

CARDIFF PARTICIPATION EVENT AUGUST 2023

What did Brook do?

In August 2023 the Brook Participation team organised an overnight Participation event which was offered to the 16-19 National Participation Forum members and 4 Forum members were able to attend. As the forum members are based across England & Wales, the event was held in Cardiff Bay.

Why did Brook do it?

The 16-19 National Participation Forum has X9 young people who have been meeting regularly online for the last 18 months and established a good rapport and friendship. As part of their role on the Forum an in-person opportunity was offered to the group once a year, and as a thank you for all their hard work with Brook we wanted to bring the group together in-person to reflect, celebrate and enjoy time together in real life, whilst also working on some exciting Brook projects!

How did Brook organise the overnight participation event?

The Participation Team began planning for the overnight participation event at the beginning of the year, working with internal departments, such as the safeguarding team, to ensure we did everything needed to keep everyone safe at the event. This included creating a thorough and dynamic risk assessment tailored to the group and the location of the event, as well as updating the Brook policy about overnight participation events with the support of the Executive Team. Brook staff also organised the venue and travel for the event, so no costs were incurred by the Forum members.

The event programme was finalised with Forum members contributing to the activities and food choices. Informed consent to take part was gathered, including information needed for the risk assessment, in advance of the event, and an information pack was sent out in advance to the Forum members to fully prepare them for the event. The event was staffed by the Participation Team (X3 staff), who have a well-established rapport with the Forum.

What happened during the overnight participation event?

The Forum had 2 key tasks to work on during the event:

1. Creating content for Sexual Health Week in September which focuses on safe relationships.
2. Working on the Forums project which focuses on accessibility and inclusivity of Brook's clinical services, particularly for neurodiverse and neurodivergent young people.

The Forum members contributions to these key tasks ensure that their lived experiences and knowledge on issues are reflected throughout the Sexual Health Week messaging, and that the work around accessibility is truly reflective of neurodiverse and neurodivergent young people's perspectives so positive change can be seen in Brook's clinical services.

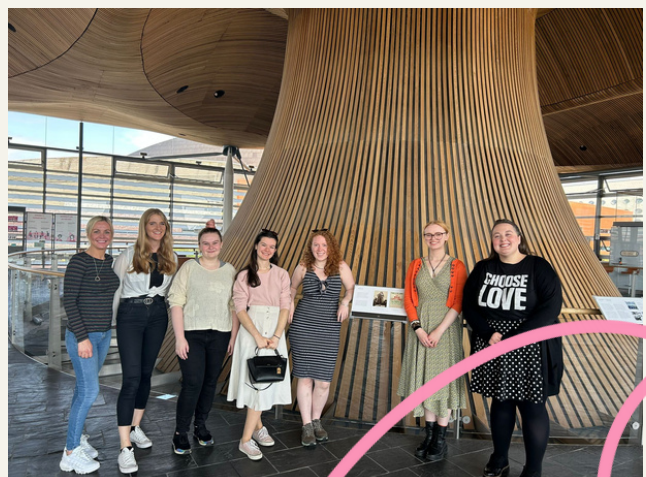
Alongside this work at the event, the Forum spent some time on a reflections activity which explored what they have learnt during their time at Brook, what they are most proud about and their next steps with Brook. We also arranged for a private tour around the Senedd (Welsh Parliament) which provided a chance for the Forum to recognise the importance of youth voice and influencing decision-makers. And the extra bonus was the opportunity to have a lovely meal together in Cardiff Bay which was a fantastic opportunity to spend time together as a group and to celebrate. Being in-person provided us with a chance to have some rich conversations and for everyone to get to know each other on a personal level.

Lessons learnt by Brook staff at the overnight participation event

It is important for Brook staff to reflect on the event and the lessons learnt from our first overnight participation event in 8 years, so positive changes can be made for any future in-person events we run.

Some of the Forum members commented that they would have liked more time, and we agree that having an additional night would have been beneficial to their overall experience of the event. More time would have allowed for an initial informal catch up on the first day, before focussing the remaining time on their key tasks. Young people appreciated the breaks, and the chance to have some time independently if they chose to do so. Feedback received was also knowing more about the tasks in advance so the young people could prepare their ideas if they wished to do so.

Photograph of the Brook Participation Team with some of the 16-19s Forum Members at the Welsh Parliament



Reflections from the Forum members

The Forum members provided some reflections about their time with Brook, and also completed an anonymous feedback form following the event. It has encouraged the Participation team to explore further in-person events in the future!

"Thank you so much for it, and I'd absolutely love to do it again!"

"I learnt such a wide variety of things".

"How appreciative staff were just that we were there. That's been a running theme for my time at Brook and it was just lovely to hear that from a person not a screen. Also just speaking to people in person was amazing".

"Feeling so validated and accepted during our neurodivergence discussions".

"Feeling really heard and valued".

"People at Brook really care, it is not a faceless org, everyone you meet, Brook is adaptable and wants to improve all the time, it is a refreshing environment".

If you would like further information about this participation at brook please visit:
brook.org.uk/get-involved/participation

