



## REPORT 3

## Participation and Empowerment of Children and Young People in the South West: A Case Study



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A Report to the Empowering Communities Consortium

## **A Note about this Case Study**

This case study was commissioned by the South West Regional Consortium of the National Empowerment Partnership. It forms part of a set of reports reflecting research and other activities undertaken through the South West Empowerment Development Project (October 2007 – March 2008). All the reports may be downloaded from the Creating Excellence website at:

[www.creatingexcellence.org.uk](http://www.creatingexcellence.org.uk)

- Report 1** An Overview of the Learning from the South West Empowerment Development Project
- Report 2** Engagement and Empowerment among Black and Minority Ethnic and other Equality Communities in the South West of England: A Case Study
- Report 3** Participation and Empowerment of Children and Young People in the South West of England: A Case Study
- Report 4** Engagement and Empowerment among Older People in the South West of England: A Case Study
- Report 5** Engagement and Empowerment in Rural Local Authorities in the South West of England: A Case Study
- Report 6** Engagement and Empowerment in an Urban Unitary Authority in the South West of England: A Case Study
- Report 7** No Boundaries: A Study of Networks and Empowerment
- Report 8** Engagement and Empowerment: Measurement and Indicators

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These reports, as with all research, reflect the views of those who took part and are a snapshot in time and there may be other perspectives that are not recorded.

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Although not all of this material could be referred to within the case study, it has informed the project's wider learning and will form part of a continuing regional resource on community empowerment.

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## 1. Introduction to the Case Study

Participation<sup>1</sup> work with children and young people, often supported by the Youth service, the Voluntary and Community sectors (VCS), or in recent years Children's Fund workers, has been around for around forty years. It takes many forms- from young people's participation in decision making about activities at a centre or club; to involvement in schools councils, youth forums and as Young Members of Parliament or on the Regional Assemblies. It can involve action by Young Carers groups or children in care training foster parents or young people acting as grant makers, advisors or researchers.

As the Participation Workers Network for England<sup>2</sup> based at the National Youth Agency<sup>3</sup> notes:

*'Participation work is all about helping children and young people to be more **influential** and to have more say over matters that affect them. **Effective participation means that their voices lead to change.**'*

The Network sees **Participation** as the process of involving children and young people in decision making at increasing levels of control and autonomy; and **Empowerment** as the outcome of this participation process in terms of children and young people's increased power and influence. They identify **Involvement** as the overall term for children and young people being included in the decision making process at any level; and contrast that with **Consultation** which is seen as a process which requires the commitment to take on board young people's views and present detailed information back to them.<sup>4</sup>

Phil Treseder<sup>5</sup> has developed a typology to clarify the different degrees of control that children and young people might have over decisions. The model states it is important to regard *"the five degrees of participation as five different, but equal, forms of good practice and to choose the one which will have the most benefit in a specific environment"*. While there are different degrees of control and influence by children and young people, all approaches result in young people being empowered and influencing decisions that affect their lives. This model does not assume that there is one, 'best' form of participation – it depends on the situation. The typology covers:

- **Consulted and informed-** The project is designed and run by adults, but children are consulted. They have a full understanding of the process and their opinions are taken seriously.
- **Assigned but informed-** Adults decide on the project and children volunteer for it. The Children understand the project, they know who decided to involve them, and why. Adults respect young people's views.
- **Adult-initiated, shared decisions with children-** Adults have the initial idea, but young people are involved in every step of the planning and implementation. Not only are their views considered, but children are also involved in taking decisions.

- **Child-initiated, shared decisions with adults-** Children have the ideas, set up projects and come to adults for advice, discussion and support. The adults do not direct, but offer their expertise for young people to consider.
- **Child-initiated and directed-** Young people have the initial idea and decide how the project is to be carried out. Adults are available but do not take charge.

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## 2. The National Context

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Workers identify as key, Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which states the right of children and young people to express their views on all matters of concern to them and have that view taken seriously.<sup>6</sup> There have been many government papers over the period with the 2001 DFES paper Learning to Listen<sup>7</sup> as key. In its recent 10 year strategy, government has identified a **vision for young people's empowerment** that by **2018...**

- society will have a more positive view of young people and do more to help them take their place in society;
- services for young people will be sensitive and responsive to their needs, offering them the support they need to make their voice heard and working actively to empower the most marginalised and disaffected;
- young people will have increasing control over local spending on positive activities and more support to take on local leadership roles; and
- young people, parents and communities will increasingly make use of effective mechanisms for holding local providers and commissioners to account for prioritising youth provision<sup>8</sup>

The strategy notes that *“young people have ideas, energy and dynamism and should have the influence and opportunity to drive change. However, they are less likely than adults to feel they can – research shows that although many think they can influence decisions affecting their school (64 per cent), far fewer young people feel they are able to influence decisions affecting their local area (33 per cent), and even fewer decisions affecting Britain (15 per cent). Young people want more influence over the opportunities available to them locally and over decisions taken about services in their communities.”*

The strategy argues that there are five reasons for seeking the active involvement of children and young people:

- Children and young people's voice and influence will lead to significant changes for them and the wider community.
- Services will be more effective, better targeted and received. This saves money.
- The health of our democratic community depends on the active involvement of children and young people.
- Local and national policies encourage and require it and our performance will be evaluated on how well we do this.



- The involvement of children and young people is key to gaining funding and sustaining developments.

The strategy states: *“It is clear from the evidence considered by the Review and consultation with young people that giving them genuine influence is a crucial first step to increasing participation in activities and access to wider public services. This is true for all young people, including those from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, or those facing specific challenges, such as young people with disabilities.....Successful services and programmes involve young people in their design at the outset and make a genuine effort to be sensitive and responsive to the needs and views they express. Public services should actively engage all the young people they aim to serve.”*

This is echoed in the requirement within the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) for local authorities to engage young people, and the Local Area Agreements Guidance also requires a statement of how local people and the VCS<sup>9</sup> must be involved in the design and delivery of LAAs. To be fully representative, this should include young members of the community. There are legal duties on children’s services authorities to consult children and young people in the development of plans:

*“The voice of children, young people and their families should be heard at all levels in order to inform local design and delivery of the arrangements”<sup>10</sup>.*

When developing positive leisure time activities, local authorities are required to ask 13 to 19 year-olds (or up to 25-year-olds if they have a learning disability) their views on the need for additional activities and facilities and their ability to access such activities and facilities. They must ensure that the views of these young people are taken into account.

### **National resources to support participation**

Based in **Participation Works**<sup>11</sup>, there are considerable national on line resources available to support participation work<sup>12</sup> as well as national and regional participation networks.<sup>13</sup>

There are a key national set of standards- the **Hear by Right standards** for the active involvement of children and young people which was developed by the National Youth Agency (NYA) and the Local Government Association (LGA) which are used mainly within youth services. Hear by Right is based around the Seven S model for organisational change: Shared values; Strategy; Structure; Systems; Staff; Skills and knowledge and Style of leadership. For each of these seven standards, there are seven indicators. The standards are split into three levels of performance, emerging, established and advanced, with each building upon the previous one. This ensures that young people's involvement is built in and not just bolted on. The standards framework forms a practical, evidence based model of how to achieve change in an organisation, showing how each relies on the other to move forward. The shared values are at the core of the framework and are vital when developing a shared dialogue between service providers and their

users. The **'What's changed for young people'** tool, which accompanies the Hear by Right standards framework, is designed to capture the changes that have occurred as a result of children and young people's participation linked to the 5 Every Child Matters outcomes<sup>14</sup>

### **3. Regional Resources in the South West**

The Regional Participation network based in the Regional Youth Work Unit in Learning South West and is for youth participation workers in youth services, voluntary organisations and Connexions partnerships. It has been developing over the last five years, supported by the Regional Youth Democracy Worker, and is slowly starting to attract participants from health, children's services and the Police. It runs training programmes to share good practice and help develop skills, whose courses are open to all workers involved with children and young people. With the advent of Children's Trusts, it is starting to refocus its remit. The group shares practice and develops regional activity around young people's voice and influence. The funding comes from Participation Works and small amounts from all the regional Youth Services but not GOSW or any other regional body. The Unit has been awarded a small contract with Participation Works to provide a programme of support to VCS professionals working with young people to help develop and improve a culture of participation, funded by the Big Lottery Fund. The Regional Youth Democracy worker identifies travel as a key issue for workers in the South West, which means that national training programmes are often of limited value and often do not reflect regional needs. In her view, locally delivered regional resources achieve much greater benefit. She is well aware of the need to share the learning more widely but funding for the work remains a key issue.

In 2007 there was a SW Regional Partnership project, 'Participation of parents and young people in strategic policy and individual planning',<sup>15</sup> which developed Regional standards for involving parents/carers and young people with additional/special needs in policy and planning, including a benchmarking exercise.

### **4. The Case Study Methodology**

Whilst many examples across the region could have been selected, this case study focuses on the county of Gloucestershire linked to work in Devon, Somerset and Dorset. The choice of case study focus was influenced by:

- The need to reflect geographical diversity in the full set case studies
- The interesting development of children and young people's participation over many years in Gloucestershire which have recently started to develop an integrated approach across a number of services and authorities
- The information that the Devon Children's Trust's participation work was mid way through a national evaluation
- The promotion of the Young Adviser model by national government



The study involved visits and interviews with children and young people and workers in a number of agencies, and drew on the recent evaluation of Gloucestershire Children's Fund and other materials. The more detailed studies are in the grey boxes.

The study looks at the history of children and young people's participation work in Gloucestershire developed initially within the Youth Service, with a focus on two youth councils and the development of a Play strategy; and then development of participation work through the Children's Fund Participation team and the Young Reporters, the Hear by Right group, and now the work of the Participation team within the Children and Young People's Directorate. Finally the study looks at a new national government initiative, Young Advisors, operating in North Devon and Bristol and touches on experience elsewhere in the region.

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## **The Gloucestershire 'Journey'**

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### **5.1 The area**

Gloucestershire<sup>16</sup> covers an area of 1,025 square miles with a total population of 575,200, with a relatively ageing population when compared to the UK's average structure. Geographically, the county splits into three areas, the Cotswolds, the Royal Forest of Dean and the Severn Vale with Gloucester and Cheltenham the key towns. Gloucester is a cathedral city and is one of six District Authorities which make up Gloucestershire County. The Gloucester urban area extends into neighbouring Tewkesbury and Stroud Districts, and is the fifth largest urban area in the South West. The town of Cheltenham, just a few miles to the east of Gloucester, is of similar size. The number of people belonging to black and minority ethnic groups stands at 16,000, of whom over half are in Gloucester City, the only District where the proportion approaches the national average. Much of Gloucestershire is very rural and transport planning is the number 1 issue for young people.

### **5.2 The history of children and young people's participation in Gloucestershire**

In Gloucestershire, there is a long experience of engaging young people in decision-making, with countywide youth participation posts going back to the 1980's and participation as one of the four core Youth Service values, part of the occupational standards for youth (and community development) work, and key in learning outcomes. Work has included:

- the support of Gloucestershire Members of Youth Parliament elected by 8000 young people across the County
- the development of Hear By Right standards
- the Youth Consultative and Advisory Network ('YouthCAN') - a Youth Service chaired independent network of practitioners sharing practice and developing local guidelines for consultation with young people.

