



12 March 2025

Subject:	Celebrating 10 years of SHAPE Youth Forum
Presenting Officer and Organisation	SHAPE Programme Manager, Neesha Patel Public Health, Sandwell Council Neesha_Patel@sandwell.gov.uk
Purpose of Report	Information

1. Recommendations

1.1 To consider and comment upon the 10 years of SHAPE Youth Forum.

2. Links to Workstreams Set out in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy

Healthy Communities	By ensuring young people have a voice to address their needs and access support when required will enable healthy communities.
Primary Care	By ensuring young people are engaged in positive activities, which will improve their mental health and wellbeing, thus reducing demand on primary care.
Integrated Town Teams	By listening to children and young people, particularly those that are most in need, to ensure they access the appropriate support and care packages when required
Intermediate Care	Ensuring young people have access to information on care their families receive and are able to feel supported
Care Navigation	Ensuring young people have access to information on care their families receive and are able to feel supported

3. Context and Key Issues

3.1 Background

The SHAPE Programme was launched in 2014 and has gone from strength to strength. Sandwell is the only local authority across the country to have a dedicated child's voice programme and leading in best

practice within this area, as the Director of Youth Work at National Youth Agency (NYA) stated, "*Sandwell is ahead of the Curve*".

Over the last 10 years the SHAPE team have collaborated with multiple partner agencies to engage with children and young people by delivering positive participation initiatives and has successfully raised the profile of child's voice across the council, schools and other organisations.

The programme operates as a mechanism to achieve Article 12 of UNICEF's Convention Rights of the Child as part of the Borough's Child Friendly ambitions.

3.2 10 Year Event

To celebrate the positive impact the SHAPE Programme has had on the young people of Sandwell, an event was held on 10 January 2025 at WS10 Banqueting Suite. The event celebrated the children and young people who have represented the voice of the child through SHAPE Youth Forum and also showcased the amazing talent seen through SHAPE Your Talent. The event was sponsored by WS10 Banqueting Suite and Stourbridge Paving Company Limited.

The young people through these projects alone have demonstrated they have made, not only a difference in Sandwell but have put Sandwell on the map through their schools, colleges, universities, through campaigns, performances, and roles held not only locally but regionally and nationally too. The individuals have grown in confidence and developed into inspiring individuals, all from Sandwell.

3.3 Outcomes

The SHAPE Programme has engaged 1000's of young people through a number of initiatives but the 10 year event alone has resulted in the following outcomes:

- One of the most memorable moments of the event was the attendance of the original 2014 SHAPE Youth Forum members, who developed and implemented the projects which are still running now, such as SHAPE Your Talent and the SHAPE Youth Festival. They reunited and shared their stories and experiences with SHAPE.
- Sandwell's Member of Parliament has expressed an interest in offering an internship to a SHAPE Youth Forum member

- SHAPE Programme Manager was nominated by the West Midlands Lieutenancy to attend the Kings Garden Party at Buckingham Palace in May 2025
- The Cabinet Member of Regeneration in partnership with National Youth Agency are working with SHAPE to develop an innovative approach to consulting children and young people through VR headsets and Artificial intelligence on town planning and regeneration
- A previous member of SHAPE Youth Forum who is now a qualified dentist would like to develop a dental education programme in Sandwell with SHAPE, co-produced with children and young people
- The Deputy Lieutenant who is on the Committee for City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO) would like SHAPE and CBSO to work together following the success of SHAPE to develop children and young people who are interested in music, art and entertainment.
- Following an emotional and impactful knife crime dance performance by a SHAPE Yor Talent winner, schools and West Midlands Police would like to develop a project to bring this performance into schools in Sandwell to help prevent knife crime.
- SHAPE will be working with the Corporate Communications Team to capture the stories of the young people, to contribute to the 50 year Sandwell story.
- A rich picture was captured at the event by the organisation Ice Creates, showcasing the impact the programme has had over the last 10 years. The organisation created the original graphic in 2014 at the first schools conference, where young people identified their needs (Refer to Appendix 1).

4. Engagement

SHAPE Youth Forum has had engagement of 150 young people aged 11 to 21 over the 10 year period. Around 70 previous and current members attended the celebration event and 70 stakeholders and partners also attended including the Mayor of Sandwell, Councillor Syeda Khatun MBE, Deputy Lieutenant Gurpreet Bhatia, Sarah Coombes MP, Gurinder Singh Josan MP, Sandwell Council cabinet members and councillors.

There were many comments made by the young people who attended on the impact the SHAPE Programme had made to their lives and how SHAPE should be celebrated. Themes include the confidence the young people gained, support for young people who had special educational

needs and disabilities (SEND), creating friendships and most importantly being able to have a voice. Some of these have been listed below:

- *“The most important thing we should celebrate about SHAPE is the impact we have had on our community and celebrate the people who organised it the most”*
- *“That our local area has young, bright passionate young people that want to make their area a better place and give the voiceless a voice and place in our community; that there are people within our council that are also willing to make that happen! Neesha, Sultan and Tariq PC Treasure MBE”*
- *“Its contribution to the local community. SHAPE has regularly produced young leaders over the course of a decade and simultaneously created a hub of opportunity for all young people to come together to drive change and prosperity in their local areas”*
- *“The most important thing we should celebrate about SHAPE is that it empowers young people to have a voice in shaping decisions that impact their lives. It’s a platform that values youth perspectives, fosters leadership, and creates opportunities for meaningful change in our communities”*
- *“An excellent forum offering young people a voice, personal development and fun activities. But the most important thing is that SHAPE helps make a difference to people's lives and members go on to become lifelong friends”*
- *“That young people are listened to and play an active role in shaping and developing provision within Sandwell”*
- *“Engagement of young people, raised aspiration, increased motivation, employment/apprenticeship successes”*
- *“The positivity of the community. Everyone I've talked to associated with SHAPE have been incredibly encouraging and positive. It's great for young people to have that opportunity to nurture their talent”*
- *“It’s uniqueness and ability to impact young people for the better, there is nothing like SHAPE in any other boroughs and it has such an amazing impact on the young people who get involved. Giving them a great start, a voice in their community and amplifying their opinions, the confidence and visibility it provides to showcase young talent is truly amazing.”*

For the event, some case studies were also captured to demonstrate impact (Refer to appendix 2).

5. Implications

Resources:	The SHAPE Programme is funded by Public Health. The SHAPE Team consists of a Programme Manager and two Project Support Officers, one of which is a fixed term post.
Legal and Governance:	No legal implications.
Risk:	Although the programme continues to be funded by Public Health at present, there are increasing demands on the Programme across the Council and Partnership. If funding reduces the SHAPE Programme will be unable to meet the demands meaning that the child's voice initiative will be compromised, and the reputation built up on a National, Regional and Local level will reduce. This may also have an effect on the corporate child friendly agenda.
Equality:	The SHAPE Programme continues to ensure diversity through an equal representation on the SHAPE Youth Forum and in all events
Health and Wellbeing:	The SHAPE Programme continues to consult with young people ensuring their needs are met in terms of health and wellbeing
Social Value:	The SHAPE Programme involves young people in all consultation and events adding social value. It also aims to boost social value through building relationships with potential sponsors.
Climate Change:	The SHAPE Programme consults with children and young people on their views of climate change and the environment.
Corporate Parenting:	The SHAPE programme demonstrates Corporate Parenting through involving Children In Care and Care Leavers in all projects

6. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Rich picture from 2014 and 2025

Appendix 2 - Case studies from young people from the SHAPE Programme

7. Background Papers

None.