

Children and Young People’s Participation in Commissioning Activities

Report to Corporate Directors of Children’s Services in the East Midlands



Report by the East Midlands Regional Participation Leads Group- January 2013

With thanks to critical friend, Jonas Gibson, Commissioning Manager, Lincolnshire County Council

Children and Young People's Participation in Commissioning Activities

Report contents

1. Introduction and report overview
2. Checklist for effective practice
3. Values
4. Legal context
5. Commissioning defined
6. Commissioning and Collaboration

Appendix 1. Regional Case Studies

Appendix 2. Self-assessment tool

1. Introduction and report overview

This is the third report produced by the East Midlands Regional Participation Leads Group and follows two preceding papers, *Participation in Children's Trust-type settings* and *Checklist for Safeguarding in Participation Work*.

This report, prepared for the Corporate Directors of Children's Services in the East Midlands, looks at the issue of the participation of children and young people in commissioning activities, within the scope of local authority led children's partnerships.

The report identifies effective practices across the region, with examples, based upon sound values and principles of participation enshrined in the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and featured across the region in a range of local participation strategies and charters. Local commissioning teams have contributed their time to support us in preparing this report, and it is heartening to note that they have been among the first teams in our organisations to 'get' participation.

The participation of children and young people in commissioning activities is one of the most concrete and effective ways for them to contribute. When we get this right, children and young people tell us that they feel valued and that they can make a difference – it makes a reality of their right to have a say and to influence. The benefits to our organisations include having unique perspectives, contributions, and new and imaginative ideas. People who use our services can also tell us best 'how it is' for them, and bring this to developing and improving them.

The report also considers the concept of collaborative working, looking at recent research and suggesting how this fits with participation and commissioning activity

As with previous reports, the primary audience is the regional DCS group and their immediate management teams. The implication is that if recommendations are adopted they should be applied across the whole workforce.

2. Checklist of effective practice

	<p style="text-align: center;">In order to support children and young people to effectively participate in commissioning activities, the following minimum requirements should be put in place and maintained by the East Midlands regional Local Authorities and key partners, including commissioned service providers.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">See Action Plan at appendix</p>
1	Local Authorities should each define within their commissioning strategy <i>how</i> and <i>why</i> they value the voices of citizens and how they will meaningfully engage children, young people and families (matched with values enshrined in local participation strategy)
2	The commissioning workforce is equipped with the skills and knowledge to undertake effective participation.
3	Sufficient resources are allocated to ensure the meaningful participation of citizens
4	Adequate time is allocated within the commissioning cycle to allow for meaningful participation to take place
5	The engagement of citizens in commissioning processes is undertaken honestly and transparently, citizens understand the level of influence they have
6	Commissioners capitalise on existing intelligence gained through current and recent service user/citizen participation activities, avoiding duplication, wasted resources and 'consultation fatigue'
7	Commissioners routinely engage citizens in evaluating the effectiveness and inclusiveness of their engagement, using this to develop practice
8	Appropriate methods and tools are employed matched to the age, level of understanding and developmental stages of children and young people and adults
9	Local Authorities should seek to engage children, young people and families at each stage of the commissioning cycle, not doing this should be by exception
10	Commissioned services should be required to reach and sustain a level of participation matching good practice standards as defined in the local participation strategy, and to provide evidence against this

3. Values

The National Audit Office describes 8 key principles of good commissioning, which are reflected in the Department of Health World Class Commissioning Competencies. Among these 8 key principles are;

- Putting outcomes for users at the heart of the strategic planning process.
- Seeking feedback from service users, communities and providers in order to review the effectiveness of the commissioning process in meeting local needs.
- Understanding the needs of users and other communities by ensuring that, alongside other consultees, you engage with the third sector organisations as advocates, to access their specialist knowledge;*

*In the East Midlands we can evidence that we are beyond simply using service providers as proxy voices for service user needs and views, engaging with service users themselves.

Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) states:

'States parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.'

In other words, children and young people have a right to have their say about all matters that affect them, and are to be taken seriously.

The 2010 NHS White Paper summarised this as the principle of 'no decision about me, without me'.

