

MYP & MP JOINT SURGERIES

In the autumn of 2007 the UK Youth Parliament was awarded a grant from the Ministry of Justice's Innovation Fund to develop the idea of joint surgeries between MYPs and MPs. This idea came about in response

to both MPs and MYPs regularly asking how they could work better together to represent the views of young people in their constituencies, and to encourage more MPs to think about the young people they represent,

even though they may not have a vote. In these two pages, we highlight some of the joint surgeries which have taken place in 2008 and give some tips on how to organise your own joint surgery.

WARWICKSHIRE

Ben Wesson, MYP for Warwickshire, held a joint surgery with James Plaskitt MP for Leamington & Warwick, at The Royal Priors Shopping Centre in Leamington Spa. The joint surgery was advertised using posters which were displayed in local amenities and largely throughout schools across the district. It was also promoted on the Warwickshire County Council website.

Approximately 50 young people attended throughout the two-hour session, which Ben believes was largely down to the location of the event and because it was held on the last Friday of half term. About 20 adults also attended and raised a number of issues with Mr Plaskitt and Ben. In addition, all of the local district and town councillors

were invited to attend and several of them did for a short period to meet with some young people from across the district.

Every young person who came along was given a lollipop with the UK Youth Parliament website address and logo attached to it, in order to encourage young people to get involved with UKYP or to raise further issues with Mr Plaskitt or Ben. Ben had also obtained some funding from the Youth Opportunity Fund (YOF) in Warwickshire for the surgery, so was able to buy memory sticks with the youth service logo on for some particularly interested young people.

The key issues discussed were transport, music tuition and youth facilities.

The event obtained press coverage in the Leamington Spa Observer, TLC – The Magazine of Warwickshire County Council's Children, Young People and Families Department, Warwickshire County Council Website and Warwick District Council Website homepage.

Ben said, "James Plaskitt MP is always happy to work with me if there is a particular issue of local or national importance. He has been very supportive from the start of my term of office; first, contacting me to congratulate me on my election, and since then I have met with him several times and travelled to Westminster to visit him in the House of Commons. Mr Plaskitt is always happy for me to contact him at any time about any key issues."

BARNSELEY

In September 2008, MYPs Ash Tate and Bethany Vaines held a joint surgery with the MPs for Barnsley - Jeff Ennis, Eric Illsley and Michael Clapham. The surgery took place at Barnsley Town Hall and was advertised through the Youth Council and Youth Opportunities Fund Panel.

Twenty one young people attended and discussed transport, recycling and sustainability issues, tuition fees, vocational courses and choice of subjects.

The MPs promised to raise the outcomes of their discussions with their colleagues at the House of Commons. They also invited a group of young people to the House of Commons for further discussions and a tour, and Eric Illsley has offered the young people a slot in his newsletter.

The surgery has boosted the relationship between the Barnsley MYPs and their MPs, and ensured that the MPs are willing to work with the young people in the future.

STAFFORDSHIRE

James Greenhalgh MYP held a joint surgery with his MP - Janet Dean (Burton and Uttoxeter) - in December 2007. The surgery was held at Burton Library, and was advertised in the local papers, official constituency surgery posters, the MP's website, and via leaflets handed out.

Seven young people attended, as well as four adults. Refreshments were offered, and the issues discussed were youth facilities, the closure of a local school and transport.

The meeting obtained local press coverage, and James continues to regularly meet with Janet Dean, who often writes to ministers and follows up complaints which he or other young people have.

James says, "Janet is keen to help on a number of our campaigns and has said if there is anything she can do then she's willing to help; she is also keen to come along to Youth Parliament events in her area. Janet is a great MP who I think is exceptionally supportive of young people."

ORGANISE YOUR OWN JOINT SURGERY

- 1** Choose a date and time which is convenient for young people. Friday evening may not be the best time as many young people are socialising with friends and relatives.
- 2** Hold the surgery in a place where young people are likely to be, e.g. shopping centre.
- 3** Advertise the surgery. Put posters up in schools and youth centres and put information on the internet, e.g. Facebook and Bebo.
- 4** Contact local press. They may be very interested to write about the surgery, both before and after it has taken place.
- 5** Contact the UKYP office at info@ukyp.org.uk, and ask for publicity materials to give out on the day of the joint surgery.