- youth councils, schools and the Healthy Schools team.

In 2001 there was a countywide *Report of the Review of Youth Participation in Gloucestershire* and out of it developed a Participation Strategy<sup>17</sup> but it was not multi-agency. There were quick moves in most of the districts to develop local Youth Participation policies and appoint workers linked to both the Youth Service and the District Councils, and develop local Youth Councils where they did not already exist.

### 5.3 Two Youth Forums

#### **The Stroud and Cheltenham Youth Forums- District based What is the Stroud Youth Council?**

The Youth Council (YC) is made up of representatives aged 11 -18 years from 7 of the 8 secondary schools, two FE colleges and 8 local youth forums, 4 of whom are active, with some 30 members drawn from youth projects, uniformed groups, and sports groups across the district.<sup>18</sup>The local and district Forums are supported and facilitated by Gloucestershire Youth Service. Of the 50 reps only half have voting powers at the Council and the others are their deputies. There is approximately a 50-60 percent membership across the structure. The youngest rep is 11 years and reps usually stay for 2-3 years, though the current youth cabinet leader has been involved for around five years.

The YC elects its own Youth Cabinet, whose 8 members shadow members of the Stroud District Council (SDC). Elections are every 12 months, but this is being reviewed with a proposal that reps should have opportunity to be in post for 2 years, given the intensive training and need for to gain experience in the role. These members have the right to attend SDC's Cabinet and can take part in the debate.

*"SDYC is a voice and represents over 10,000 young people in Stroud District."  
(Youth Support Officer)*

The YC operates two funds for the benefit of young people in Stroud district, the Youth Initiative Fund (YIF- £8K) and Talented Performer Grant Aid (TPGA- £2K) programme. Reps in the Youth Cabinet have been trained in assessing application forms and make recommendations to the YC.

#### **Who sponsors the Council?**

The YC is supported by SDC's employee, the Youth Support Officer, who has been full time since August 2006. His line manager is in SDC's Community Safety team, but he receives "collateral support" from a colleague in the Youth Service and is mentored by the Youth Services' Stroud Area Team Manager. SDC Neighbourhood Wardens transport the reps to and from meetings and events which is crucial in this rural area. Gloucestershire Youth Services have supported the YC through intensive training programmes, workshops and annual residential weekends which has made a difference to the quality of the

reps engagement. The National Youth Agency has completed joint training for young people and Stroud District Councillors in November 2007 and they are drawing up local participation standards with their help.

### **The history**

The YC started in March 2000, because councillors recognised that young people under 18 did not have a vote or any way of expressing their views and opinions- "*Stroud District Council embraced young people's involvement*". (Youth Support Officer)

Membership in early days came from schools with 2-4 reps from each school. Members stayed for 2 years and then moved on. In the early 2000s, the reps were confident and articulate communicators; and their involvement in YC looked good on their CVs and UCAS forms. The YC then was not representative of young people in Stroud District and did not reflect young people's needs. 2002 was a landmark year as the Gloucestershire Youth Service devised a training programme tailored to the existing members' needs. Through training and a community development/ outreach approach, the existing members realised they were not truly representative, so they set about developing a new constitution and structure. This involved bringing in young people from youth clubs/projects via a network of youth workers in rural and disadvantaged areas. Stroud District Council paid for a Youth Support worker to facilitate the YC 2-3 hours per week. There was a period of sustained youth work support from Gloucestershire Youth Service, training for new and existing members, and the YC evolved into its current structure and form.

### **What works in delivering the results?**

Partnership working is key, particularly between SDC and Gloucestershire Youth Service with both Forum members and the workers accessing training, resources and professional support. The YC is linked into the Parish Councils, the Neighbourhood Wardens scheme, the Community Safety team, the Anti Social Behaviour Officer, the Crime and Disorder Partnership, the Police's Youth Participation Officer and the LSP.

SDC officers are drawing down plans from the LAA and Gloucestershire Children and Young People's Plan to inform the active involvement of young people. The Hear By Right Standards are being adopted by SDC in March 2008. SDC embraced the standards and these have been the "*powerhouse for the development of the Youth Council*" (Youth Support Officer). The NYA has completed training in HBR for the YC and District Councillors and a number of mapping exercises have been undertaken by reps with councillors and officers. Currently reps are working with councillors and officers to produce a planning document on youth participation. Recently a first joint meeting between the two cabinets was held to see if they could work more closely together and this will continue on a 6 monthly basis.

Recognition in the early days by the reps that they were not representative of Stroud District's young people was seen as "*a gutsy decision*" and led to the Council being much more representative.

The YC was invited to give evidence at a Citizen Jury on the Cotswold Canal Restoration Scheme- and were quoted in the bid. This increased the YC's profile and they received good verbal feedback on reps' input. Stonehouse Youth Forum has just started, as the Police identified this has "*a key area for partnership working*" and seconded their own Participation Youth Worker to Gloucestershire Youth Service to work with this forum.

Using youth work methodology, training and a community development approach have meant the pace is slower and fits with young people's needs and views, and fosters their awareness of issues.

*"Personal relationships with young people are essential in enabling them to feel worthwhile. You can get close to young people and work out what makes them tick"* (Youth Support Officer)

#### **The outcomes of the work**

The relaunch of the free night bus which transports young people to their door is seen as a key outcome. Reps from Cam and Dursley, two isolated rural villages in the valleys, became confident at meetings with councillors and persuaded the LSP to give funds to extend the service to their area. The reps made an impression on the Steering Group of the project. The young people persuaded them to run a pilot, and it was the most used night bus service in the Stroud area. However, the cost was prohibitive within the current budget. The LSP found some extra funds to support the night bus service in Cam and Dursley.

*"These reps sat in lots of boring meetings, waiting their chance , and it was worthwhile, as lots of young people have benefited....Cam and Dursley reps are not young high academic achievers, they are more at the other end"* (Youth Support Officer)

In 2006, SDC's Environment re-cycling strategy for litter management was rewritten by YC reps. Following consultation about areas to site new letter bins, the recommendations identified by reps to improve litter management and increase recycling of litter, were acted on.

#### **The future**

There is a need to embrace HBR, but if this is to happen in a meaningful way, it will need resources at ground level. Unlike MAD the Cheltenham YC, the Stroud YC struggles with getting school engagement right. There is need for work with schools to enhance the participation of reps, have consultative and reporting back mechanisms within schools, and an attitude change to young people within some schools. Because the project has just grown and the worker is under time pressure, the work has not been evaluated (though self evaluation occurs annually). There is no tracking, and accreditation of young

people's work and rewards are not working so well. For some young people this is a significant gap.

### **The Cheltenham Youth Council- MAD (Make a Difference)**

#### **What is MAD?**



MAD<sup>19</sup> was set up in 1998 to give children and young people in Cheltenham, aged 11 -19 years, a voice, and allow them to influence decision making<sup>20</sup>. All the young people are volunteers some of whom represent their school or neighbourhood, and others who just want to be involved. Currently, there are 20 young people involved in MAD, with 32 seats on the Youth

Council. All the secondary schools have representation, there are two reps from the two neighbourhood projects and all the youth service areas are represented. There are 6 co-opted places for organisations such as Young Carers Groups. The initial constitution meant that some groups were not representative, but the new structure removes these barriers. (MAD took advice from Stroud District Youth Council) There are a range of young people involved, mainly from the town areas, but it tends to be the older ones who like to talk in public. Reps are voted in for 2 years and can stand for re election and tend to stay until they leave to go to university. The Youth Council meets every 3 weeks.

#### **Who sponsors MAD?**

MAD has a full time Cheltenham Borough Council (CBC) Youth Engagement Officer, who is an ex member, supporting them. This post is likely to be reduced to a half time in April and it is uncertain where the post holder will be based. Youth workers attend MAD meetings on a rotating basis to support the local youth forum reps. Reps are transported to meetings and events by their parents.

MAD has links to the:

- Thematic Strategic Partnerships e.g. Children and Young People Partnership and sit on the Play and Free time Forum with other agencies.
- Social and Community Overview Scrutiny group of CBC– MAD have reps on this group and it looks at CBC cabinet decisions
- Chief Executive who has regular questions and answers on a three monthly basis under the new MAD structure.
- Full Council cabinet and have had one joint meeting so far
- User Forum of the local Leisure Centre and Police Area Committee

#### **MAD activities have included:**

- Consultation on play equipment in Pitville Park for the Lottery bid and worked to prevent a skate board park closure
- Consultation on Cheltenham's Sustainability Strategy.
- Involved in designing training programme for the police recruits on how to deal with young people
- Involved in Hear By Right training and mapping exercises with councillors and officers and presented findings to the Social and Community Scrutiny Committee
- Worked with Cheltenham Music library to re design a youth area, Planet Youth<sup>21</sup>
- Interviewed for council positions such as seasonal play staff.
- Presentations to agencies and senior officers on work of MAD

#### **What works in delivering the outcomes?**

- The wide range of reps and seats makes the Youth Council have a more powerful voice.
- Young people themselves decide who should be invited to Youth Council meetings e.g. Shelter asked to come and do a presentation.
- The commitment of senior officers and councillors enables young people to feel listened to.
- The Annual presentations of MAD's work and the reviews and plans for next year to guests including the police, VCS , schools and head - teachers, councillors and senior officers.
- The support given to Youth Council helps them with connections to council structures, and time from Youth Engagement Officer

The youth workers have been surprised that the young people valued the more structured approach:

*"We were surprised that the young people preferred the new more formal structure like having chairs and vice chairs, a cabinet and youth council structures; meetings are now held in the council chambers, which is popular. The young people take it seriously and like the discipline of formal meetings which mirrors full council meetings....This new structure didn't put young people off.... The school reps liked the fact they are elected. Reps have more power within the new structure and feel more empowered e.g. when the Chair of the Youth Council intervened and explained that the Chief Executive's time was up during the question and answer session!"*

The demands on young people's time can be a barrier, as they have to juggle school, jobs and recreation with the Youth Council's work. The timing of meetings is not always convenient for young people.

#### **The Outcomes**

In 2004, MAD re-launched itself and made a DVD, which was sent to schools to promote the work of MAD. The DVD and the work of MAD helped bring in and promote the proof of age identity card in Cheltenham. Most of the

activities identified above are seen to have had outcomes; in particular the work with the Cheltenham Music Library was identified.

The work of MAD shows that young people have opinions and they raise awareness that young people have a voice and should be listened to.

*“Some people think that young people are not interested in a range of topics, but they are interested in issues affecting their communities and not just play. For example, St Paul’s Youth Forum campaigned for litter bins and received funds for the project.”* (Play Team at Cheltenham Borough Council)

Cheltenham Borough Council run a Performance Management System and MAD is measured against four set indicators - the number of decisions influenced, the number of young people consulted, the number of seats taken up on the youth council, the number of training opportunities requested by Youth Council.

MAD’s Hear By Right project came up with 3 action priorities for the full council and was presented to the Social and Community Scrutiny Committee; these actions priorities have been achieved. However, there is a long way to go; on the HBR mapping form it was noted in some areas of work, *“We are listened to but our views are not always taken on board”*.