The UNCRC and an increasing focus by OFSTED on 'the voice of the child' and on evidencing outcomes and impact has helped drive and support our organisations to develop a participation value base. To make this a reality has meant the development of ways of working that enable children and young people to participate more fully and meaningfully, year on year.

There is always room for improvement, as evidenced through OFSTED inspections and peer inspections in the region, and through feedback from children and young people who use our services and engage in commissioning related activities. Learning through sharing successes and challenging experiences across the region will help us all develop further and with a greater degree of consistency.

4. Legal Context

Before deciding how to fulfil its Best Value Duty, Local Authorities are under a Duty to Consult representatives of a wide range of local people. Guidance states that this is not optional and that they should consult with the following groups:

- representatives of Council Tax payers
- ***those who use or are likely to use services provided by the Council***
- those who appear to the Council to have an interest in any area in which the Council carries out its functions
- local voluntary and community organisations
- small businesses.

This applies to all stages of the Local Authority’s commissioning cycle, including when considering the decommissioning of services.”

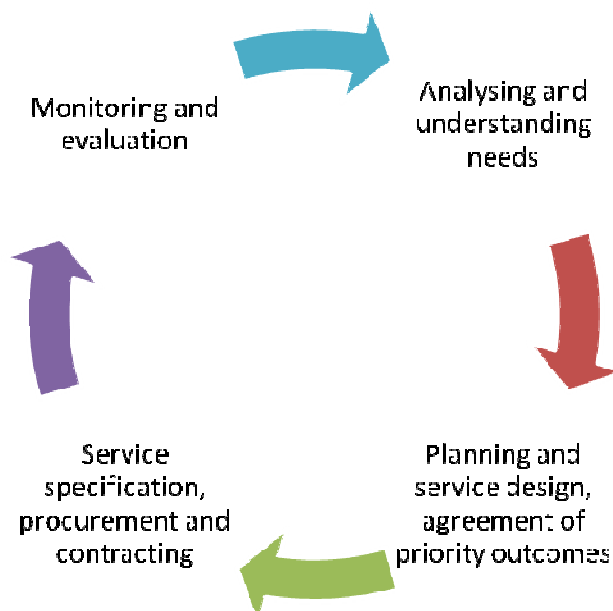
5. Commissioning defined

‘The commissioning role is one in which the authority and its partners seek to secure the best outcomes for their local community by making use of all available resources.’

Improvement and Development Agency (2010)

This definition describes in simplest terms what commissioning means for a Local Authority and its partners. There are many other similar definitions, some of which can be found within the reference documents listed in this report.

Commissioning is a cyclical activity, and there are generally considered to be four key stages, sometimes referred to as the ‘analyse, plan, do and review’ cycle.



Each stage of the commissioning cycle gives us an opportunity to engage with service users. Case studies attached to this report are aligned to each of the four stages shown in the diagram above and describe a range of methods that have been found to be successful at each stage, for different types of group and levels of commissioning activity, from the smaller scale to the strategic.

Commissioning has more recently been described as an art, not just a technical procurement tool: 'Loose talk and a hard nut: commissioning for better outcomes'; Cozens et al; SOLACE Foundation, (February 2007) If we are to successfully engage service users in commissioning activity, the 'art' could be said to be in how we achieve this equitably and effectively. This challenge could be described in terms of:

- *Effective partnership working*, including information giving and communication, creating spaces for influence and employing participative methods for service users, and
- *Striking a fair balance between*: i) the increasing desire of citizens young and older to be heard and play a part in shaping services, supported by a clear rights agenda, and ii) the views, experience and expertise of professionals and organisations which are in turn subject to a raft of guidance, directives and inspections.

