

Getting a Better Deal for Children and Young People in Nottingham

A 2 day participation event



Event Report
April 2006

Introductions

Di Smith - Chair of the Strategic Partnership for Children, Young People and Families

“I was delighted to be able to attend the final session of the Hear by Rights Conference. It was clear from the moment I entered the room that there was a real atmosphere of positive engagement.

The DVD provides an excellent record of the two days and together with this report will serve as a reminder of an event which represents a landmark for all of us working in services for children and young people in Nottingham. We have made a commitment to actively listen and respond to the views of children and young people as part of our everyday practice. This is a commitment we intend to keep as we work together to improve the life chances of all children and young people in Nottingham.

I look forward to continuing to work with you.”

Phillip – young facilitator

“This conference has been an important first step, because now the adults have to look at how they work with young people.

Communication between adults and children is essential, because from what we are taught we learn, and from what we learn we develop. Adults should go to young people and say ‘what do you want us to do?’, because those young people are tomorrow’s future and adults who are in charge need to understand young people, if they want to make changes for them.”

Maureen McGrath – Children’s Services Manager Barnardo’s Sherwood Project

“The report to the Executive Committee in March 2005 ‘Children and Young People’s Engagement - What We Know’ identified that there have been many major pieces of consultation work in Nottingham over the last 3 years. What appeared to be missing was a framework for the implementation of the structural and organisational change needed to improve policy and practice and meet the new statutory requirements. The ‘Getting a Better Deal’ conference is the start of that journey.”



JJ – young facilitator

“I think it’s important that young people take part as their opinion in the present can affect the outcomes and decisions in the future. Young People want to be more involved but there needs to be opportunities for them to have an input into decision making... Young people know what’s happening to them, they have more of an understanding than people think. They know what’s right for them in certain situations; they just need the chance to express this.”

The Context

“By 2008 every local authority in England must have in place Children’s Trust arrangements. Local partners should ensure a culture of openness across their Children’s Trust arrangements so that listening and responding to children and young people becomes an integral part of every day practice. They should see to it that children and young people are involved in decision making about their lives and designing and developing services”.

(Statutory Guidance on interagency co-operation to improve the wellbeing of children: children’s trusts (SG) 2004)

“We are creating a culture of children and young people’s participation in Nottingham. This means that all children and young people will be listened to about all decisions that affect their lives, and that services and outcomes for children and young people will improve as a result.”

Nottingham City Children and Young People’s Participation Strategy

Barnardo’s has been commissioned by Nottingham City Council to lead this process, which is being funded by the Nottingham Children’s Fund.

Barnardo’s worked in partnership with some key local providers (Connexions, Youth Engagement Service, Play, Partnership Council, Education, Social Services, Health) to develop a set of principles to work towards in Nottingham.

This two day event was the next step on from developing these principles. Its aim was to start us on the journey of implementing a successful participation strategy in Nottingham City. The views and priorities of the children and young people who attended will be taken forward to shape the next stage of work. We hope this will signal a fundamental cultural shift in the way services engage with children and young people.



Hear by Right

Hear by Right has been recognised as a tried and tested process for engaging with young people and professionals and was seen as a natural framework within which to develop Nottingham’s own participation strategy.

Children and young people need to be heard, taken seriously and be treated as equal citizens. The Convention on the Rights of the Child gives them that right and demands that adults listen and respond. Many adults struggle with how to make this happen.

Hear by Right is a set of 7 standards covering all parts of a service or organisation and works as a mapping and planning tool to be used with children and young people to improve the ways in which they can influence and improve services so they get a better deal. It’s been used since 2001 across England and in other parts of the world with a wide range of services and organisations.

The Young Delegates

Barnardo's has a history of partnership working in Nottingham and were able to use this knowledge of city service provision to recruit delegates from varied backgrounds and from many traditionally 'marginalised' or 'hidden' groups. We recognise that any single event can only ever be a snapshot, however we are pleased that children and young people from the following groups attended the conference:

Achievement Team :: Action for Young Carers :: Base 51 :: Beconn :: Butterfly Project :: City Hospital Youth Service :: KISS :: Leaving Care Team :: Outburst :: Partnership Council :: Play Service :: STARS :: Travelling community (supported by Connexions) :: YOT :: Youth Engagement Service.