In February 2008, MAD held a Birthday Party, and some young people, aged 14 – 16 years were interviewed informally at the event. All these young people, except one young woman, were quite confident and socially skilled. The young people met and greeted guests and ticked off their names etc and chaired the presentation, but there was no evaluation of the event.

What they enjoyed about being involved in MAD was getting to know new people, good discussions, going to new places and events, being able to voice opinions, meeting councillors, and having good fun. They particularly noted the under 18s night at the club; meeting up and getting to talk with young people from different age groups; and there was nothing they did not like about being involved in MAD.

They identified that they have gained personally making new friends and doing different things now, which they did not do before. Some noted the increase in confidence and learning about issues and problems and how they can be solved:

*“I have different experiences of life and it helps you realise that problems can be fixed”*

*“It has helped me think about problems differently.”*

The young people really valued the staff and being able speak openly in the group:

*“Staff are great and you can really talk to them about anything and they listen. If you talked to teachers like that at school you would get into trouble.”*

*“I like the fact that you can say what you feel at MAD.”*



MAD is perceived as a place where young people can bring issues and get things done:

*"I am a school rep and I can bring things about the school environment and talk about them at MAD."*

*"They (council) were going to close down the Skate Park and we protested and said why it should be kept open and how young people would skateboard on the streets etc. They kept it open and made it better."*

When asked what difference MAD had made, they identified both helping people generally in Cheltenham and making a difference to young people e.g. the Skate Park, and the young people's area in Cheltenham Library. These young people felt they had a voice and it was listened to.

### **The Future**

MAD want to be involved in recruiting other council officers, as well as play officers and they want to introduce training for elected members on young people's issues. There is informal self evaluation by MAD members of their work and the Annual report, but otherwise no evaluation of the work beyond the performance indicator evidence. It is not yet clear what the effects of losing worker support time will be.

In 2002, research and consultation for establishing the priority needs for **Gloucestershire Children's Fund**<sup>22</sup> was undertaken. Entitled "*Nothing to do, Nowhere to go*" the starting point of this consultation was that young people should be at its heart and that they should be involved in writing and asking the questions as well as providing the answers. Five young people aged 11-16 years from Matson, one of the disadvantaged areas of Gloucester, agreed to take on this role with the support of a youth worker and a freelance social worker. The team worked on understanding the official documentation and developing two sets of questions for the different age groups based on the issues of school, crime, self-esteem and environment. Over three weeks the two workers, accompanied on every occasion by at least one young person, carried out fifteen consultation sessions, including one during football training, and questionnaires were completed by Youth workers in two areas. Targeted consultations with traveller children and disabled children were held later. The same questions were asked either in a group discussion, talking individually, drawing and talking, or playing a game. The young consultants generally asked the questions with the adults supporting and prompting. On two occasions two young consultants worked alone together. The young consultants made a very powerful presentation about the consultation to the Partnership Board on 9/12/2002 and there is clear evidence that the consultation influenced the plan.<sup>23</sup>

In 2004 one of the Gloucestershire Children's Fund (GCF) evaluators brought the idea of Young Reporters<sup>24</sup> back from a national conference. Unusually, the GCF had a dedicated team of participation workers, rather than an

individual worker, because for NCH, the accountable body, children's participation was at the heart of the work.

## 5.4 The Young Reporters



### Young Reporters 2004-Present<sup>25</sup> - Countywide

Participation has been integral to Gloucestershire Children's Fund (GCF) from its beginning with a specialist participation team which worked with Schools, the Youth Offending Service and other agencies to involve children and young people in the recruitment of staff. Organisations funded by GCF were asked to provide evidence of the involvement of

children and young people in the planning, delivery and evaluation of project activity. Children and young people have been involved in GCF's commissioning and evaluation processes, both helping to review evidence from existing projects and assessing new applications. Their opinions have informed the decision-making process.

In 2004, the Participation Team successfully recruited 14 Young Reporters (YR) aged between 10 and 13 from across the county. Projects were asked to identify children who would benefit from being involved, including those from GCF target groups such as children excluded from school. A programme of training and development for the YRs was developed, together with a package of rewards, including vouchers, trips out and refreshments. The young people took part in an introductory fun day and then an initial two-day residential where they:

- o received training in research and interviewing methods
- o developed an interview schedule to be used in interviewing other children and staff during project visits

Working in pairs and accompanied by a Participation Worker, YRs have visited and reported on all the projects funded by GCF and interviewed children and young people attending the project, using traffic light cards to record their answers to standard questions. They hold a group discussion with some children and young people and interview project workers using an interview guide, for which the Participation Worker scribes. Immediately following the visit, the YRs write up their observations and recommendations. Children using services and project staff were observed to be more honest when talking to the YR and staff have been more willing to hear and act on recommendations from the YR. To date they have completed three rounds (one a year) of evaluation visits.

There is evidence from both external evaluations<sup>26</sup> (which involved the YR working with the independent evaluators) that YR have helped to raise the profile of participation. For a number of projects being funded by GCF has encouraged them to develop meaningful participation of children. In some ways participation is so embedded in most projects that it is difficult to separate it out from just 'how things were done'. The evaluators noted that YR involvement in the external evaluation work built rapport with the children and young people and increased the response rate. They have now been sub contracted by an independent Social Care Consultant commissioned to evaluate the Budget Holding Lead Professional (BHLP) pilot initiative, to get feedback from children and young people who have received services from the BHLP project.<sup>27</sup>

Other projects the Young Reporters have been involved with include:

- Community Chest panels (assessing funding applications for countywide groups allocating over £90,000 to date)
- Publicity meetings, including writing to date 6 CYP newsletters and translating the GCC CYP plan in to a child friendly poster
- Involvement in national initiatives such as 11 Million, Youth at the Table and Get Ready for Geneva
- Running and facilitating a county wide Active Involvement Conference
- Training other young people to become volunteers

The outcomes of their involvement for the YR themselves have been growing self esteem and confidence<sup>28</sup>. The young people value and enjoy their experience, and could identify benefits skills and opportunities they had gained from being a Young Reporter including: ability to express opinions, increased confidence, being able to meet new people and participate in special events, journalistic and interviewing skills, being proud of themselves, and feeling better about themselves. Peer evaluation of the scheme by Poole Children's Fund showed that the Young Reporters, their parents and siblings all felt that the YR confidence has increased significantly through their involvement with GCF. The YR also said that they had learnt new skills, such as communication skills, and developed new friendships in the group. Their siblings described them as being more confident and mature with improved behaviour and parents described their children as being more confident and out spoken since becoming YR.

The Gloucestershire Children's Fund Board, supported by the Participation Team, continued to engage a wide group of children and young people in both project appraisal and monitoring, which has in 2008 is becoming the model for the authority.

As the GCF's participation work developed, the emerging Children's Directorate liked the Young Reporter model. After 2005, it was particularly promoted by the new Change for Children Director of Commissioning and Partnerships, brought in to lead the change process; plan the new Directorate's work in a way that engaged children and young people; and

further develop the Gloucestershire's Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership's (CYPSP<sup>29</sup>). As a number of interviewees noted, there was a lot of good practice in the authority, like taking feedback from Children in Care through YPLAN, but it was fragmented across different parts of the authority, and mainly focussed on teenagers.

In 2004, the first **Children and Young People's Participation Subgroup** met, growing out of YouthCAN, and involving most of the key local agencies doing participation work. It was asked by the CYPSP to review the consultation and participation activity in Gloucestershire which involved children, young people and their families<sup>30</sup>; to identify the learning involved; and to undertake initial work on the development of participation and consultation across the county.

Then in 2005 the CYPSP asked the Participation subgroup to develop proposals for the involvement of children, young people and parents in the next phase of the Children and Young People's Plan process, as up until then the engagement of children in strategic planning had been very limited. The agenda picked up pace during that year and the Participation Sub-group took on the specific task of co-coordinating countywide consultation on key issues. This included consultation with children and young people on the Every Child Matters outcome areas and the priorities in the draft Children and Young People's Plan, working through existing groups like Youth Councils and Young Reporters, and the coordination of the Participation Strategy. The Gloucestershire Online Pupil Survey 2006<sup>31</sup> achieved over 12,000 responses on a range of Every Child matters issues, including whether children and young people felt involved in the decisions that were made about how their school was run and how influential they felt their school/forum or other consultation structure was. Schools are able to interrogate their own data. It also provided important evidence about children and young people's issues and concerns.

It was recognised that though Chief Officers from the partner agencies had signed-up through the CYPSP to commit their service areas to the process, there were currently gaps and inconsistencies across the services. The principles and practice of participation varied from well-resourced and embedded in professional and service areas, such as the Youth Service or Connexions who had developing a young people's Shadow Board; to occasional, rushed and often outsourced and tokenistic activities.

In 2006, the Participation subgroup developed the '*Strategy for the Participation of children, young people and their parents and carers 2006 – 2009*'.<sup>32</sup>This recommended that the Participation subgroup would:

- develop a virtual communication network and reference mechanism for coordinated participation and consultation, linking children, young people and key participation workers;
- establish participation benchmarks and monitoring for the multi-agency partnership and ensure commitment from individual signed-up services;

- undertake an objective Hear By Right baseline audit of participation practice in all partner agencies;
- ensure continued engagement of children, young people, parents and carers in reviewing and improving participation and consultation strategies, models, methods and processes and co-ordinate the work;
- ensure awareness and embedding of cross-cutting participation issues through all strands of planning for children and young people's services;
- and create a formal county-wide award to recognise individual involvement by children and young people in this work.

It was suggested that a "Reference Group" would be a good addition to the consultation /participation process, consisting of a group of children and young people that could be contacted regularly throughout the creation of the Children and Young People's Plan.

The Participation Sub Group was quite a large diverse group, so to develop and implement the Action plan, a smaller executive group of six was formed. The Development Officer for Gloucestershire Voluntary Sector Youth Provision chaired the group, but it had no terms of reference and though he was very active, when his post went he was not replaced. Members talk about the group as being very frustrating with people pulling in different directions and the group getting stuck. Also there were key membership gaps- so for example Connexions, that had a dedicated Participation Team, were not part of the group.

The Strategic Partnership had wanted a dedicated visible Children and Young People's Board, a definite set of representatives they could consult rather than a "virtual intelligence network", and therefore found the strategy and action plan frustrating. So, though the CYPSP finally adopted the strategy, not much happened after it was adopted.

In the meantime young people were involved in interviewing all posts in tiers 1, 2 and 3 through a Children and Young People's Panel,<sup>33</sup> through interview panel membership or a parallel panel, and other services started to see the benefits of participation. The Young Reporters were also involved in the Youth Support Service consultation and Finlay Primary School Fresh Start and encouraged by government interest, and their local youth Councils, the District Councils, also got more involved in this area and in the development of the Play Strategy.

## 5.5 The Play Strategy

### The Gloucestershire Play Strategy

In 2002<sup>34</sup>, Gloucestershire Neighbourhood Projects Network led the



Neighbourhood Children's Commission, an enquiry into the state of open access play in some of the most disadvantaged communities in Gloucestershire. Four of the eight Commissioners were children. One of the adult Commissioners was a senior childcare advisor from the Department of Education and Skills. She was so taken with the engagement of the

children who had taken part that she and the national Children's Play Council (now Play England) used the whole engagement process as a good practice example.

