

Case Study 2: Youth Parliament Regional Meeting.

The occasion: About 35 young people who are the Members of Youth Parliament for the South West, were gathered with adult mentors for a whole day conference in the summer holidays. They had a very heavy programme for the day, and we were the “light relief”.

The venue: Somerset College in Taunton, in their conference suite, with excellent meeting and refreshment facilities.

The expected audience: The MYPs, and we had ascertained that their adult mentors would be happy and keen to join in too.



The message we were trying to put across: We thought that the MYPs might be very “UK-centric” in relation to the big issues they felt affected young people's lives. We wanted them to treat as important issues facing young people in other parts of the world. The MYPs would be going back to their own areas to work with their peers, and I also felt that they might find our methods useful to replicate..



The bites we chose: We knew the young people would have been in sitting-down discussion for most of the morning, and that our session was immediately after lunch, so we decided on craft activities which could focus on discussion of Children's Rights the world over, and which would take a maximum of 20 minutes to complete, to leave time for some “On the line” work. The specific bites we used were the **Home made football; Papel picado, God's Eyes, Community Rag Rug** and **Worry Dolls**, each group of 6 or 7 people doing just one activity.

What happened: I had asked in advance if there were any of the MYPs who felt global issues were politically important to young people, and would be willing to lead an activity. I was delighted that five young people came forward enthusiastically. I briefed them by email, and then met them over the lunch break to finalise arrangements. The room was ideally set out, with large round tables about which group could easily sit, and we were able to set up the activities (including background materials on each table) during the lunch break. The session worked well. After a brief introduction, where I avoided saying that the activities were an undercover route to global discussion, everyone set to with a will; and completed their craft items on time. It took time to chivvy them into place for the “on the line” discussion, but once we started they enjoyed the method.

Our evaluation: The planning and briefing really paid off, and the young facilitators did a brilliant job. They didn't find engendering the discussion easy, and we went round giving a bit of support over this, but they managed it in the end, as was evinced by the “on the line” discussion. It took longer than anticipated to chivvy them into place for this, and, after everyone had proudly shown off their craft items, there wasn't enough time left for an effective “on the line” session – although the young people were impressed by the method.

What we would keep or change if we did it again: the community rug only really lends itself to individual activity; the other bites worked well and the volunteers had no trouble leading the groups. The preparation work with the volunteer MYPs was essential. The background materials became very muddled with the craft materials and the MYPs' own belongings, and so were a bit lost – one or two very carefully selected background items would have been better. We had handouts for everyone.