was Leonard Lang, whose 10 year-old son is a YPPG committee member.

Mr Lang, whose son has global developmental delay and epilepsy, said: "It is very important for him to make decisions about what he wants to do. He knows what he wants, and can make it quite clear even if he can't say it."

David Harris, Norwood's Director of Operational Services, said: "I haven't met a young person yet who didn't have an opinion, and Norwood felt it was high time to take notice of the views of the children and young people who use our services.

"Since its inception four years ago, the YPPG has become increasingly significant to the way we develop our children's services and it was fantastic to be able to show off its progress. The vital feedback we receive from the YPPG ensures that Norwood offers the services that our young people want. It also builds their confidence and enables them to be and feel more independent."

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Broadway House, 80-82 The Broadway, Stanmore HA7 4HB