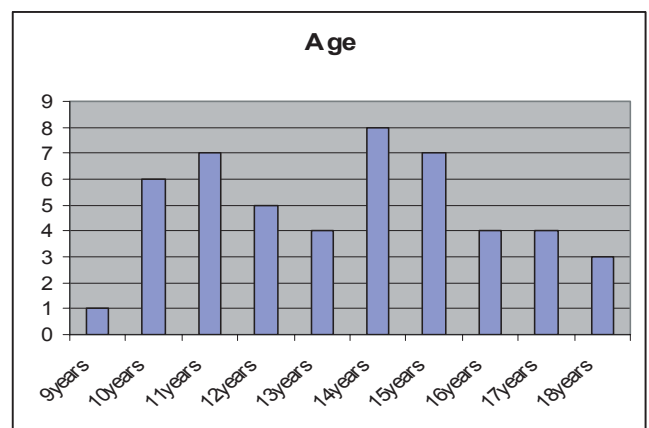
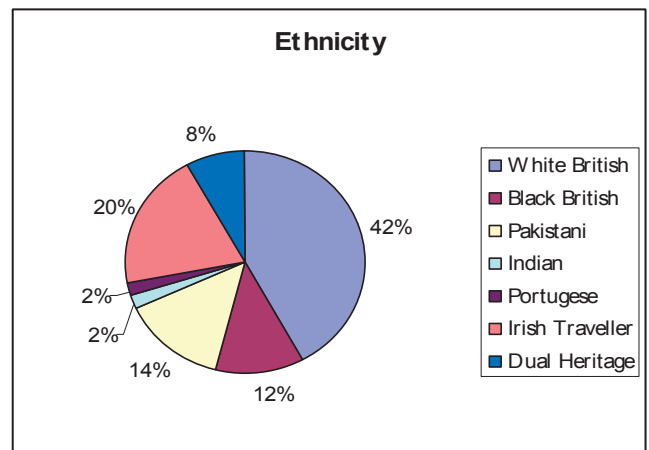


Services were consulted as to any additional needs the children and young people had, and information was provided in child friendly language using words, pictures and - as a number of delegates had learning disabilities - Makaton, to enable maximum participation.

49 children and young people attended, representing a broad range of ages, backgrounds and abilities.

These included:

- 12%** of young delegates with a known disability
- 6%** known to be lesbian, gay or bisexual or transgender
- 6%** from the care system.
- 58%** from an ethnic group other than White British
- 39%** under 13 years of age



Delegates were paid for their time and contribution with gift vouchers and a free ice skating pass.

“we want to keep being able to talk to adults about what we want”

Being Healthy

We asked delegates to use the Graffiti wall to record their views.



More than 50% who responded said they did or sometimes took drugs, though only one third of young people chose to answer this statement.

- "I can't cook"
- "I eat healthy a lot of the time but not always"
- "I love exercise"
- "(I exercise) 3 x a week"
- "(I'm sometimes happy it) - depends who I'm around"

The children and young people prioritised what they felt were the key issues for services concerned with Being Healthy:

Priorities

- Managers of services should support children to participate.**
- Within each service there should be opportunities for children to pass on their skills to others.**
- Achievements should be celebrated.**
- Everyone should have the chance to participate especially those who are usually left out.**
- Services should have a clear agreement about how they listen to children.**
- The service should have on-going plans for the participation of young people.**
- Service Managers should be trained and supported in participation.**

I have healthy food and drink:		
yes 51%	sometimes 36%	no 13%
I do exercise:		
yes 76%	sometimes 20%	no 4%
I am usually happy:		
yes 42.5%	sometimes 42.5%	no 15%

The majority of young delegates considered themselves to be very or fairly healthy with regards to food (87%) and exercise (96%), however, less than half (42.5%) felt they were 'usually happy'.



Being Safe

We asked delegates to use the Graffiti wall to record their views.



- “(I feel safe) sometimes at school”
- “I live on my own in a flat and sometimes I don’t feel safe.”
- “I feel safe because the doors are locked”.
- “No, I feel intimidated”.
- “I get bullied and I don’t like it.”
- “(I) feel safe at play centre”.
- “(Not in my area) cos it’s full of prostitutes and drug dealers.”
- “Too much gun crime.”
- “Too many road works”.
- “(There’s) loads of broken glass”.
- “(Sometimes) “but houses do get broken into.”
- “(There) are loads of bullies”.