Achieving this genuinely and successfully requires developing approaches to sharing power and influence that can provide a cultural challenge to established organisations like our own. This approach has been usefully described as 'collaborative working', a concept that is becoming established in the language of strategic discussions and initiatives at local, regional and government level, and which is increasingly supported by research, e.g. Collaborative Working-Inside Out; Miles, with Trott; Institute for Government Paper 5; (October 2011)

6. Commissioning and Collaboration

What, then, is meant by 'collaborative working'? The concept is not new, the language may be changing –for 'collaboration', read 'co-production.' At a local level, Sheffield City Council decided as far back as 2003 to develop a local collaborative commissioning framework, describing their approach as one which:

*'...involves **engagement with service users at every stage** of the process to ensure that services are responsive to their needs and preferences. This is particularly important, as partners in Sheffield are keen to explore models of **bottom-up service design** in which needs are identified and services are identified in partnership with neighbourhoods, groups of service users or individuals and families.'*

Collaborative Commissioning in Sheffield –discussion paper, Sheffield City Council, (2003)

Potential benefits identified by Sheffield CC at the time closely reflect some of those found in regional participation documents, including:

- Efficiency
- More responsive and personalised services
- Meeting the needs of the most complex/high need service users

The approach described here chimes with current and growing participation-drivers for all Local Authorities and their partners. National programmes, such as Total Place and Community Budgets, along with the personalisation agenda in health and social care have employed and tested collaborative approaches with varying degrees of success.

How effective is collaborative commissioning, and what makes it succeed or fail? Miles and Trott (Institute for Government, October 2011) researched a range of public sector-led collaborative working approaches at an international level. Their findings and recommendations were made available to the Coalition Government in October 2011. They found that collaboration is hard, but that the benefits can significantly outweigh costs.

Four ‘core themes’ were identified, each of which needs to be attended to and the whole kept in balance in order to achieve successful outcomes; neglecting any one area makes the collaboration less successful. They also identified that sharing power is a challenge not to be underestimated and that it needs to follow a staged approach. Miles notes in the executive summary to the report:

‘Neither am I convinced that relying solely on the citizen as customer will be a sufficiently robust pull towards the necessary service redesign that needs to happen. A baby does not go from crawling to walking without the ‘coasting’ and ‘clinging to fingers’ stages.’

Collaborative Working-Inside Out; Miles, with Trott; Institute for Government Paper 5; (October 2011); p.8

The four core themes identified in the report as key to successful collaborative work of any type are:

