

# PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE POSITION PAPER

November 2006

## 1 Purpose

To summarise progress on the engagement and participation of children and young people in service design and delivery, and to set out our future opportunities and priorities.

## 2 Background

- 2.1. In 1998 a comprehensive **Youth Review** was carried out in the city and was subsequently published by the National Youth Agency. This led to the creation of the **Youth Strategy 2000-2005** paving the way for the development of Sunderland Youth Parliament and the creation of youth participation initiatives.
- 2.2. In April 2004, the Cultural and Leisure Review Committee agreed a **Performance Improvement Review report and implementation plan for Young People: Engaging and Delivering Services (see Key Document)** which formed the basis of work in this area over the last two years. In April 2006, the Review Committee agreed that any outstanding actions would be subsumed within the Children & Young People's Plan.
- 2.3. Publication of the **Children & Young People's Plan in April 2006** saw the participation of children and young people firmly embedded in the culture of Children's Services.

## 3 Current Practice

- 3.1 **Work with young people** through participatory approaches has developed significantly during the past three years. A real commitment exists throughout the city in developing the voice of young people and engaging them in the design and delivery of services. This has resulted in the development of strategy, building of structures, and investment of time and resources to raise the profile of young people's voices at delivery and strategic level.
- 3.2 Much good practice has been developed in the **Early Years Sector in engaging parents and the community** in service design and delivery. Training for early years practitioners emphasises the need to observe children and develop and adapt their learning opportunities in response to those observations. Children 'leading

their own learning' is emphasised in support and challenge of practice in all Sunderland settings.

- 3.3 Within **Children's Fund** services there is a strong emphasis on the use of the **Hear By Right standards** for mapping and developing their services. This has been a major factor in the embedding of participatory practices with children aged 5-13 within the ethos of Children's Fund initiatives, further enhanced by having a full-time officer responsible for the development of this agenda. The development of a "**Children's Champions**" Group provides a focus and support for the continued development of children's voice within the Children's Fund initiatives.
- 3.4 The restructure of the **Youth Development Group** in 2004 resulted in a major refocus on the development of youth participation supported by an additional resource dedicated to this agenda within the Youth Service and more recently within the emerging Children's Services. Other services, including **Connexions, School Improvement, Looked After Care**, also have officers with a primary role to support and facilitate development of the agenda.
- 3.5 The second UK Youth Parliament elections in Sunderland took place in February 2006. 7,596 young people aged 11-18 voted, a 300% increase since the 2004 elections.
- 3.6 **Appendix 1** sets out a range of examples of recent and current practice on actively **engaging children and young people** in Sunderland. Clearly there has been major progress in developing this agenda in recent years resulting in a wide and varied range of structures, opportunities, methods and approaches as the above comprehensive list illustrates. The list in Appendix One is not exhaustive but helps to give a picture across the city and within Children's Services. Much of this work is now routinely embedded in practice.

#### **4 Future Priorities and Practice**

- 4.1 Priority 26 of the **Children and Young People's Plan 2006-2009** – "Enable children and young people to participate in service design and delivery" sets out our key actions for 2006/7:
- support children and young people to participate in service evaluation and planning: Services will complete the participation self-assessment in order to establish their own baseline and planning requirements by March 2007
  - Support children and young people to participate in local demographic initiatives: Youth Participation Network will be expanded to include groups and services for children and young people as a mechanism to monitor participation levels and identify continued support by March 2007
  - Support children and young people to access information about service priorities and feed back their views: The communication strategy will be implemented including the development of web space within the Children's Trust website, which will be designed with the involvement of children and young people by March 2007
  - Support children and young people to directly influence the services that they need: Implement the participation self-assessment tool as a means to track the input of children and young people and its subsequent impact by March 2007
  - Develop an information strategy that will enable us to put in place the systems, tools and access points – virtual and physical – so that we can get information to young people in a timely and accessible way by March 2007

- Ensure remaining actions from Performance Improvement Review for Young People: engaging and delivering services Improvement Plan are completed by the Children and Young People's Participation Group by March 2007

4.2 In addition to this, **corporate planning guidance** indicates a need for all Council services to take into account key messages highlighted by young people at the Youth State of the City Debate. This will have the impact of influencing operational planning.

4.3 A recent development is the proposal to develop a **Young Citizen's Charter**. The Charter would set out roles and responsibilities of the City Council, Children's Services and their partners, together with rights and responsibilities of children and young people. It would provide clear entitlements of all children and young people incorporating the legislative requirements of the Children's Act, the principles of the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child, particularly Article 12, and also take into account international and national standards of children and young people's participation.

4.4 Underpinning all of this is the need, as part of a **workforce development strategy**, to invest in training and support for practitioners and managers in order to facilitate the embedding of participatory practice with children and young people throughout service design and delivery.