The young delegates prioritised what they felt were the key issues for services concerned with Being Safe:

Priorities

- Managers of services should support children to participate.**
- Services are monitored on how well young people are supported to participate.**
- Within each service there should be opportunities for children to pass on their skills to others.**
- Everyone should have the chance to participate especially those who are usually left out.**
- Services make clear what resources exist to support young people to participate.**
- Services should have a clear agreement about how they listen to children.**
- There are clear rules about how young people can participate safely and fairly.**

I feel safe in the house I live in:		
yes 69%	sometimes 19%	no 11%
I feel safe in my area:		
yes 35%	sometimes 37%	no 28%
I feel safe at school or college:		
yes 57%	sometimes 35%	no 8%

Safety was a big concern for the young delegates. Almost **one third** did not always feel safe at home, with almost two thirds not always feeling safe in their area. The most positive result on safety was that 57% felt safe at school or college.

- “Schools must be more proactive in tackling homophobia”**
- “I live in a hostel and it is not a nice environment”**

Economic Wellbeing

We asked delegates to use the Graffiti wall to record their views.



My area is clean and safe:		
yes 26%	sometimes 44%	no 30%
I have enough money to live on:		
yes 45%	sometimes 29%	no 26%
The house I live in is decent:		
yes 64%	sometimes 15%	no 21%

Only 26% of the children and young people felt their area was usually clean and safe. Almost 50% felt they had enough money to live on, but less than two thirds (64%) felt that the house they lived in was decent.

- There are “not enough cleaners”
- “It is scary to go down to the park and there are drug dealers at the bottom of my street.”
- “I live on my own and I have a baby – I am always skint even on payday”
- “not enough police on the road”
- “(It’s) not clean”.
- “I am on job seekers”

The young delegates prioritised what they felt were the key issues for services concerned with Economic Wellbeing:

Priorities

- Everyone should have the chance to be included especially those who are usually left out.
- Service Managers should be trained and supported in participation.
- Services make clear what resources exist to support young people to participate.
- Children and Young people get their own budget to spend.
- Children and young people take part in deciding who works with them.
- Services provide clear information for children on how they can participate.
- Children and young people have their rights respected and services explain to them what their rights are.



“We should help decide who works with us...to see if that person is racist towards us”

Positive Contribution

We asked delegates to use the Graffiti wall to record their views.



have a say in my area...

- "As if!"
- "in my dreams"
- "no way because we're travellers but we deserve to be listened to"
- "nobody listens"
- "(I have a say) because I'm a youth counsellor."
- "I stay out of trouble with the police because our area is bad enough."

The young delegates prioritised what they felt were the key issues for services concerned with Making a Positive Contribution:

Priorities

- Managers of services should support children to get involved.
- Services make clear what resources exist to support young people to participate.
- Children are able to participate in the running of some parts of the organisation.
- Everyone should have the chance to be included especially those who are usually left out.
- Adults listen to and respect children.
- The Service provides information about what workers can do for children.
- There are clear rules about how young people can participate safely and fairly.

I have a say in what happens in my area:		
yes 27%	sometimes 15%	no 58%
I stay out of trouble with the police:		
yes 74%	sometimes 15%	no 11%
I help other people:		
yes 70%	sometimes 28%	no 2%

74% of the young delegates stated that they stayed out of trouble with the police, and 71% said they helped other people. Almost 60% felt that they never had a say in decisions being made in their area.

“We think we should have responsibility to do stuff and to have a say and we should be able to give plans”



Enjoy and Achieve

We asked delegates to use the Graffiti wall to record their views.



- “I know a lot of girls who like to sing and dance so I think we need more things for girls.”**
- “What we need around Nottingham is more youth clubs for the able and disabled”.**
- “(There is) nothing for girls”.**

The young delegates prioritised what they felt were the key issues for services concerned with Enjoying and Achieving:

Priorities

- Within each service there should be opportunities for children to pass on their skills to others.**
- Children are able to participate in the running of some parts of the organisation.**
- Children and Young people get their own budget to spend.**
- Children and young people take part in deciding who works with them.**
- Everyone should have the chance to be included especially those who are usually left out.**
- The service should have on-going plans for the involvement of young people.**
- Services should have a clear agreement about how they listen to children.**