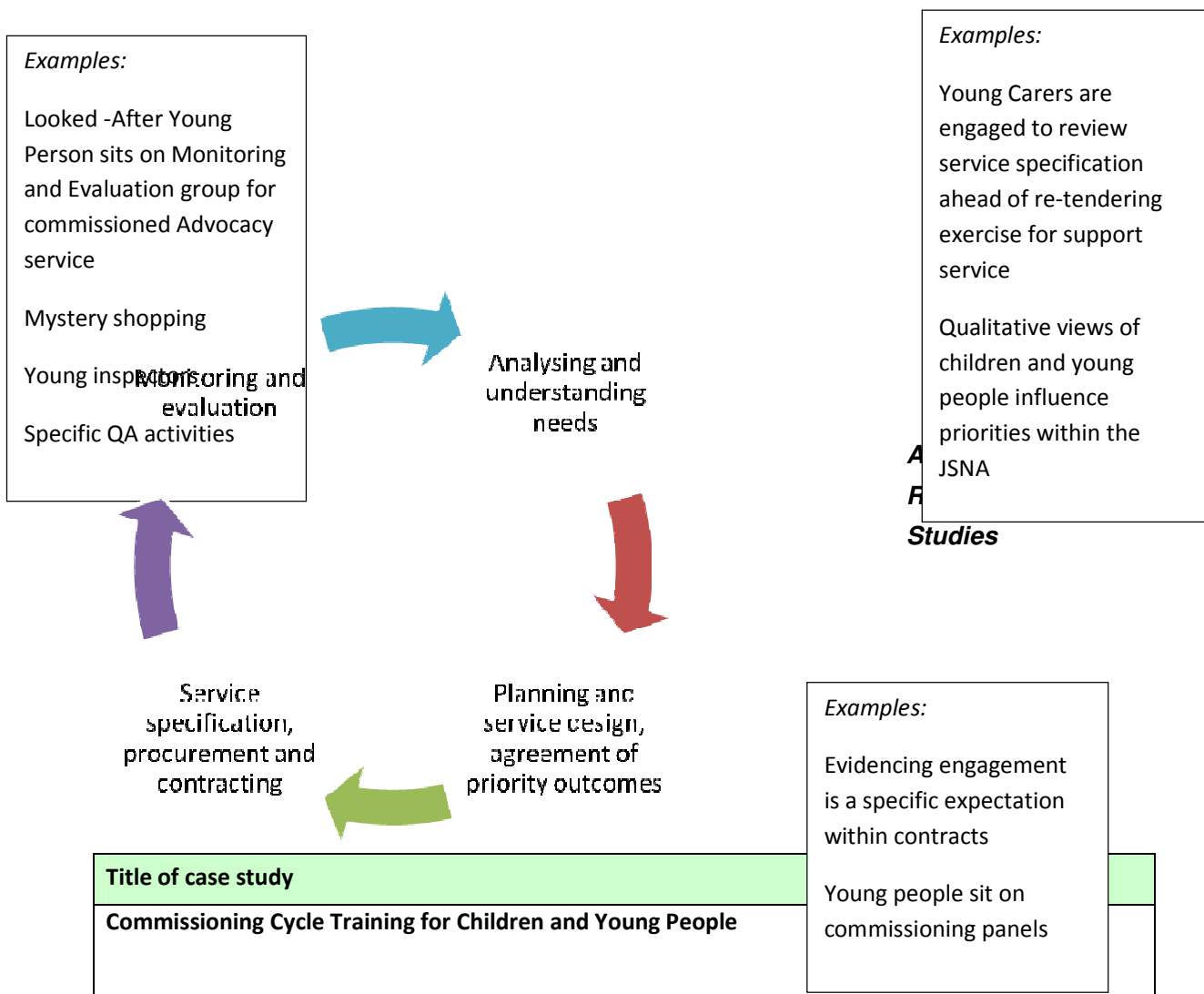
- Create common purpose, supported by explaining what is important and promoting collaborative front line working
- Insist on whole system approaches, supported by holding partners to account, resourcing new ways of working and building political backing
- Share power. Supported by distributing leadership, serving others’ perspectives (thinking it possible that your own perspective is partial), and spending time on relationships

- Appreciating the service user’s perspective, or walking in the service user’s shoes. This was supported by using appropriate outcome measures, getting service users into the heart of governance and listening to citizens and communities

The concept of collaborative working bears direct relation to participation approaches already adopted by East Midlands Local Authorities’ Children’s Services Directorships and Partnerships. A helpful way forward could be to create a set of participation principles for commissioning, essentially informed by the good practice checklist in section 2 (above) of this report.

The diagram below shows participation principles at the heart of the commissioning cycle.

Participative Commissioning Cycle



Par
Prin

Name and job role, organisation, contact details
<p>Derby City Council Adele Styles Children and Young People’s Engagement Officer adele.styles@derby.gov.uk Arshie Mushtaq Commissioning Support Officer arshie.mushtaq@derby.gov.uk Liz Perfect Project Manager Children's Commissioning Liz.perfect@derby.gov.uk</p>
Date
8 March 2012
Introduction – what’s the case study about?
<p>The Children and Young People’s Commissioning Team and the Children and Young People’s Engagement Officer developed a training package to help young people understand commissioning. This was based on the four key stages of the commissioning cycle:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Understand ★ Plan ★ Do ★ Review
Background
<p>An initial meeting with the Children and Young People’s Engagement Officer and the Head of Commissioning took place to discuss embedding the active engagement of children and young people in commissioning and shared a regional training resource from Northamptonshire.</p> <p>The Young People’s Engagement Officer then met with a Commissioning Manager and agreed in order to actively involve children and young people it was important for those involved to understand the concept of commissioning.</p>
What happened?
<p>The Children and Young People’s Commissioning with the support of the Children and Young People’s Engagement Officer developed and planned an initial 2 hour training session for one evening so that it wasn’t too onerous for children and young people to participate.</p> <p>The training was promoted to various children and young people’s groups such as Schools, Voluntary and Community groups, Children in Care Council and Voices in Action (the city wide youth forum). Twenty One young people attended the training.</p> <p>The training included a warm up activity relating to commissioning and different activities that</p>

