**East of England Young People’s forum**

**Thursday 28th March 2024**

**Meeting 1 – 10:00 – 11:00**

**In attendance**

Bedford

Suffolk

Essex

Cambridgeshire

Luton

**Minutes**

Social media vote – Our first agenda item was to ask young people what they thought was the most effective way of using social media to let everyone know about Voices of the East! What came out on top from this group was **YouTube.** Young people felt YouTube was a good option because everyone can access it, it’s good for a range of ages and it can be a gateway into other things.

**Facebook** & **TikTok** was also mentioned.

Mental health – As we know all know, mental health is the first chosen topic amongst our group. Over the past 2-months we have been collecting views from across the East of England via the in-person meetings that have been happening – well don if your local area got involved! We gathered a list of ways that young people want to raise awareness about this topic which led to the following conversation:

* **Podcasts** would be a good idea as lots of people listen to them – 6 votes on this.
* There should **be more lessons on mental health awareness** in all types of schools – 8 votes on this.
* Providing more opportunities for young people locally to **attend clubs** would help.
* We could use some **videos** to raise awareness through a YouTube channel if produced – 4 votes.

In the second part of the mental health focus we looked at feedback on why young people are feeling isolated or lonely, therefore having a negative effect on their mental health. This included lots of discussion such as:

1. Bullying is having a big impact on young people, especially towards young people with learning differences because not enough people understand.
2. People’s stereotypes about disabilities are not being addressed, sentences like ‘oh you don’t look autistic’ are still being used.
3. Not having enough opportunities outside of school.
4. Going from primary to secondary school is having a big impact on young people.
5. There is lots of pressure on young people coming from schools.
6. Friendships are hard to maintain when you move schools.
7. Bullying is making young people feel low.
8. We need to explain more about people’s differences and have lessons.
9. Bullying is the biggest issue for younger people and then it’s exam stress that takes over.
10. A good idea to have anti-bullying ambassadors.

Logo designs – Thank-you for all the brilliant Logo designs that have been sent in over the last month, so that more young people are able to have an input the favourites will be sent out via a survey before we look to have something professionally produced by the summer.

Regional awards – Following past conversations the group would like to introduce some regional awards for young people who are doing great things. During this meeting we opened an interactive whiteboard where groups could add their thoughts on what should be recognised. We will put this all together formally from the most popular responses but so far we have had things such as Outstanding commitment, LGBT+, being there for someone and supporting a parent just for a few.

**Next round of meetings – 9th May (6pm – 7pm)**

**10th May either 10:00 – 11:00 or 13:30 – 14:30**

**Throughout June or July there will be local in person meetings across local authorities.**