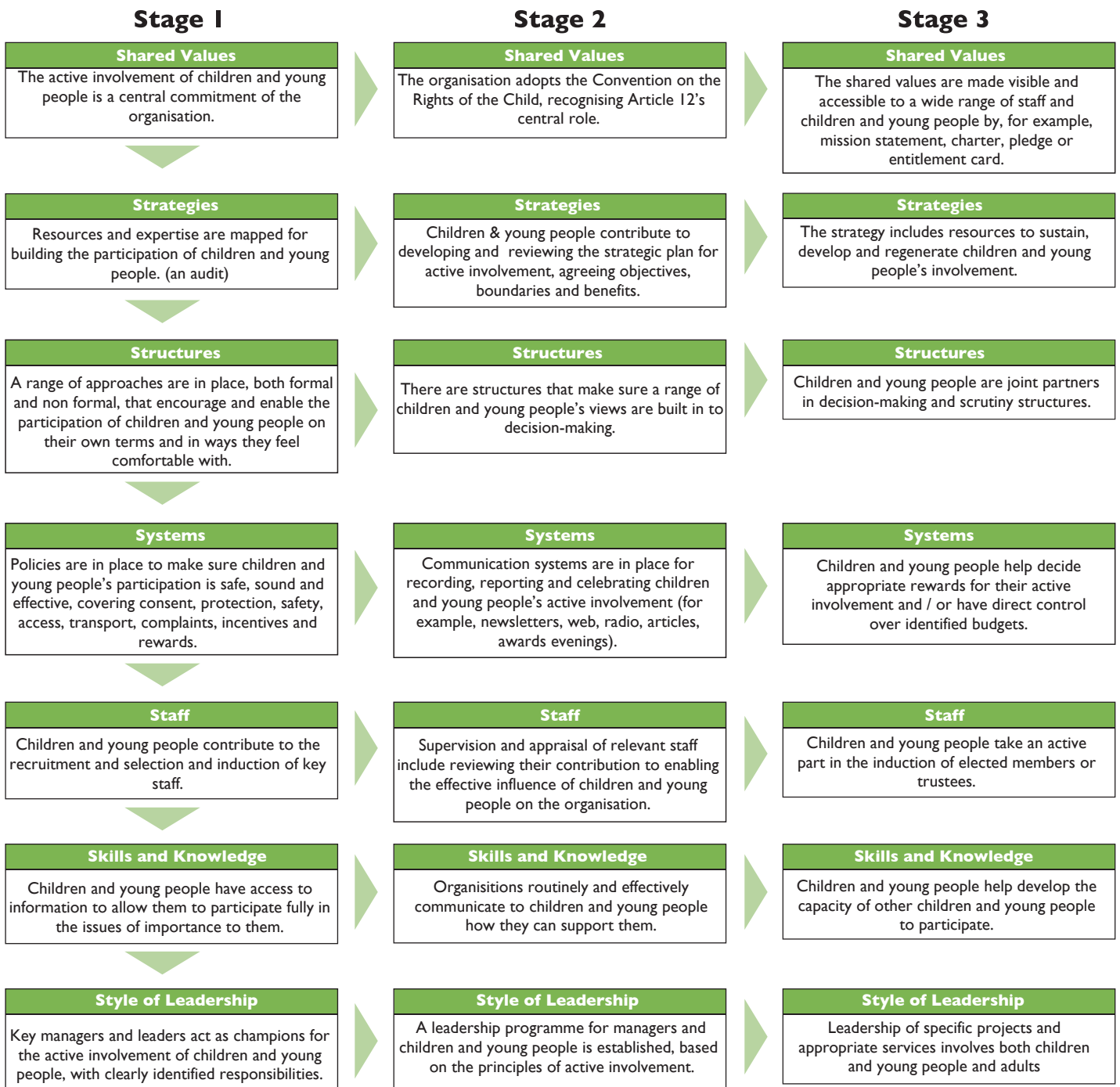
I enjoy school or college:		
yes 33%	sometimes 7%	no 60%
I do well at school or college:		
yes 57%	sometimes 7%	no 36%
I enjoy leisure centres:		
yes 80%	sometimes 10%	no 10%
I do well at leisure centres:		
yes 57%	sometimes 29%	no 14%
I enjoy activity clubs:		
yes 48%	sometimes 4%	no 48%
I do well at activity clubs:		
yes 62%	sometimes 25%	no 13%

Although 60% felt they did not enjoy school or college, 64% said that they did well (or sometimes did) when they were there. Less young people chose to comment on leisure centres or activity clubs, however, of those that did the majority (80%) enjoyed leisure centres and opinion was equally (48% positive and 48% negative) divided over the enjoyment of activity clubs.