## 5. Challenges

A recent consultation exercise with practitioners identified key challenges for the engagement of children and young people.

- the challenge of achieving greater involvement in services that are traditionally adult led
- the challenge of engaging children and young people from hard to reach or marginalized groups.
- the challenge of getting the most out of the resources available to support participation across all age ranges
- the challenge of embedding Hear by Rights standards in all work with children and young people

## Background Papers

- Report of Consultation with Children and Young People (mapping exercise) version 3 (19.08.06)
- The involving children and young people section of the Children and Young People Plan 2006-2009
- The Children and Young People Democratic Engagement Strategy 2005-2010,
- An audit report on Hear By Right requested by the National Youth Agency – October 2006
- Children's Fund Strategic Plan 2005-8

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## Democratic Engagement

- **UK Youth Parliament** elections leading to the election of 2 Members of the UK Youth Parliament and 2 Deputy Members, who take on key roles locally, regionally and nationally.
- Youth representative on the **Children's Trust** since 2004.
- Representation of young people on the **Inclusive Communities Partnership** (Sunderland Partnership) since 17<sup>th</sup> October 2006
- UK Youth Parliament survey with young people on facilities in Sunderland planned, carried out, evaluated and reported on by Sunderland's Members of the UK Youth Parliament in partnership with the Youth Development Group resulting in key issues being raised and informing service planning.
- Development of **Area Youth Forums** to reflect the council's area committee structure with the aim of formalizing the links.
- Sunderland Youth Parliament's '**We're All Ears**' Campaign

## Local Events and Conferences

- Young People's Annual **State of the City Debate**.
- Annual young stakeholders' conference on education – **Learning is Fun** – developed and delivered by young people resulting in the development of the Sunderland Young People's Anti-Bullying Charter Mark, the increased take up of school's undertaking School Council UK Training, and adaptation of this youth-led model to develop the Young People's State of the City Debate.
- Youth Service conference for young people – **Youthinc**, which brought young people, Elected Members, and council officers together to debate youth issues on an area basis. An outcome of the conference was a follow up event organized by the North Area Youth Event, and the Youth Development Group used the ideas, comments and issues raised to help inform the development of the Youth Matters Team.
- Use of **e-voting** for young people from voluntary sector youth projects through the 'Say What You Think' event organised by Sunderland Voluntary Sector Youth Forum with further use on the issues of sexual health and drugs and alcohol in conjunction with other partner organisations.

## Equality and Diversity

- **City Equals – a group for disabled young people** which advocates on behalf of young people with special needs, has carried out access audits, has engaged in consultation, and links with Sunderland Youth Parliament.
- **Connexions Youth Engagement Group** which has representation of young people from **BME groups**, as well **young refugees and asylum seekers**.
- **Young Asian Voices** Youth Committee which has representation on the project's management committee, continue to work with management committee to identify a suitable base for the project, and work with the project coordinator on planning programmes.
- Children's Fund worked with Washington **Asian Women's Society** to consult with children and young people as part of the development of an Eid Festival.

## Being Healthy

- Young people's consultation conference on **health** and report produced by young people has resulted in the development of a young people's health clinic

at Oxclose Community School, and agreement has been given to develop an inspection process of GP surgeries by young people.

- Development of **anti-binge drinking posters** by young people from the Youth Offending Service, which were used in a city-wide campaign, and subsequently formed the basis of a pre-Christmas radio campaign sponsored by the Sunderland Teaching Primary Care Trust and the Youth Development Group.

## Staying Safe

- 4UM – a group for **Children and Young People Looked After** which has recently been fully involved in changes made to the participation of children and young people in Looked After Reviews. The group has developed from a consultation focus group to also become an umbrella framework which supports participation by a wide range of Looked After Children and **Care Leavers** in a variety of projects including delivery of training for staff and students at Sunderland and Durham Universities, organizing and delivering workshops locally and regionally on young people's issues, policy and procedure development, and now supporting Looked After Representation on Sunderland Youth Parliament.
- Development of Sunderland Young People's **Anti-bullying** Charter Mark by young people from Monkwearmouth School and Sunderland Youth Parliament . 20 schools have signed up to the Charter Mark and other schools are using it as template to develop their approaches. Children's Fund worked with Extended School and the Anti-Bullying Service to consult on best practice on engaging with children. Three fun consultation days organised by the Sunderland Carers Centre highlighted the lack of understanding of young carers issues in schools, and bullying, and also provided practical proposals for the improvement of support for young carers, including a Young Carers Card in Schools and the use of mobile phones.
- An editorial group is due to be established of young people from Looked After Care through the **4UM** network to commence work on a dedicated magazine 'Messages' and an education-focussed website.