Local children acted as community guides and gave a fascinating insight into the places and spaces they used for play. Not only did they show commission members public sector play spaces that were uninspiring, vandalised and in need of removal, but also some hidden places where imaginative games and natural play thrived amidst some depressing urban estates desperately in need of regeneration. The findings were presented in the short film "Where children play" and the Commission Day brought together children, parents and both statutory and voluntary sector workforce. Some powerful images were shared.

Alongside all this active engagement of children, the concept of a Gloucestershire wide Play Policy began to take shape. The University of Gloucestershire's Playwork Partnerships joined forces and an extraordinary collaborative piece of work resulted in both County Council and six District Councils adopting a Gloucestershire wide Play Policy that went on to form a fundamental part of each District's Play Strategy. The Strategy was used a good practice example in Play England's 'Planning for Play'. Two-tier local authority areas, where a county and district authorities co-exist, rarely co-operate as effectively as they did for this piece of work. The Play Policy's real triumph was the level of engagement between public sector bodies and the VCS play sector. Taking Play Seriously was adopted by both County and the six District Councils in February 2005. The external evaluation<sup>35</sup> of the work noted:

*"The strategic development of play is a model for inter-agency co-operation especially as so many of the community and environmental issues*

*undermining children and young people achieving the Every Child Matters outcomes require wider inter-agency and community partnerships. We recommend that the learning from this model is shared more widely”.*

Now in 2008, the Gloucestershire’s Children and Young People’s Plan is currently being refreshed and, under the ‘enjoy and achieve’ section, one of the aims is ‘CYP access and enjoy play and recreation opportunities’. For the first time, progress is being measured under a range of indicators that would appear to take play seriously. The VCS are listed as delivery partners alongside the District Councils. A budget of £30,000 has been provisionally allocated for ‘strategic play development’ during 2008-2009; however, it is not yet clear what the commitment of the Children’s Fund will be around targeted preventative play projects.

It is also important to note where young people have failed to be involved. The final development of the Gloucestershire Play strategy and the current links with the LAA involve adult advocates only, though young people were involved at every stage until the engagement with the strategic structures.

Work continued on the ground to engage and listen to children and young people, but there was no strategic leadership and co-ordination, and little happened in terms of the strategy until the appointment to the new post of Participation Manager, in July 2007. The postholder had led the GCF participation team and then become the Programme Manager. The post was directly accountable to the Children’s Directorate lead for Commissioning and Partnerships, through the Head of Programme and Partnership, the earlier champion for participation work. The priority of the new post was that children and young people be able to be part of the Strategic Partnership, even if the Board model was not appropriate, and to review the strategy and action plan. Her role was not to control but to bring leadership to the area and ensure that children and young people had a strong voice.

The multi-agency Participation Sub-group had stopped meeting and a new Participation Steering Group was needed which would bring together the wider network to take things forward. Through very active consultation and bridge building, 35 people were involved in the initial meeting of the new **Participation Group**. Out of the meeting came a small scoping group of volunteers which in the autumn of 2007 met three times, and drafted the terms of reference which were agreed by the Partnership Board and YouthCAN. At last there was real engagement of people and organisations, bringing on board the full group, including District Councils, health, police, schools and the VCS.

The purpose of the new Participation group is to ensure that the voices of children and young people are heard and acted upon within the Strategic Partnership and ensure that participation priorities identified in the Children and Young People’s Plan (CYPP) and Local Area Agreement (LAA) are implemented and reviewed alongside children and young people. It is



planned that the group will provide a strategic, coordinated approach in order to promote the inclusive development of participation, maximising opportunities for sharing information and good practice, innovation and expertise. The group will report into and be accountable to the CYPSP Programme Board via the chair of the group who is a member of the Board. The objectives of the group include to identify, prioritise and address countywide participation concerns; to plan, monitor and evaluate participation and consultation for the CYPP with children and young people; to measure and celebrate the impact of children and young people's voices being heard; to monitor and encourage take up of the Hear By Right Standards; to work collaboratively in partnership to ensure children and young people's participation contributes to Every Child Matters outcomes; and to implement a system for agencies to check for duplication of work and inform pieces of work in progress; and to share and value good practice.

Whilst this may sound like a re-run of the earlier Participation Sub group, this time there is full multi agency involvement and a small team to drive the work forward with high level sponsorship. Initially the group are not going to review the strategy, but are developing a strong action plan. It seems likely it will cover:

- adoption of UN convention article 12 and developing a charter on participation rights and responsibilities
- a participation analysis of needs survey and plan to implement the hear by rights standards across the Strategic partnership
- structures to ensure a range of views are built into decision making and governance of the Strategic partnership and minimum standards for the engagement of children with disabilities, with evidence of these having influenced the plan and the Commissioning Board. This evidence will be collected and shared.
- Greater involvement of children and young people in recruitment amongst all partner organisations
- Training for staff and children and young people
- young people's employment and accreditation of experience

In 2007, young people from the Hear By Right group (see below), Members of Youth Parliament, YPLAN, the Looked after Children group, Connexions and the Youth Service formed **Youth Panels** to interview four candidates for the Head of Youth Services post, four Director Posts and 2<sup>nd</sup> / 3<sup>rd</sup> tier posts in Children and Young People's Directorate. With the Head of Service post, panel members attended the briefing with HR, and then interviewed the following week. The young people designed their own questions to ask and fed back their own opinions.

In early 2007 the Gloucestershire Children's Fund was commissioned by GCC to lead on the active involvement of young people in **commissioning Youth Support Services**<sup>36</sup> in Gloucestershire. After some piloting, eleven focus groups were carried out involving 62 young people. Five groups were made up of young people who are deemed most vulnerable to exclusion by and within specific local communities e.g. black and minority ethnic groups, young

people with disabilities, young people not in employment or education (NEET) young people who are looked after by the local authority in some way, and those who are rurally isolated. The other six groups were young people based in each of the six districts. The focus groups concentrated on the key messages that emerged from the review of existing consultation. As part of this work, a youth panel of four young people representing three projects received training to enable them to assess presentations and question tenderers. The young people fed back their opinions to the adult panel, which had a weighting of 20% of the overall decision. Young people will continue their involvement through monitoring service deliver of the contract by feeding their views into the Contract Monitoring Board.

Another early move was the Strategic Partnership asking the Hear by Right Young People's Steering Group, supported by the Hear by Right Worker, to consult with existing forums about why and how they should **engage with the Strategic Partnership** (CYPSP). They used a yikkety yak to capture views of 80 young people. The feedback was presented by the young people to the Executive Board of the Strategic Partnership in November 2007. The evidence showed that young people would like a variety of consultation mechanisms, including web and online, building on existing forums and involve events and workshops. The Board agreed to build on existing groups through the emerging Participation Steering Group rather than have a Shadow Youth Board.

It has already been agreed that the CYPSP Partnership Board should host an annual **Change for Children stakeholders' conference** (to include children and young people and their families) to share thinking on the way forward and listen to stakeholders' views. CYP planning groups have been established in the six districts as a sub structure of the local strategic partnerships and the strategic partnership (CYPSP) and these groups are accountable both to their LSP and, through the proposed District Network, to the CYPSP Executive Group.

The 'refreshed' **Children and Young People's Plan** will involve setting targets in April 2008 and performance indicators relating to the Children and young people's block in the LAA/LSP. Many of the ways of measuring progress identified in the current draft focus on identifying examples of influence on the plan or participation in consultations, but there are also new- and what are said to be '*risky*'- targets for:

- young people's participation in the elections for the youth parliament
- numbers of organisations and departments who have mapped and planned using the Hear by Right standards.
- Percentage of pupils who feel they can contribute to their schools council

Children and young people are just starting to be involved in **commissioning**, building on the experience of the Children's Fund. The Standards Framework for commissioning provides an opportunity to embed participation throughout service design and delivery, and gives the potential for commissioners to

make children and young people's participation in planning, contracting, monitoring and reviewing, a requirement of all contracted services. Also there will be opportunities for children and young people to influence the decisions of the new 0-19 years multi agency Commissioning Board, critique its work and take responsibility for certain funding allocations, like small grants supported by the GCF's NCH Participation team.

Already in Gloucestershire, there are standards for engagement developed by young people, including advice on capacity, timing, venue, transport, accessibility and proper feedback- *"You startin'? We're finishin'"* – and the YouthCAN *"Participation and Consultation Methods with Children and Young People"* which outlines a variety of methods from large scale questionnaires and surveys, through to small focus groups and interviews. It is recognised that effective participation includes training (for adults and CYP), support and accreditation, which all require appropriate levels of resourcing. This should be identified within the commissioning strategy with specific budgets and time allocated. As the Director of Commissioning and Partnerships noted:

*"If we do not involve children and young people in commissioning and monitoring, we will not provide the services they want to use..... we need customer feedback into the system as otherwise how will we measure whether and how we have made a difference"*



## 5.6 What is 'Hear by Right' Gloucestershire?

The aim of the Gloucestershire Hear By Right (HBR) Young Peoples Steering Group and staff team is to develop and implement the Hear By Right strategy within Gloucestershire County Council (GCC), working with young people, officers, workers and elected members, with young people at the centre of the strategy and driving it forward- as the group recently stated: *"Young people have the right to be heard- If it's about us, don't do it without us."*

### **Who sponsors the programme?**

The HBR standards have been integrated into the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership, Children and Young People's Plan for 2007. Until March 2007, the HBR worker was based in an office with the Youth Services, County Youth Participation worker but now the post is part of the Programme and Partnership Team with in the Children and Young Peoples Directorate at Shire Hall, Gloucester.

### **The history**

The Gloucestershire Youth Service appointed a 'Hear By Right' Youth Worker in April 2005 to develop a strategy to actively involve young people across all directorates within the County Council. The Hear by Right Youth worker has worked alongside a young people's steering group since June 2005.

Currently, the Hear By Right group is quite a fluid group of some 20 members aged 13-19 years; around 6-10 young people attend meetings. They are

some of the most actively participating young people in Gloucestershire and include current and ex members of the Youth Parliament; Members of Youth Councils in Cheltenham (MAD), Forest and Stroud; Proud start; the Connexions Young People's Board and Young Carers County Youth forum. They are involved in the Youth Opportunities fund, Youth Capital Fund and other grants panels<sup>37</sup>; active in Young carers- locally and nationally; the Act by Right group;); and many activities such as meeting MPs and ministers, training the trainers courses in BANES, media, music (the Gloucester Youth Orchestra and teaching the violin)<sup>38</sup>. However, the group is quite diverse and is not just the most articulate and confident young person on their way to University. In the last year, the 21 HBR group members have put in 582 hours of voluntary work into their work which is accredited for those that want it through Gloucestershire awards, Duke of Edinburgh Awards and ASDAN.

Key activities in last two years include:

- CYPSP Participation Showcase Event 2006 where three young people ran a workshop on Hear by Right, at the event for the 100 people
- Hear by Right Standards Training Day 2006 run with the NYA and the HBR Worker, and attended by just under 100 people from across CYPSP, to introduce participation and train on HBR.
- Political Speed Dating Event 2006 involving GCC's Chief Executive, Directors and Councillors and young people from different groups and organisations



- Director for a Day 2006 when a member of the HBR group spent an afternoon with the Director of Services for Children and Young People
- Raft Building Event 2006 when the HBR group planned and organised a successful team raft-building event with the Chief Executive of GCC, Directors

and County Councillors. This event achieved the young people's aim of breaking down barriers, and building relationships.