Service Priorities

The children and young people used the Hear by Right process to prioritise 21 standards.



It is the intention of this exercise that services adopt these standards as the beginning of a template for change, beginning with the seven standards in stage one and progressing to the seven standards in stage three.



The Adults



Managers from across city services were invited to attend the second day of the event, to see the work of the first day and to talk with and listen to the children and young people.

Managers then had the opportunity to work in partnership with young delegates to create service action plans for participation.

“ The children have got so much to say and it’s time we listened to them” Jackie Dearden – Senior Educational Psychologist



“it’s very easy to get out of (the habit of) talking to children when you get into management...to actually involve them in planning is really useful”. Glyn Connolly – WOTCH

Although the young people were given the opportunity to leave at lunchtime on the second day, The overwhelming majority chose to stay to meet with elected members to showcase what they had achieved. 5 elected members attended.

“ We are determined to lift Nottingham to the top” Councillor Hylton James

JUST LISTEN

Right here is a demo of how we feel
We speak the truth, here’s the proof, it’s real
Nottingham ought to be strong like steel
So we’re here to prepare us a better deal

We should be together in unity
We all play a part in building our community
Our ends, making new friends
We should be developing and setting new trends

Nottingham is my home and my city
I don’t want to feel all alone or to pity
Sometimes situations could be gritty
I hope we can promote equality

I’m supposed to be safe well that’s what I thought
No matter the problem, I should get support
I can’t change my problems, it ain’t my fault
But people blame me like I’m the adult

Living where I live can be a little bit strange
But it wont take much for us to make a change
I choose not to abuse
My position in life, I wanna win not lose

We have a voice it should be heard
If you’re not listening why should I say a word
I wanna get by, fly high, like a bird
Me living in a slum, no that’s absurd

We have opinions that should be respected
If we don’t sort it out we’ll all get rejected
I wanna live my life healthily
If you wanna help then just listen to me

This rap was written and performed during the event using words and ideas from the young delegates by Phillip – a young facilitator

Report Recommendations

Leadership:

- Identify lead elected member and lead officer from executive group to be children and young people's participation champion
- Establish steering group to be chaired by lead officer for participation
- Establish governance arrangements for children and young people to feed into this process
- Identify additional resources and costs associated with delivering this strategy
- Develop performance management structures to enable consistent approach to participation

Implementing Hear by Right:

- Implementation of the service priorities and standards that children mapped to form the basis of Participation Policy for the city
- Use of the Hear by Right performance indicators that require evidence from children and young people on how each standard is being met
- Identify review dates for children to hear feedback from action plans they developed with service managers
- Develop training strategy for staff and pilot it with key agencies three from the statutory and one from the voluntary sector with full evaluation
- Develop toolkit to include e learning for staff and young people

Participation in Action:

- Develop training strategy for children and young people to enable them to achieve organisational change
- Develop accreditation programme to encourage young people to get involved
- Develop communications strategy for children and young people's participation
- IT systems to be developed to enable young people to participate
- Young peoples website to be developed
- Develop young peoples commissioning group

How will we know the participation strategy is having an impact?

- Children and young people tell us that services have improved and that we are listening and responding to their needs
- Improvements across all 5 outcomes for children
- When we reach a stage where we no longer need a dedicated participation service as we will have achieved the cultural change in the way we listen and respond to all children and young people across all of our services

Feedback

“Today lots of people listened to me”
“Adults should listen to children”
“It was very interesting”
“I really enjoyed myself today”

- 100% of young delegates felt that had their say
- 100% of young delegates felt listened to
- 73% of young delegates felt that things will get better



Acknowledgments

We would like to take this opportunity to thank:

JJ, Phillip and Katie – young facilitators

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All of the managers and elected members who attended.

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Maureen McGrath, Barnardo's
The Nottingham City Children's Fund

This event was organised by
Cara Holland and Julia Hayes – Participation Co-ordinators
Barnardo's Sherwood Project.

“We have a voice and today we have been heard”

young delegate

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Our Aim

“We are creating a culture of children and young people’s participation in Nottingham. This means that all children and young people will be listened to about all decisions that affect their lives, and that services and outcomes for children and young people will improve as a result.”

Nottingham City Children and Young People’s Participation Strategy