



CABINET – 25TH JUNE 2025

SUBJECT: YOUTH FORUM PRIORITIES

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Cabinet of the issues raised by Young People via the Youth Service's Youth Forum.
- 1.2 To seek the views of members in how the issue outlined in the report can be addressed.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Following the Annual Youth Forum Conference in January 2025, Young People have identified current issues that are important to them and have voted on a Priority Issue for 2025.
- 2.2 The agreed process that follows the identification of issues is as follows:
 - Presentation of issues to Education SMT for information.
 - Young People present issues to Education Scrutiny and Cabinet for information and support.
 - Issues are presented directly by Young People.
 - Young People form a Project Group that meets weekly to address the Youth Forum priority issue, working directly with Officers and Members as appropriate on a range of initiatives intended to have a positive impact on the issue. This work will continue until December 2025.
 - Progress, outcomes, and impact, as a result of young people working to address the priority issue, is monitored through Education's termly monitoring of the Service Improvement Plan.
 - The work of the project group draws to a close ahead of the next conference (January 2026), when the process restarts, and new priority issues are identified. Final impact assessments are completed, and young people receive feedback on progress made.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Cabinet are asked to:

- a) support the presentation of Youth Forum issues, by young people.
- b) consider how to support the Youth Forum in addressing their Priority Issue.
- c) to have due regard to issues raised within this report by Young People when making decisions which impact upon their lives.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To ensure members are informed of the priorities identified by young people, and that the voices of young people are considered as part of decision-making processes.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 The Youth Forum enables young people aged 11-25 to have a voice on issues that affect them. Each year, young people's ideas and issues are identified in a borough wide consultation, structured and organised around five themes: Prosperous Caerphilly; Safer Caerphilly; Learning Caerphilly; Healthier Caerphilly; and Greener Caerphilly.
- 5.2 At the Annual Youth Forum Conference Young People are provided with the opportunity to further explore the issues raised via the borough wide consultation and engage in a dialogue with peers. From exploring all themes within the context of young people's lives, young people identify and agree on a priority issue for each theme.
- 5.3 Following the Conference, an overall priority is voted for by young people representing the Youth Service, Schools, and Youth Support Services. The issues are listed below, with the percentage detailing the proportion of the vote through a borough wide ballot in which 2,383 young people participated. The issue with the most votes is the 'priority issue' and the one in which the youth forum will work on for 2025.
- 34% Learning Caerphilly - **Priority Issue**
School toilets – We need more toilets in our schools to be opened throughout the day in order to be able to use them freely and sensibly.
 - 24% Safer Caerphilly
Personal safety – We need to feel safe in our communities on public transport and walking home at night to keep ourselves safe
 - 19% Healthier Caerphilly
Physical and Mental health – We need to educate young people about positive body image, eating the right food for a balance of nutrition and inform young people of tools to help overcome mental health issues.
 - 13% Greener Caerphilly
Littering – We need more visible bins in our communities, and we need to educate people around littering and recycling and encourage people to be more environmentally aware.

- 10% Prosperous Caerphilly
Employment – We need more help and support around getting employment, setting up a business or becoming self-employed including on how to secure work experience and applying for financial support available.

5.4 Following the ballot to identify the overall priority issue, the Youth Forum project group has further consulted with young people via school councils and the youth service to explore the issue and gain a more informed insight into why this is a matter of concern for young people.

The consultation feedback will assist the project group in generating ideas on how to address the issue. Some of the common themes emerging from the consultation include:

- School toilets are mostly only open at break & lunch times in secondaries, resulting in very busy or inaccessible toilets.
- Most young people are allowed to access the toilets in lessons if they have a pass for a medical condition or are given a toilet pass by their teacher.
- In Primary Schools, College and EOTAS provision (Education Other Than At School), toilets are open freely throughout the day.
- Secondary school toilets are closed due to safety, people vaping, using phones, mitching, damage, no locks/broken locks, intended blockages, graffiti, people eating in toilets... Young people are aware of the many issues, one secondary school have reportedly spent in excess of £40,000 in damages to the school toilets.
- Young people understand why toilets have restricted/limited access, but feel it is unfair and leads to issues such as pupils not drinking during the day to avoid the need for the toilet, they are concerned about the health risk of holding it in all day, some have no period dignity as unable to take their bags in, many are too intimidated or unable to use during the break times as they are so full.
- Some young people report that requests to use the toilet during lessons can result in a negative mark against your name or a negative behaviour point on class charts in some schools, this causes issues for some young people.
- *'There is a contradiction between pupils understanding their human right to go to the toilet when they want to and the need to have a set of rules for toilet usage in a big organisation like a school' (feedback from one school council).*

5.5 Over the next month, the Youth Forum Project Group will devise a programme of work that is feasible for young people to carry out between now and December with the aim of addressing the priority issue. This will involve linking with Secondary School Heads and following up on a recommendation made by one of our secondary schools during the consultation phase to visit a secondary school in a neighbouring authority to discuss best practice.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

6.1 In considering the recommendations the following assumptions have been made:

- Enabling children and young people to have a voice in matters that affect them is a statutory duty and the Youth Forum and the processes that support it, provides the mechanism in which this statutory duty is fulfilled.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 This report provides information and asks for support; therefore, an integrated impact assessment has not been completed at this time.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no financial implications with respect to this report.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no personnel implications with respect to this report.

10. CONSULTATIONS

10.1 This report was presented by the Youth Forum Vice Chair at a Special Meeting of the Education and Social Services Committee on 3rd June 2025. Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation, this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee:

- a) Supported the presentation of Youth Forum issues, by young people, to the Cabinet.
- b) Considered how to support the Youth Forum in addressing their Priority Issue.
- c) Have due regard to issues raised within this report by Young People when making decisions which impact upon their lives.

consultee

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 'Shared Purpose: Shared Future, Statutory Guidance on the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015', and in particular SPSF 3 – Annex B, which is issued in accordance with Section 17(3) of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 and applies to local authorities in respect of local well-being plans and whenever they take decisions which might affect children and young people.

11.2 The Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010, Section 12 requires local

authorities to promote and facilitate participation by children in decisions of the authority which might affect them.

Author: Lee Kabza, Youth Forum Coordinator

Consultees: Richard (Ed) Edmunds, Chief Executive
Mark S Williams, Executive Director Corporate and Regeneration
Councillor Sean Morgan, Leader of the Council
Councillor Jamie Pritchard, Deputy Leader of the Council
Councillor Carol Andrews, Cabinet Member for Education and Communities
Leanne Sykes, Deputy Director of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer
Lynne Donovan, Director of People Services
Headteacher's Consultation Group
Keri Cole, Director of Education
Paul Warren, Strategic Lead for School Improvement
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