

Youth Issues Forum

by Ali George

The aim of the event was to engage with young people in the south of Edinburgh and find out about their quality of life. Groups from Gracemount High School, Liberton Kirk, Moredun Library and the Liberton/Gilmerton Youth Forum presented videos to an audience of adults who can help effect change in the area.

A lot of young people felt that they have a bad reputation because of the way they are portrayed in the media. Nobody wants to cover stories about the youth group helping out at a church coffee morning, or Gracemount High School loving the Channel 4 show Glee so much that they have started their own Glee club. Instead adults have a perception of young people hanging around drinking and smoking and committing petty crimes.

“I like wearing a hoody,” said one member of the pupil council at Gracemount High School, “it’s comfy and it keeps my neck warm. But the head teacher banned us from wearing them because of the negative image they’ve been given by the media.”

Meanwhile young people from Moredun wanted to get fit and have fun by organizing monthly visits from a mobile roller disco, but are being told by community centres that they won’t be allowed in case they damage the floors. Even though mobile companies bring their own floor with them.

It seemed that whilst young people present had lots of good ideas, they were hampered by the fact that the event was aimed at adults. Some younger people commented they did not understand all the words used, and the way that adults would talk for ten minutes and then say ‘and what do you think’ almost as an afterthought was condescending at best.

It didn't help either that the only councilor present, Tom Buchanan, opened proceedings by announcing his intention to leave straight away for a more important meeting in the city. This speech gave the impression that the event was more of a box-ticking effort by the council than a genuine commitment to effecting change in the South.

Hopefully the pledge cards everyone was required to fill out at the end of the event will remind those in charge of all the positive themes that came out of the discussion.