- Part of the Youth Interview Panel for Head of Youth Services Post, four Director Posts and 2<sup>nd</sup> / 3<sup>rd</sup> tier posts in CYPD.
- Consulting with children and young people to gain their views and opinions on how they can engage effectively with the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership.
- Delivery of Interview and recruitment training pack to other young people that was developed through the YouthCAN Participation workers network. Young people from HBR actively trained other young people.
- Meeting Ministers and the All Party Parliamentary group for Children and Young People and raising local and national issues e.g. Young Carers

getting a young carers allowance and not getting EMA because not always in school

- Transport- the Night bus in Stroud ( see Stroud Youth Council)
- Currently developing a website, video and leaflet to raise awareness of the HBR standards and the role of the group

### **What works in delivering the results?**

Whilst the worker is clearly key in supporting the young people, for the young people what is crucial is the likelihood to seriously engage with adults on real issues of concern to them and influence decisions- and not just talk about the issues adults want to consult about. They said what was crucial was:

*“More direct talking to adults”*

*“High people listening and not being patronising”*

It is the attitudes of adults who hold power and their fear of challenge that can get in the way as the video script notes: *“Adults aren’t always right”*

Getting access to good and enjoyable training was important as well as developing their own ideas- *“Developing circles of fortune approach to Act by Right- using twister with the 7 standards”*

The worker identified a number of key ingredients:

- Honest, open, real and clear communication and expectations and clarity about where the power lies
- Opportunities for the young people to develop skills, and be creative - in particular being able to achieve something and accredit their experience if they want to.
- The training and work of the NYA are crucial if young people are to have real power and not be tokenistic.
- Having structures to enable communication and connection between young people involved in projects and clubs through to the Youth Members of Parliament so that their voices can be heard
- A real social element- ‘What’s in it for me?’

### **The outcomes of the work**

In a recent report the worker noted:

- “Young people have become influential within the County Council through their participation in interview panels
- Some members have been extremely active in using the HBR standards within MAD Youth Council and others
- The current performance of the implementation of the HBR standards across the CYPSP is fair. This is a huge challenge and is very much at the early stages of development.”

When the asked what other groups or campaigns group members had been involved in it was notable that many of the outcomes related to the work of other groups and not the HBR group. The group had spent some of the session trying to develop a promotional leaflet for the group, so it was a good

opportunity for the HBR group to reflect on the difference the group had made. Generally they felt that the group was in a new stage and just starting to recruit new members and work out what it wanted to do and not much had changed through their work recently. They felt that there was a lot of red tape and paperwork and talking, and that mostly they were not told what difference consultations make. Which has been fed back and the group have now received feedback following their input to the CYPSP consultations on the Business plan for 2008-2009. Much of the time they did not feel heard and did not feel they were taken seriously. The idea of the group was vague and 'it is difficult to say what we do'- the point of the DVD and leaflet was to get more people involved and raise awareness of the HBR standards to members of the group to enable them to promote to other young people. The group agreed with the worker that things take a long time to change, and maybe they were now seeing the benefits of the work of members from a couple of years ago and it was now time to move in a new direction to implement and give an understanding of HBR

When asked what they would look for if they went into another area to see if the young people were empowered, they identified young people's notice boards and leaflets; young people on the council and/or a parallel linked set of councils; money for activities and a say on how it was spent; safe transport; and listening and consultation followed by action.

On the DVD script the group tellingly notes:

*"We see things from a different perspective"*

*"We know what happens when adults are not around".*

### **The future**

The group have identified that they see their future as

- To be inclusive and hold regular meetings
- Present the views and opinions of children and young people
- Continue to give accreditation using Act By Right (ASDAN)
- Help train young people and practitioners to use the standards
- Provide peer educational opportunities
- Support and promote the active involvement of young people
- Encourages the use of HBR across Gloucestershire's CYPSP to everyone

There is little evaluative evidence available on the work of the HBR group though there are plans to review with the young people the experience of undertaking the interviewing for the senior posts

### **Wider work on Hear by Right**

As a result of NYA training and consultation, along with the work of the HBR worker and Youth Forums and youth support workers in the districts wider work has been completed:

**Mapping with Library Service** was completed in 2005 with Partners for Change, a project in three areas of the SW, funded by The Paul Hamlyn Foundation whose aim was to develop new ways for library services to

engage with socially excluded young people and young people at risk. The report notes that staff learned to feel more confident in dealing with young people, especially those at risk, and became aware that involving young people in real decisions can improve library services. Young people felt more ownership and involvement with their local library services, and felt more comfortable and confident about working with library staff. In the South West, a series of dissemination events and training activities have been developed and offered free of charge to colleagues in library services across the region. These have built awareness of the project and have stimulated cross-authority learning. In addition, new partnerships have emerged from these activities, including a fruitful collaboration with the South West Participation Workers Network.<sup>39</sup>

**Mapping and planning Connexions Direct** completed in Dec 06 and they have used it to inform the Participation Needs Analysis Survey. Connexions' Advisors have attended ABR training delivered in partnership with NYA and GCC officer. Connexions have a Participation team, a Youth charter, use peer inspection, and the Young People's Board is very active.

**Mapping of Gloucestershire Youth Service in 2007** in the process of completing the planning elements of the framework.

### **Work with the District Councils**

There are initiatives in some of the Districts as well as County Council departments on implementing the HBR standards. For example, in Cheltenham, ensuring that the Cheltenham Strategic Partnership, its partner organisations and delivery partnerships adhere to the principles of the Hear By Right campaign is identified in the 2007 Sustainable Community Strategy. In Stroud the work of the Youth Council and the Hear by Rights standards are promoted in Council newsletters<sup>40</sup>.

In Gloucester, the City Council has had a Blueprint commitment to reaching Level 2 of the Hear by Right Standards ("established") since 2005. In 2007, a consultant was invited to work with council services on mapping current and planning future initiatives involving children and young people, and to work with the authority as a whole in assessing their current standard. The report is largely positive about Gloucester City Council's involvement of children and young people, assessing them as 'making good progress in achieving the "established" level of youth involvement', but with clear recommendations for how they could do better. The report identifies the wide variation across services, partly because some services have more direct contact with young people, for example culture and leisure services, but also because some services have an individual officer who has 'championed' the participation of children and young people and has demonstrated a commitment to good practice. There is a need for training for all staff to raise awareness of youth participation and enable staff to develop skills in working with children and young people in particular active listening skills. There is a general



commitment to children and young people within services, but also an acknowledged lack of skills in how to work with them in a meaningful way. Where there is evidence of good practice – for example seeking feedback from young service users – there is generally a lack of sharing of achievements, as there is currently no vehicle for this. There is limited evidence that children and young people from BME communities or disabled children and young people are enabled to participate in feedback or other participatory activities, where additional support may be required,

## 5.7 The Future in Gloucestershire

Although the Participation team is based in the Children and Young People's Directorate, the view is emerging that children and young people's participation is really starting to permeate the authority and the District Councils as well as the VCS. There is the active presence of children and young people from range of backgrounds involved in recruiting staff, and to a limited extent in policy development, commissioning, and evaluation, and there is high level sponsorship. It is hoped that the work of the NCH Gloucestershire Children's Fund Participation team and that of the Young Reporters can be incorporated into the commissioning process along with the commissioning experience of the Board, so that children and young people are centrally involved in determining and monitoring provision.

This has been a long journey and the road will always be stretching still far ahead. As the 2006 Participation report<sup>41</sup> noted:

*"This proposal builds on our change objectives to involve children and young people in the decisions we make and to demonstrate that we listen to their views and feedback. We want to develop a whole culture of listening to regular feedback from children and young people on the services we provide and engaging them in needs assessment, service planning and evaluation."*

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## 6. The Young Advisors North Devon and Bristol

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### 6.1 What are Young Advisors?

*'Young Advisors are young people aged between 15 and 21, who show community leaders and decision makers how to engage young people in community life, regeneration and renewal. Young Advisors are trained and employed consultants who guide local authorities, housing associations and other local partners about what it is like for a young person to live, work, learn and play in their neighbourhood. They will:*

- *help organisations 'youth proof' their practices, policies, strategies and commissioning.*
- *help you understand how to attract and maintain the interests of young people.*
- *speak out for young people, making sure their thoughts and feelings are considered in decisions that affect them.*

- *work both locally and nationally to share good practice and learn from others.*
- *engage directly with other young people to get them involved in neighbourhood improvements.*<sup>42</sup>

Four pilot schemes were set up in 2006 by the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit ODPM<sup>43</sup> and it is now being rolled out nationally under the auspices of the new Young Advisors charity, set up by DCLG, who provide guidance and intensive training for the young advisors themselves.<sup>44</sup> There are now two schemes in the South West. The first covers Ilfracombe, Combe Martin and Bratton Fleming in North Devon and operates under the auspices of Transform, the Neighbourhood Management Programme. The other is in East Bristol covering Barton Hill, Lawrence Hill and Redlands operating under Community at Heart, the New Deal for Communities programme.

## 6.2 Young Advisors North Devon<sup>45</sup>

### The area

Ilfracombe is the most deprived area in Devon with nearly double the county level of unemployment and is one of the 25% most deprived areas nationally. The nearby villages have pockets of rural deprivation. The Transform area has a population of some 14,000 of whom about 10% are aged 15-21 i.e. there are around 1,400 people in the target age group.



### Who sponsors the Young Advisors?

Transform, the neighbourhood management programme which set up Young Advisors, includes the North Devon District Council, the Police, Devon County Council Education Department, representatives of the local voluntary sector and health. The Devon Youth Service were

partners in setting up Young Advisors to help ensure their sustainability.

### The history

A Young Advisors (YA) scheme was set up in Ilfracombe and two neighbouring villages in 2006 in the wake of Rory McDonald, Assistant Neighbourhood Manager at Transform, commissioning a DVD from a couple of young local film-makers about what life was like for local teenagers.

Transform staff already knew that there were concerns about the shortage of facilities for young people and the community were reporting a lot of 'teenagers hanging about'. There had been a youth club one night a week in Combe Martin but it had been closed following a break-in. Transform recruited 14 young people aged 15 - 17 years to help make and appear in the film through the youth focus groups they already ran and the Neighbourhood Wardens. Before the focus groups, there had been no formal way for young people to be consulted and the view among young people locally was that 'no-one listens to us or takes us seriously'. Rory persuaded the Transform board to allow young people editorial control of the film so they decided on the style and content. The result was a hard-hitting film which highlighted how little there was for young people to do and how this could quickly lead to anti-social behaviour. It also highlighted how intolerant local residents generally were of young people being out and about. The film was widely shown locally to statutory sector managers including GOSW. It gained publicity nationally resulting in a group of young people travelling to Westminster with two local councillors to show it to DCLG staff, local MPs and the Minister to encourage greater investment in facilities for young people. It has since been shown to representatives of other political parties and at national conferences.

#### **What works that delivers the outcomes?**

Seven of the 14 involved in the film have been trained as YAs (and the other seven set up the Concrete Surfers Federation which has just raised the funding and support to build a skate board park). A further nine are now being recruited from a slightly younger age range (14+) to provide continuity as some of the present cohort will be leaving the area later this year to go to college. The training is intensive and covers a wide range of skills and attitudes essential to consult with young people effectively and represent their interests to statutory bodies.