## Enjoying and achieving

### Achievement Awards

- Evaluation and consultation on the development of the annual **Sunderland Young Achievers Awards** which has resulted in changes in the design and strategy of the marketing of the awards, and the design and production of the presentation ceremony.
- Effective use of award programmes, including the **Mayor's Award and Duke of Edinburgh Awards**, to promote and recognise young people voluntary work and service to the community.

### Schools

- **Building Schools for the Future** has used consultation to influence school design for the first phase of the programme, leading to the development of citywide strategies for the delivery of education through BSF
- The **School Improvement Service** has engaged and consulted with pupils on the Pupils First programme, individual learning plans, transitions and on learning and safety in schools.
- **Every Schoolday Counts** has consulted extensively and engaged children throughout the life of the projects covering all areas of the project's work. An example of this work includes the 100 Top Tips for Attendance that contributes

to a toolbox of good practice which will be shared with schools and other local authorities.

#### Sport and Leisure

- Children's Fund – Involving Children and Families Service has trained children to be researchers (**Southwick Investigation Squad**) who have worked on researching **play** parks in Southwick and have presented findings to influence the Urban Play Strategy.

#### Making a positive contribution

- Development of the **Young Community Leaders** Programme.
- **School Council** UK training delivered in 50% of Schools including Infants, Primary, Secondary, 6<sup>th</sup> Form, and schools for pupils with Special Educational Needs.
- Continued development of **Keyfund and Keyfund Juniors** as an effective mechanism for children and young people to gain key skills through developing youth led programmes.
- The development of the **Youth Matters Team** including Youth Advocates and Youth Volunteers with the responsibility to distribute £750,000 from the Youth Opportunity Fund and Youth Capital Fund over two years to young people led initiatives.
- Introduction of a Youth Participation Self-assessment tool, which incorporate the principles of **Hear by Right** and the Voice-Platform-Action models of participation, for projects to assess and plan their youth participation development. 83% of youth projects have completed the assessment as part of the Youth Development Group Quality Standards Framework.
- Use of **Viewpoint**, e-voting and small group consultation with young people from the Youth Offending Service to help inform service analysis and development.

#### Achieving Economic Well-being

- Consultation by **Sunderland Library Service** to inform policy surrounding children and young people's membership, privileges, fees and charges being reviewed and further recommendations being made to senior management.
- **Connexions Youth Engagement Group** provides a shadow function to the Connexions Local Management Committee contributing to the allocation of grants to project, and members have also been trained young in committee skills, recruitment and selection, and also engages young people in quality measures through a mystery shopper process.
- **Fundraising** skills are developed using the Keyfund and Keyfund Junior process.
- **Youth Advocates** are employed by the Youth Development Group to work alongside young volunteers to administer the Youth Opportunity Fund and Youth Capital Fund.
- City Council's annual budget consultation process involves young people with **direct contact with the City Treasurer**.

#### Service Management and Improvement

- B2b+ Project **Young Parents Committee** meets quarterly to review and plan their programme of work and service development.
- Young people are instrumental to the development of the **Y-Not? Project** through involvement on the management committee, project support group, consultation and recruitment and selection.

- Ongoing evaluation and consultation is used by **Children's Centres** to inform service delivery leading to action planning for service improvement including raising the profile of specific issues through local programmes for example an anti-smacking campaign.
- **Recruitment** processes for the appointment of the Director of Children's Services involved children and young people from Wear Kids, Look After Care, Connexions and Sunderland Youth Parliament, and recruitment processes to appoint the Deputy Director of Children's Services included young people from City Equal, Connexions, YEAH group, and Sunderland Youth Parliament.
- The **recruitment** of all staff to the Wear Kids project (Children's Fund) has involved children.
- **Young Persons' Inspection Team** have worked alongside the Youth Development Group as part of the inspection processes of the Quality Assurance Framework and have also been included in the development of the Urbact Young Citizens' Project toolkit for youth participation in urban policies (European programme).
- Annual meetings with the City Treasurer and Sunderland Youth Parliament as part of the City Council's **budget consultation**.

### **Publications**

- Young people led and youth focused publication – **Urban Beat, Word Up, and Street Magazine**.
- In partnership with Hetton Primary School and Home School Partnership the Children's Fund worked with children who needed extra support in school who identified the importance of friendship and belonging as a key issue for children. The children gained a wide range of skills through the development of a magazine that was circulated to all **primary schools** in the Children's Fund area, and the success of the project demonstrated that primary school children have the ability to actively engage in this kind of work.
- Development of posters and a **guide to the representation of young people** by members of the Farringdon Community Sports College Council in partnership with the Extended School Team and Youth Development Group.