<p>related to the understand, plan, do, review stages of commissioning.</p> <p>An evaluation form was completed at the end of the session where</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16 YP stated they enjoyed the training session and • 5 YP enjoyed it a little bit, • 17 YP stated they fully understood the commissioning cycle and • 3 understood it a little <p>The venue for the training was a young people friendly building in a city centre location making it more accessible for children and young people to attend with food and drinks provided.</p> <p>All young people were given a certificate for participating in the training signed by the Strategic Director for Children and Young People’s Service and provided with hand-outs and a glossary of terms from the training.</p>
<p>Outcomes</p>
<p>The aim is to have a pool of young people who understand the concept of commissioning and could be contacted directly by the Children and Young People’s Commissioning Team to assist in various aspects of the commissioning cycle.</p>
<p>Learning/sustainability</p>
<p>When young people are to be involved each stage of the cycle there may need to be additional support or training to prepare them for these specific tasks.</p> <p>Consideration now needs to be given for future commissioning plans and a development of a framework to identify young people’s participation in order to enable sustainability.</p>
<p>Other places where case study has been distributed</p>

<p>Title of Case Study:</p>
<p>Children’s Commissioning; User Participation in re-tendering a Young Carers service.</p>
<p>Name and job role, organisation, contact details</p>
<p>Colin Hopkirk, Participation Officer Commissioning Team members: Jonas Gibson, Commissioning Team Manager Commissioning Officers Catherine Southcott, Linda Turnbull</p>

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Date
01/11/12
Introduction – what’s the case study about?
<p>Lincolnshire’s service to support Young Carers had reached the point where it needed to be re-tendered. In order to ensure that the service specification was reviewed and improved to meet actual need, Young Carers were invited to engage in the commissioning process.</p>
Background
<p>Childrens Commissioning recognise the complex difficulties and emotional challenges that Young Carers face on a daily basis. In line with national practice and local analysis there is a need for a Young Carers service in Lincolnshire.</p> <p>The new service will be an amalgamation of two separate services previously commissioned for Young Carers, including one provided for Young Carers aged under 18 and one for Young Adult Carers (aged 18-25). LCC believe that engaging users is a fundamental part of the commissioning lifecycle and most notably a vital part of producing a robust and relevant service specification.</p>
What happened?
<p>Participation with young carers during the commissioning process included;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An initial consultation day with Young Carers to gain an insight into what users prioritised from the service. This helped to shape the initial tender documents. • At the Provider Briefing Session, a former Young Carer gave an introductory presentation outlining her role as a Carer. • Two further consultation sessions with young carers took place to engage with the specification; to highlight changes and make recommendations. • Young carers were equally involved with setting tender questions • Young carers self-selected two young carers to form part of the evaluation team for tenders and interviews. • Young carers will continue to be engaged through having a seat at contract monitoring meetings
Outcomes

- Young Carers have a genuine voice and influence in service development and decision making
- Young Carers have had a direct input in shaping the specification which will form the foundation of the new service.
- Young Carers have an active role and shared responsibility for the procurement of this service.
- The Project Team are confident that the service specification understands and reflects the needs of local young carers.

Learning/sustainability

Learning

- Good quality participation takes time and money! Especially in a rural council like Lincolnshire
- Timely service user feedback is required to ensure that users know we have acted on their feedback.
- Commissioners don't have all the answers and users are best placed to influence the shape, outcomes and priorities of a service for young people
- Commissioning teams welcome the expert advice and guidance from the participation team who are more experienced at user engagement –this working relationship is strengthening over time and the Commissioning team are developing their own enhanced participation skills
- Providers are now required to sign up to the Participation Charter in all contracts – monitored through formal processes - this ensures their long term commitment to participation