Transform employs the YAs, paying £10 an hour (£5 an hour for training) so they have a contract and a code of conduct. In recruiting new YAs, the present group agree it will be important to ensure that people are motivated by a passion for making a difference rather than simply the money.

The YAs have carried out a wide range of work locally and further afield making presentations and leading workshops with local authority and other statutory sector staff, raising awareness of the issues facing young people and the importance of engagement. The YAs have a representative on the Transform Board.

To ensure that they do represent the views of local young people, the YAs attend local youth clubs on agreed evenings, run focus groups in the community and in schools and even stop people in the street with a video camera to solicit views. The North Devon YAs interviewed explained that they take their responsibility seriously to represent the views of all young people, and not necessarily their own personal views.

There is now a Service Level Agreement between the YAs and the North Devon District Council to involve the YAs in 'youth proofing' all the relevant council policies. The YAs say that such a clear and public commitment to engage in this way is empowering and encouraging for them. YAs are also now working with several Devon County Council Departments including planning to ensure they address the interests of young people in their strategy and policy making.

The workers support role is crucial and recognised by the YAs:

*"(Name) is really nice – it's not just like it's a job for them – they put in the extra mile".*

### **Outcomes of the work**

The District Council are taking the input of the YAs seriously with many of the plans and policies affecting the area having been changed and services improved as a result. For example, a budget for youth provision that had been cut has been reinstated. The new recreation strategy for the area was almost entirely written by the YAs. The YAs comment on the style of documents, ensuring they are more accessible, as well as the content.

The Police, with whom the YAs now work closely, have reported a noticeable drop in anti-social behaviour. (One of the town's previously most prolific graffiti artists is now a YA and helps with the clean up). The police come to Concrete Surfer Federation meetings and that this had led to more respect on both sides: *They don't see us as 'things' any more.*

The YAs themselves report that they feel there has been a sea change in the attitude of the District and Town councillors towards them and now feel respected and listened to, instead of dismissed, because changes are being made in response to their input.

*"We're getting more respect from councillors. They used to just dismiss us. Now they actually consult us and we are getting what we asked for."*

The 'Teenage Kicks' DVD and some of the workshops that YAs run have had a high impact and appear to inspire service planners and managers to act.

The success in securing a venue, planning permission and funding for a skate board park is evidence of that as is the improvement in youth club facilities. The District Council now approach the YAs to make presentations and have asked to see the video again. The District Council say that having young advisors *"has opened people's minds. They provide proofing on policy documents"*. Other agencies also referred positively to the opportunity they had to speak directly with local young people through the Young Advisors' Scheme.

Statistics of how many different young people have been engaged have not been kept and there is not yet any formal evidence of young people more generally feeling more engaged and empowered. However there is quite a lot of anecdotal evidence that many young people locally are aware of what has

been achieved. 150 young people (some 10% of the eligible group) have expressed initial interest in being selected for the new cohort of YAs which suggests a high level of awareness. A MORI poll on the impact of Transform generally showed 60% of the local population were aware of Transform's work and of the involvement of young people. The Young Advisors Charity has recently evaluated the scheme and their report is expected soon.

The impact on the Young Advisors themselves has been considerable. Many of them own up to having been 'tearaways', and how as a result of becoming Young Advisors, they no longer get into trouble. The Young Advisors are not necessarily the 'star pupils' or those most involved in the school (none of them are on the School Council for example). Their self-confidence has improved with many of them now being seasoned presenters at national conferences.

*"Benefits? Being able to speak in front of complete strangers. We have to work well as a team and we've become quite close friends. It wasn't just the people who were best at school. We've stopped being 'rebel-ish' ...Without this, we'd probably be really fed up."*

*"At Bratton Fleming, I was able to challenge what the councillor said. We are in a position to challenge older people who might say something different about what's happening here."*

Danni has abandoned her plans to be a hairdresser and is about to start training as a Youth Worker – something she told us would not have dreamt of previously. The positive impact on the advisors themselves has resulted in the decision to appoint three of the nine new YAs *because* they have low self-esteem so will be co-opted on the basis of nomination by teachers or youth workers rather than from those who apply.

### **The future**

Because the Neighbourhood Management funding is short-term (another four years), the Young Advisors are considering the best way to ensure their long-term sustainability. Statutory agencies who wish to use YAs as part of their strategy for involving the community do have to pay for them, so they do have the potential to be self-sufficient financially. Becoming part of the Chief Executive's Department in the County Council, part of the Youth Service or North Devon District Council are all possibilities, but the preference is to find a more independent route, such the Bristol YAs' plans to become a social enterprise. There are already moves to set up YAs across the county with the North Devon YAs assisting in training new YAs.

A second film has been commissioned with the expectation that it will show how youth facilities have improved and the role that young people now play in influencing youth provision. Devon County Council are apparently looking at how the Young Advisor concept could be applied to other parts of the community e.g. older people.

### **6.3 Bristol Young Advisors<sup>46</sup>**

#### **The area**

The Bristol Young Advisors scheme operates in east Bristol covering Barton Hill, Lawrence Hill and Redlands. Lawrence Hill, the inner city area that most of the New Deal area covers, is one of the most deprived in the country. The population of the area is 5,500 of whom around 10% are between 15 and 21.

#### **Who sponsors Young Advisors?**

Community at Heart is the resident-led not-for-profit organisation that delivers New Deal for Communities. It is one of a number of initiatives including a Youth Forum to involve young people locally. The New Deal for Communities comes to an end in 2010, and is already reducing its staff so the Young People's Delivery Manager will be leaving March 2008. It is hoped to be able to raise the funding to keep the YA manager on for a few more months to support YAs as they set themselves up as a social enterprise.

#### **The history**

A Youth Forum was set up initially after a period of community development work. Funding applications to set up Young Advisors failed initially but eventually DCLG did release part funding with extra support from Community at Heart. A conference in October 2006 to launch YA did not attract much interest, but subsequently community outreach and word of mouth resulted in 10 YAs (who dropped to six) being recruited and trained. Since then four more have been identified who will be trained soon. The national Young Advisors charity charge £5,000 for the training, which Community at Heart have just agreed to fund.

#### **What works in delivering the results?**

The current six YAs are employed by Community at Heart paying £8 an hour (£4 an hour for training) so they have a contract and a code of conduct. Much of the work the YAs have done is running workshops for local councillors and statutory sector organisations on how to better engage young people. The input of YAs has been across the city not just in the NDC area and there is reported positive feedback from police on consultation work. The YAs have also contributed to an eight week programme training young people in how to be confident community participators. The YAs have just been commissioned by the City Council Race Equality Team to undertake 300 questionnaires with young people, and are soon to run five training sessions for VOSCUR, the voluntary sector umbrella body on engagement skills, peer mentoring etc.

The YAs are well connected in the community to consult with young people informally through peer groups and through their attendance at youth projects locally.

Recently, the YAs consulted widely with other young people in the local area about the improvements to the Urban Park, coming up with a worked through set of proposals which addressed the interests of children and young people using the park.

### **The outcomes of the work**

Monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the YAs appears to have been scanty so far and there are no statistics on how many people have been engaged as a result of the YAs' work. A full external evaluation of all the work that Community at Heart has been doing with young people is being commissioned at the moment. There is no evidence, anecdotal or otherwise, to suggest young people generally feel more listened to and the YAs do not feel confident that much will change in the NDC area, given what they have observed / experienced in relation to the Urban Park. Following consultation with young people on improvements to the Urban park, these were recently rejected by the Board of Community at Heart, despite support from the Play Rangers Team, the Youth Forum, CAH's Youth Team and BCC Play. This was because a residents' group dealing with environmental issues and open spaces were concerned that the elements that could provide shelter for young people (a wind break and a group of benches arranged in a U shape with some shelter around them) would enable drug taking and sex. This experience has reinforced the views of the YAs that although there are efforts to consult them, the views of a small group of adults will prevail if they are different from those of the young people. However, there are moves to consult a wider group of local residents and re-open the debate. There is still concern that when Bristol City Council take over from Community at Heart they will pay even less attention to the views of young people.

The impact of the scheme overall on the YAs themselves has been considerable. One who had been excluded from school now does a lot of voluntary work as well as his YA work. Three of the YAs are Somali and their English as well as their confidence has improved considerably. All of them have improved confidence with many of them now being seasoned presenters and trainers.

### **The future**

With the NDC coming to an end and the staff input to support them being lost soon, the YAs have decided to set themselves up as a social enterprise called DISC (Develop, Involve, Support Communities). Bristol City Council Youth Opportunities Fund<sup>47</sup> has provided funding of £14,000 to secure an office and launch the enterprise. Eventually DISC aims to be self-financing through what it charges for carrying out consultation and engagement work or delivering training for other agencies. The YAs have plans to cover the whole of Bristol and to directly run some services for young people such as a helpline as well as continue to engage them in statutory decision making. The formal launch is on 4 March 2008 and the YAs hope to have a website up by the end of March that will provide advice and sign-posting for young people.

## 7. Other key regional experiences

**7.1 Somerset- Children** and young people are involved in an interesting variety of ways in Area planning groups, Youth Parish Councils and consultation work like Place Shaping days with County Councillors. A group of young people meet monthly with different service heads and young people are involved in staff recruitment. There is use of their own detailed standards and indicators. There is an interesting key role played by an experienced individual based in Chief Executive's office and working across local authority departmental boundaries to embed participation into the new reorganised system. This work would benefit from being recorded.

**7.2 Dorset-** Through NCH and their work with Dorset Children's Fund, there is important work involving children and young people and carers in evaluating key services, including a service user evaluation of the Child Assessment Framework and 12 of the Children's Fund projects. This and its linked training pack appear unique. The Total Respect group<sup>48</sup> of looked after children linked to the Children's Rights Service, are involved in training elected members and foster carers, through the County Council's training and Development work. NCH and the Youth Service have developed a Board of Children and Young People in Poole to shadow the Strategic Partnership Board. A contract with a provider was amended following feedback from the Shadow Board. At present it appears hard to link up with the democratising work of the Youth Service but the Children's Trust may help this to occur.

### 7.3 Devon

Again in Devon the participation of children and young people has been a long journey starting in the Youth Service. Some six years ago, a Gloucestershire youth worker who had set up the participation work there, moved to Devon to take up a one year participation post. Early work focussed on the youth Parliament and trying to ensure good representation. Slowly the team grew involving work with children who are seen as hard to reach, children with special needs and young people in care. Slowly the work started to get strong support from young people and workers and 'buy in' from senior managers. The participation post is now a strategic post appointed at a senior level leading the Democracy and Participation team of four. The Local Public Service Agreement 'stretch Targets' (LPSA2) has funded one of these posts-the targets were identified as 'groundbreaking' in the recent NYA report.

In 2006, senior officers from the Children's Trust Partners met with young people and representatives of the NYA to start the process of drawing up an action plan for the achievement of the advanced Hear By Right standard. The Executive and Board contributed to the development of the action plan. Each partner agreed, at a senior level, to appoint a young person's champion who is a member of a Hear by Right Partners group, chaired by the Chair of the Children's Trust Partnership Board and facilitated by the Democracy and Participation team.



*"Bigger Voices...Better World!"* The Council's Youth Participation Strategy is the key document, which informs the broader participation strategy across the Children's Trust.<sup>49</sup> Developed with children and young people, it encompasses all aspects of children and young people's participation. Starting with the why, it ends with a detailed plan for organisational change using the Hear by Right standards map and plan tool. It is reviewed on a six monthly basis to assess progress against the challenging targets the Council and now the Trust have set themselves.

In 2007 Devon County Council achieved the advanced Hear By Right standard, the first authority to have this achievement verified by the NYA. It is now seeking to facilitate the same achievement by the Children's Trust Partnership by 2010. The NYA report<sup>50</sup> stated that: *"Devon County Council has made significant progress in embedding the participation of children and young people across the whole organisation and is developing excellent work with key partners and organisations to ensure that this can be sustained throughout the changes taking place within Children's Trust arrangements..."*

The PSA reward grant will be used to support a countywide group of young people who will work closely with the Trust to embed the participation of children and young people across the commissioning of services. Children and young people have taken part in joint training with the Strategic Partnership to begin the process of writing a Participation strategy for the Trust. Young people have attended a meeting with the Director of Finance to discuss the annual budget. In addition, young people take part in some recruitment and selection and it is hoped this could extend to other partners. Young people are now more formally involved in scrutiny<sup>51</sup> and take part in the induction of new elected members. As part of the staff annual appraisal there is scope within the equality targets to incorporate targets for supporting the voice of children and young people. Once a year the leader of the Council and the Director of Finance meet a group of young people to go through the budget and find out what young people's priorities are. They then feed back how young people's priorities have influenced decision-making.<sup>52</sup> Working groups on bullying and rural transport at the request of young people have been initiated. The County website will have a children and young people portal which is being developed by young people and the ICT and finance teams.

Neal Skinner, a young person who has been involved in Devon's Young Person's Shadow Executive<sup>53</sup>, a group set up to ensure young people have a voice in the decisions made in Devon, said in a press release: *"My involvement has meant a great deal to me, young people have a great and innovative contribution to make to decisions, especially decisions that affect them. It has been great to work on helping young people to impact decision making....The biggest change I have noticed is a cultural shift - adults seem to be willing and eager to engage with us, and it is great that they now have a better understanding on how to do that. ....Due to the success of our youth involvement work from 2006/07 we have just set up a youth involvement panel, in partnership with our local Council for Voluntary Services (CVS). The*

*Panel is called 'Scene & Heard' and intends to involve young people from across the district in having a say on issues that affect them."*

An Executive Member for Children's Services, said in a web site interview that the young people *'always bring forward valuable points and perspectives that councillors such as myself find interesting and important. "*

Key features in the independent evaluation of young people's participation in the Trust indicates that Devon Children's Trust *'demonstrates significant progress in developing participation by embedding plans and opportunities for young people's participation within local service structures.....opportunities have been created to effectively involve young people such as the Young People's Parliament and Shadow Scrutiny Committee<sup>54</sup>. In this respect young people's participation is firmly located within local decision making structures. The challenge ....is to widen and connect opportunities and networks for young people to participate, beyond centralised decision making structures and to work to change organisational cultures so that participation becomes routinely embedded in everyday practices. Most people were aware of the mapping and planning process for participation, although some partner agencies had not become significantly involved in the process. Progress in developing participation arrangements is variable.... with some sectors much more advanced in their understanding and development of participation than others.... Development of participation within the Trust arrangements is seen as a learning process as new systems and practices are evolved. The Hear by Right (HBR) Mapping and Planning tool is embraced as a useful framework for supporting and monitoring progress in developing and implementing participation. A challenge exists in how to implement HBR across all Children's Trust partner agencies. HBR tends to be embraced at a strategic level but with limited impact for practitioners. .... Young people's experiences of participation showed that they value having a range of opportunities to get involved, having support from workers and structures to work in, being able to learn new things, gain experience and be respected for their contribution. Young people did not want to be involved if they were not respected, not listened to, blocked in their initiative or if nothing happened as a result..... The benefits of participation are seen by adults largely in terms of clear messages for more effective services. For young people the benefits of participation are seen more in terms of their own personal achievement, learning and development, confidence building, being involved and feeling valued for their contribution.<sup>55</sup>*

Staff identify as key to success:

- Strong leadership and commitment from the Chief Executive and the elected members
- The Action Plan developed jointly between the Council's Corporate Management Team, the Youth Service Democracy and Participation Team and six young people
- Each Directorate appointed a Young Persons' Champion who drew up an implementation plan for the department and was senior enough to have real influence so it got implemented

- Regularly monitoring the implementation of the Action Plan and reporting back to young people on what the Council was doing so that they could see whether the council had done what they said.
- The calibre of the Participation and Democracy Team in the Devon Youth Service

## 8. Learning and Conclusions

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Key learning emerges from the case studies:

### **History, ethos and infrastructure**

- There is a long history of Youth Services and the VCS being involved in participation and empowerment of young people and a wealth of skills and experience and regional and national networks, but this is often 'locked up' in one organisation or department and is not influencing the wider strategic planning and approach of the authorities- as two of those interviewed noted, "*The Youth Service is very insular*"
- Strong empowerment values underpinning Youth Service and more recently the national children's charities and Children's Fund work ; also key to new initiatives such as Youth Advisors
- A range of national and regional infrastructure resources exist to support the participation and empowerment of Children and Young People much of which is invisible to those not working in the youth field
- Children and young people's participation and empowerment- including young people who experience exclusion or poverty- in the decisions that affect their lives, areas, and services can be achieved, but skilled worker time and benefits for young people have to be built in
- Children and Young People need a wide menu of participation opportunities from very informal and local to national, using a variety of media that allow them to engage at the level appropriate to them, and not to participate if they wish
- To overcome the stereotypical views that many adults including local residents, elected members and officers, generally have about young people requires fairly passionate advocacy and commitment by someone in a senior enough position to be able to influence decision-makers to take the risk of acting on what young people say would be of value to them.
- High level support and commitment within some strategic partnerships and coherent strategies and plans that reflect understanding of the time/effort needed for effective engagement
- Making sure that participation is not an add on or an after thought but rather that objectives and structures are established that require regular input from young people
- It is not simply about creating a number of elite participation workers or services, but about a whole change to the ethos and culture of the organisation. Internal change champions need to engage all levels of management and frontline staff across the whole local authority and its wider Strategic partners to raise profile and get cross-departmental work going – changing hearts and minds to achieve cultural shift<sup>56</sup>
- Participation and empowerment of young people need formal structures with clarity about their role and functions and the extent and limitations of the power and influence on offer- sometimes this may seem counterintuitive in contrast to the informal and participatory ways of

working. There needs to be honest, open, realistic and clear communication and expectations about what is possible

- Slow recognition by the local authorities of the value of involving children and young people in planning, monitoring and evaluating services- and now in commissioning activity - and the impact this has on the quality of delivered services
- Understanding of the particular barriers to engagement faced by equalities and other vulnerable groups and the amount of work involved in ensuring their engagement
- Showing marginalised young people respect and genuinely valuing their input and abilities has a considerable effect on their behaviour and willingness to engage. For many young people just being involved, being valued and recognised for their input and making worthwhile contributions is seen as a positive benefit in itself regardless of service outcomes. Being for example a young volunteer appears to give the young people a respect, recognition, role and status that occupies their time in a positive way and appears also to be diversionary and protective<sup>57</sup>

#### **Investment and assets**

- Investment of time and resources in community development work, especially in the early stages, to engage directly with children and young people, identify aspirations and goals, and decide how to measure outcomes
- Time spent putting systems in place to act on the identified issues and work towards tangible outcomes
- Sustained longer-term funding over many years, given the constant turnover in young people's initiatives, that can provide training and support for children and young people's engagement especially if taking up representative roles
- The availability of resources controlled by children and young people like small funding pots, and a budget to reward and credit engagement and empowerment which can be the focal point for action, matched with external advice and training

#### **Helpful processes**

- The approach and style of the workers is crucial- young people need to feel respected, valued, validated as individuals, and listened to; the worker needs to be responsive to who they are and where they are at, alerting them to their strengths, and building up their confidence, competences and self esteem
- Involve children and young people in the process from beginning to end; go to where they are and work with them to develop innovative, enjoyable and creative ways for them to get engaged and not just replicate adult structures
- Engaging more than the obvious group of articulate confident young people requires outreach and community development work; networking and partnership building are essential, with enjoyable and participatory methods. Young people themselves are often the best peer engagers

- Young people want to be listened to; what is crucial to them is the chance to seriously engage with adults on real issues of concern to them and influence decisions- and not just talk about the issues adults want to consult about; regular feedback and celebration needed.
- Opportunities for the young people to develop skills, like leadership and governance, and be creative and achieve something and to accredit their experience if they want this. A real social element needs to be built in.
- Providing thorough training and paying or rewarding young people for their input is effective in securing commitment and change- and produces considerable personal benefits for them
- The 'impact' of young people directly meeting elected members or senior officers or communicating their views through DVDs is a powerful tool for change- it demonstrates that showing people a situation first hand or hearing about experiences directly is immensely more powerful than just telling them about it. Also effective use of local media to inform and give young people a voice

#### **Ongoing support and capacity**

- Dedicated Local authority multi disciplinary participation team to undertake the direct and indirect work required to support and enable the delivery of its enabling role across all Council activities and with its Strategic partners
- Well-signposted access to both 'expert support' (professional resources; advice) and 'peer support' (twinning /buddying arrangements; exchange visits; networks); opening up existing resources to local people and professionals who want to engage with young people.
- Providing learning opportunities and support so that children and young people can build knowledge and skills to make informed decisions in order to engage and influence more effectively.
- The training and work of the NYA, NCH and others are crucial if young people are to have real influence and needs to involve staff at all levels and all departments and elected members/trustees, front-line workers in areas such as verbal and non-verbal communication skills <sup>58</sup>

#### **Effective leadership and coordination by the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership**

- Secure funding for infrastructure - outreach work, community engagement with the children and young people as citizens, and the training and support of children and young people; creative use of LAA
- Good intelligence about what is happening in children and young people engagement and empowerment
- Coherent Children and young people's Participation strategy, Framework and Development Plan
- Feedback to children and young people on performance against targets
- Local authority and other strategic partners giving leadership but not taking control – a listening, enabling role
- High level Champions of engagement and empowerment of children and young people in key roles on the Strategic Partnership

- Representatives empowered to act as a strong voice for the community and taken seriously by other sectors
- Effective linkages between Children and young people's representatives and wider community stakeholders when appropriate
- Achieving well-coordinated partnership approaches to children and young people engagement to avoid duplication and reduce 'consultation fatigue'