Other places where case study has been distributed

Within Commissioning and Participation teams

Title of case study

Special People Group co-production work

Name and job role, organisation, contact details

<p>Jon Rea, Engagement and Participation Lead, Nottingham City Council</p> <p>Jon.rea@nottinghamcity.gov.uk</p> <p>0115 8764812</p> <p>Laura Haxton, Commissioning Manager, Nottingham City Council</p> <p>Laura.haxton@nottinghamcity.gov.uk</p> <p>0115 8763456</p>
Date
March 2012
Introduction – what’s the case study about?
<p>The involvement of disabled young people in the commissioning of a service information hub for personalised budget holders and the planning of support services for those who take their personalised budget as a direct payment. It demonstrates how young people with inclusion needs can play a co-productive role in the Analysis and Plan stages of the commissioning cycles.</p>
Background
<p>The Special People Group is a participation forum and activity group for young people aged 15-17 with complex and in some cases severe physical disabilities, convened by Barnardo’s and hosted by Oak Field School and Sports College, a specialist 3-19 school for physical and learning disabled children and young people. The group had previously taken part in consultation around the Vulnerable Adults Plan and had demonstrated a real enthusiasm and aptitude for participation work. The group is composed of young people on the cusp of transition to Adult services and has a highly aspirational membership.</p>
What happened?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City Council’s Quality and Commissioning directorate asked the Special People Group to contribute to a consultation around the intention to commission a service information hub - an online resource that would provide personal budget holders with product and service information, including links to brokers. The group were also asked to assess plans for direct payment support services for personal budget holders who take a direct payment, as part of a Whole Life Disability Strategic Commissioning Review. The group agreed to the request for help and two sessions were set up; the first to brief the young people on the content and purpose of the consultation work, and the second to conduct the assessment work. • As the service information hub work involved reviewing and assessing a number of websites a room was set up with accessible desks and computer terminals. Support workers were on hand to enable each young person to have a buddy to help navigate sites where needed and record responses. • The group reviewed and assessed a sample selection of existing service information hubs, from a range of providers including local authorities, voluntary sector organisations and private companies. The assessment covered functionality, accessibility, usability, content, appearance and style. When the assessments were complete scores for each site were discussed with the group and a ranking of sites and their respective qualities was drawn up. • For the direct payment support services consultation the group took part in focussed discussions with the Commissioning Officer about draft support plans. They were presented with a selection

of options for commissioning and analysed each one to develop a preference list. They identified various areas where the plans needed further development and provided insight into how the proposals would work in practice.

Outcomes

In each case the views of the group were influential in shaping the findings of the respective Analysis and Plan stages. With the information hub work, the group demonstrated that for young people in transition and younger age range vulnerable adults, digital information and empowerment resources are an essential element in supporting independent living. This provided a crucial balance to competing evidence from older 'non-digital' service users. In addition their assessment of sites provided a valuable evidence base for developing the service specification of the information hub.

In the case of the support services for those who take their personal budget as a direct payment the input of the group was instrumental in determining the final preferred commissioning option. The options were then further consulted with other groups with personal budgets. The final specification and payment schedule required providers to highlight their services and costs against the packages of support services that had been developed through consultation and were integral to the evaluation of the tender processes. In addition the Commissioning Officer was able to provide a service user narrative to accompany the review findings.

Learning/sustainability

Engaging young disabled people in the commissioning of Adult Social Care services is essential if commissioners are to develop insight into likely future user behaviour and attitudes. While older vulnerable adults often evidence cultural or behavioural resistance to new approaches to adult social care, younger users demonstrate a far greater sense of adaptability and acceptance, around both new technology and the concept of individual choice and control over arrangements that support independent living.

With regard to the involvement of the Special People Group in future commissioning, members of the group have subsequently taken part in other participation activities with Quality and Commissioning and the One Nottingham partnership. Recent changes to funding mean the group's future as a regular participation forum is uncertain, but the constituent partner schools and organisations continue to be part of the resource base for co-productive work around physical and learning disability strategic commissioning reviews. In addition the work undertaken with the Special People Group has provided a practical template for the inclusion of young people with additional needs in co-productive work, generating very useful learning around methodology, session logistics and delivery styles.

Other places where case study has been distributed

Nottingham City Council website
www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/commissioning

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Title of case study
Blaby and Hinckley PAYP Young Inspectors

Name and job role, organisation, contact details
<p>Pali Obhi, Blaby and Hinckley and Bosworth IYSS Locality Manager, LCC, CYPS, Email: pali.obhi@leics.gov.uk Mobile: 07985 256323</p> <p>Jane McCormick - jane.mccormick@leics.gov.uk</p> <p>County Youth Support Worker - Voice of Young People.</p> <p>Address: Leicestershire Youth Service, Room 100A, County Hall, Glenfield, Leics. LE3 8RF. Mobile: 07946867488</p>
Date
28th Nov 2012
Introduction – what’s the case study about?
<p>The involvement of young people in the commissioning and monitoring of activities funded through Positive Activities for Young People (PAYP)</p>
Background
<p>Integrated Youth Support Services (IYSS) Locality Managers oversee the commissioning of PAYP funding. There are 5 IYSS Locality Managers whom each hold a responsibility for a district in Leicestershire.</p> <p>In line with the LCC Active Involvement Policy, it was essential to ensure that young people were at the hub of commissioning PAYP funding. Building on the Youth Services Inspectors a model was developed in partnership with the Youth Service to train PAYP Young Inspectors</p>
What happened?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Youth Service took lead on the recruitment, training and support for young people throughout the programme. • Young People were recruited for existing PAYP funded activities, youth services, schools and youth councils, ensuring that a diverse range of young people were recruited. • Young People attended the Senior Member Training and PAYP funding workshop where they were briefed on the purpose and criteria of PAYP. The young people also inputted the monitoring tool that would be used for the monitoring visits for both them and the IYSS Manger • Dates were arranged for young people to screen the bids at a time convenient to them • The IYSS panel came together to screen the bids • Comments of the YP inputted into the approvals and non-approvals of the bids which were consist between both groups. • Funding confirmation was given and dates set for the PAYP Young Inspectors to inspect each project supported by the Youth Services. • The IYSS Manager accompanied where possible the young people or attended separately. • The outcomes of each visit are documented together so that the panel is able to compare the

feedback made by the PAYP Inspectors and the YSS Managers

- The feedback will support the re-commissioning of PAYP funding and determine any gaps and future commissioning priorities.

Blaby, Oadby and Wigston Programme

- 6 YP attended the training
- All enjoyed the training with positive feedback
- Undertook a real inspection as part of the process
- Gained a reward of their choice as a thank you

Outcomes

- Greater understanding on the commissioning cycle and process
- Undertaking further inspections
- Confidence in talking to peers on the activity
- Confidence in discussing the PAYP application
- Greater awareness of local council processes

Learning/sustainability

The Youth Service have made a commitment to support the PAYP Inspectors. Without them it would have been difficult to set the programme up.

As a result the Young People are offered refresher training with an opportunity to feedback any comments on the process which may lead to changes in the monitoring questions. The programme is now in its 2nd year and is deemed to be successful in the areas outlines.

Each locality has its own particular arrangement which maybe similar

Other places where case study has been distributed

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Appendix 2: Self-assessment and planning tool					
Key area	What are you doing now?	What do you need to do?	Responsible for action	Date to be completed by	We will know we have done this when...
1. LA Commissioning Strategy defines why and how children and young people's engagement is valued and to be achieved					
2. Commissioning workforce is equipped with knowledge and skills to undertake affective participation					
3. Sufficient resources are identified and allocated to ensure meaningful participation					
4. Adequate time is allocated within the commissioning cycle to ensure meaningful participation takes place					
5. Engagement is on an informed, honest and transparent basis. Participants understand the level of influence they have.					
6. Commissioners capitalise on existing intelligence gained through recent/current engagement activities, avoiding duplication and consultation-fatigue					

<p>7. Participants are routinely engaged in evaluating the effectiveness and inclusiveness of their engagement. Commissioners use this information to develop practice</p>					
<p>8. Appropriate 'tailored' approaches, tools and methods are used to match age, level of understanding and developmental stages of participants.</p>					
<p>9. Local Authorities should seek to engage children, young people and families at each stage of the commissioning cycle by default, not doing so should be by exception.</p>					
<p>10. Commissioned services are required to reach and sustain level of participation matching standards as defined in the local Participation Strategy, and to routinely provide evidence.</p>					