### **Monitoring and Measurement**

- There is a fast growing literature<sup>59</sup> about how and why to involve young people in making public decisions, but very little evaluation and research about how best to do so and what impacts can be achieved. Even when evaluation documents exist, they are not well promoted or easily available.<sup>60</sup> There is a need to develop more ways of sharing experience
- Monitoring and evaluation tools focussed on identifying outcomes and the processes that achieve them as well as outputs have to be built in from the very outset with an emphasis on baseline evidence and the need for independent evidence. Understanding of the need for capacity and time to undertake meaningful evaluation
  - The Hear by Right standards can be useful drivers for change but are very time demanding and not the whole picture. There are concerns that though they are useful, they only offer one off snapshots or indicators.
  - Current government indicators in relation to Children and young people focus on school attainments and children in care, and do not use either the Hear by Right standards, or the versions of the PSA 21 adult indicators. Consideration of development of Tellus to reflect the PSA21 indicators and a 'joining up' of approaches to empowerment across different government departments
  - Achieving common data collection methods to avoid duplicating effort and overburdening children and young people
  - The value of involving the children and young people in peer evaluation work
  - The need for Toolkits to support the evaluation and impact of engagement and empowerment. The key evaluative questions appear to be:
    - Are children and young people being included and genuinely listened to in areas that affect them?
    - Do children, young people and adults work in partnership to change things for the better for themselves and their community?
    - Are children and young people equipped and are their points of view respected

## Appendices

### Appendix 1 Contacts

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## References

- <sup>1</sup> Engagement and empowerment work with children and young people is generally termed participation, though some workers feel that it would be helpful to adopt the empowerment terminology
- <sup>2</sup> <http://www.nya.org.uk/Templates/internal.asp?NodeID=89411andParentNodeID=89141>
- <sup>3</sup> The NYA Participation team promotes the active involvement of young people in democracy and decision-making and in their communities.
- <sup>4</sup> Treseder, 1997, Empowering Children and Young People: Involvement in Decision Making
- <sup>5</sup> *Empowering children and young people training manual: promoting involvement in decision-making.*  
Save the Children. Phil Treseder)
- <sup>6</sup> UNCRC 1989
- <sup>7</sup> <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/listeningtolearn/downloads/LearningtoListen-CorePrinciples.pdf>
- <sup>8</sup> Aiming high for young people: a ten year strategy for positive activities DCFS and Treasury 2007
- <sup>9</sup> There is a worker for 8 hours a week, to be increased to 22 hours in March 2008, to facilitate and resource the Children and Young People's network of the Gloucester Assembly for the Voluntary and Community Sector. The network has approx 250 groups and they elect reps to sit on the Children and Young People's Strategy Group and Youth Task group. Until now this has been an electronic network with a newsletter with the reps consulting and feeding back.
- <sup>10</sup> DfES 2005 Statutory guidance on inter-agency cooperation to improve the wellbeing of children: children's trusts, Sections 1.4-1.6. © Crown Copyright
- <sup>11</sup> Participation works is an online gateway to the world of children and young people's participation launched to improve the way practitioners, organisations, policy makers and young people access and share information about involving children and young people in decision making. At its core is a comprehensive Resource Hub which allows you to find resources on participation.  
<http://www.participationworks.org.uk/AboutUs/tabid/62/Default.aspx>;
- <sup>12</sup> <http://www.participationworks.org.uk/ResourcesHub/ParticipationWorksResources/tabid/316/Default.aspx> ; in particular the 2008 guide to children and young people's participation rights <http://www.participationworks.org.uk/ResourcesHub/ParticipationWorksResources/tabid/316/Default.aspx>
- <sup>13</sup> <http://www.learning-southwest.org.uk/web/Page3.aspx?PageID=118>;
- <sup>14</sup> Evidence may be from paper, verbal records or direct observation and may be gained from practitioners, managers, elected members or trustees (depending on the context) as well as, crucially, from children and young people themselves. The standards require self-assessment and are all evidence based, though there are options to achieve externally validated NYA Quality mark or through the NYA and Investing in Children partnership which offers external validation of children and young people's participation leading to change. Partners agree a three stage process over three years which will lead to formal membership. Changes resulting from specific issues and concerns raised by children and young people are the ultimate goal of participation activity. These changes are a key requirement when using Hear by Right and are fundamental to successfully completing the framework.
- <sup>15</sup> <http://www.sw-special.co.uk/news/sw/>
- <sup>16</sup> <http://www.gos.gov.uk/gosw/factgosw/gloucester/> ; <http://www.maiden.gov.uk/>
- <sup>17</sup> [www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/utilities/action/act\\_download.cfm?mediaid=15627](http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/utilities/action/act_download.cfm?mediaid=15627) -
- <sup>18</sup> <http://www.youth.stroud.gov.uk/default.asp?pid=1>
- <sup>19</sup> Make a Difference
- <sup>20</sup> <http://www.madypc.co.uk/>
- <sup>21</sup> <http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/libraries/index.cfm?articleid=17840>
- <sup>22</sup> The Children's Fund is a national, government-funded initiative to provide a flexible and responsive approach to meeting the needs of children aged 5-13 who are at risk of social exclusion. The fund aims to develop good practice for preventative services for such children and their families, thus supporting them in breaking the cycle of poverty and disadvantage.
- <sup>23</sup> E.g. The input of children and young people in an estate near Stroud influenced resource decisions

- <sup>24</sup> Other examples exist in the region including in Poole and Dorset Children's Funds and the Young Mystery Evaluators in Plymouth
- <sup>25</sup> Similar initiatives existed in Poole, Dorset and Plymouth
- <sup>26</sup> <http://www.gloschildrensfund.ik.com/>
- <sup>27</sup> <http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=16950>
- <sup>28</sup> There is general national evidence supporting these findings about positive participation of young people Bernard Davies Play, Participation Potential. Groundwork 2005
- <sup>29</sup> Gloucestershire's Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) is a partnership of the key local organisations that provide services for children and young people. The CYPSP includes representatives from Gloucestershire County Council, district councils, health, Connexions, the Learning and Skills Council, police, probation service, voluntary and community sector and schools
- <sup>30</sup> Consultation and Participation: A Review of activity in Gloucestershire that involves children, young people and their families Williams, C and Williams, A (February 2005)
- <sup>31</sup> <http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/changeforchildren>
- <sup>32</sup> [http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/media/adobe\\_acrobat/j/0/cypsp.pdf](http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/media/adobe_acrobat/j/0/cypsp.pdf)
- <sup>33</sup> Young people involved in all playworker interview across county including when work is part of wider partnerships- e.g. University of Gloucester; Play Glos will put children and young people inside governance structures being developed- residential w/e in Jan for children and young people
- <sup>34</sup> The engagement of children in issues around the development of play in Gloucestershire is the subject of a detailed case study commissioned by the SW Empowerment Consortium by Pippa Levett of Gloucestershire Play. This section is based on this work.
- <sup>35</sup> <http://www.gloschildrensfund.ik.com/>
- <sup>36</sup> information, advice and guidance
- <sup>37</sup> <http://www.hbrglos.co.uk/?q=node/47> ; The Panel has included young people from county groups including National Star College, ?, Gloucestershire Young Carers Forum, Hear by Right, Members of Youth Parliament, Connexions and Friendship Café.
- <sup>38</sup> The 6 young people at the group discussion identified 16 groups or initiatives in which they were involved
- <sup>39</sup> [www.theirreadingfutures.org.uk/documents/Partners\\_for\\_Change\\_000.doc](http://www.theirreadingfutures.org.uk/documents/Partners_for_Change_000.doc) - and [http://hbr.nya.org.uk/organisations/gloucestershire\\_library\\_service\\_partners\\_change](http://hbr.nya.org.uk/organisations/gloucestershire_library_service_partners_change)
- <sup>40</sup> [http://www.stroud.gov.uk/info/community\\_portfolio\\_news\\_mar07.pdf](http://www.stroud.gov.uk/info/community_portfolio_news_mar07.pdf)
- <sup>41</sup> see reference 31
- <sup>42</sup> [www.youngadvisors.org.uk](http://www.youngadvisors.org.uk)
- <sup>43</sup> national evaluation of the pilot [http://www.youngadvisors.org.uk/YA\\_NationalEvaluation.pdf](http://www.youngadvisors.org.uk/YA_NationalEvaluation.pdf)
- <sup>44</sup> [http://www.youngadvisors.org.uk/YA\\_SchemeGuide.pdf](http://www.youngadvisors.org.uk/YA_SchemeGuide.pdf)
- <sup>45</sup> Evidence from visit and interviews with two YAs and the manager and documentation; also interview notes from a study in 2006 by UWE.
- <sup>46</sup> based on group discussion with 7 YAs and two managers and documentary evidence
- <sup>47</sup> The fund is also an example of empowerment. Bristol's Youth Select Committee (made up of UK Youth Parliament MPs and young people who stood for UKYP) has created a diverse panel of young people to help assess grants. These panels exist in every authority in the region.
- <sup>48</sup> see [www.croa.org.uk](http://www.croa.org.uk)
- <sup>49</sup> <http://www.devon.gov.uk/biggervoicesbetterworld.pdf>
- [http://hbr.nya.org.uk/example\\_mapping\\_and\\_planning\\_tool\\_18](http://hbr.nya.org.uk/example_mapping_and_planning_tool_18)
- <sup>50</sup> <http://www.nya.org.uk/hearbyright/cd/Book%20and%20tools/1HBR%20book%202006.pdf>
- <sup>51</sup> The Young People's Scrutiny Forum which any young person may attend and parallels the work of the Council's Scrutiny Committees. Recently the YPSF has been involved with the production of a report on healthy eating in schools as well as being consulted on developments for Customer Services at Devon County Council. The YPSF are also part of a national project as a partner with Mencap in enabling their meetings to be accessible to all young people.
- <sup>52</sup> <http://www.ukypdevon.co.uk/>

<sup>53</sup> This has been given the power to call the lead member or relevant Director to meet them, talk about aspects of their work and hear the concerns of the Shadow Executive which they then have to respond to.

<sup>54</sup> Scrutiny Committees look at the effectiveness of the Council's own policies and inquire into matters of local concern. These investigations lead to reports and recommendations which advise the Executive and the Council on its policies, budget and service provision.

<sup>55</sup> Evaluating the development of young people's participation plans in two Children's Trusts Interim Report Year 1 2008 Barry Percy-Smith The SOLAR Action Research Centre University of the West of England, Bristol National Youth Agency  
[http://www.nya.org.uk/shared\\_asp\\_files/GFSR.asp?NodeID=96493](http://www.nya.org.uk/shared_asp_files/GFSR.asp?NodeID=96493)

<sup>56</sup> Kirby, P et al (2003) Building a Culture of Participation – Involving children and young people in policy, service planning, delivery and evaluation, DfES: London (Handbook and research report) Research evidence on this kind of culture change work points to intensive communication as to why change is needed, where it is going and what is happening, using a variety of mechanisms.

<sup>57</sup> Developing Preventative practices: National Evaluation of the Children's Fund. Evans, R., Pinnock, K., Beirens, H., and Edwards, A. (2006) Chapter 3

<sup>58</sup> One respondent was finding it hard to engage their local Fire Brigade in thinking that involvement with young people was important!

<sup>59</sup> Measuring the Magic? Evaluating and researching young people's participation in public decision making Carnegie Young People Initiative. Perpetua Kirby with Sara Bryson  
<http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/files/main/Measure%20the%20Magic.pdf>

<sup>60</sup> The evaluation of the Devon Children's Trust participation work was not mentioned in the interviews and is only on the NYA site; the excellent NCH reports including evaluation of Common Assessment Framework Service and the training manual and CD rom do not appear on any web site.