



hear by right

in housing and communities

Building children and young people's participation to help make where they live a better place



"Children and young people are today's citizens. They are integral to every community. They have a right to be heard and taken seriously. Their voice and influence is crucial to improve services, increase community cohesion and achieve the *Every Child Matters* outcomes."

"*Hear by Right* is a tried and tested standards framework for organisations to assess and improve policy and practice on the participation of children and young people. It was developed by The NYA and LGA and is used widely by local authorities and their partners, including across a range of housing providers and neighbourhood renewal initiatives. It enables a strategic and systematic approach and is an excellent tool to map current evidence of participation practice and to plan priority developments. *Hear by Right* has our full support and we commend it to you."



Janice Shiner (top left), Chair, The National Youth Agency
Councillor Margaret Eaton, OBE (right), Chair, the Local Government Association



"Children and young people are key members of communities up and down the country. Their ideas and voices can help shape and improve every neighbourhood. As future tenants and home owners we need to listen and respond to their aspirations and concerns today so we can better shape the homes provided for them tomorrow. *Hear by Right* sets out practical steps to help make this a reality."

Richard Capie, Director of Policy and Practice, Chartered Institute of Housing

This briefing is about how *Hear by Right* can help ensure legal compliance and best practice on the participation of children and young people. It is primarily for Board members, strategic and operational leads for resident participation across housing provision, including Housing Associations, Registered Social Landlords and local authority housing. It draws on successful examples of using *Hear by Right* to make participation safe, sound and sustainable. It sets out requirements and best practice, drawing upon the Chartered Institute of Housing, the Tenant Services Authority, the Audit Commission and government policy. It draws on the experience and expertise of housing providers to put the case for the active involvement of young residents and tenants to help make where they live a better place.

***Hear by Right* is a participation improvement tool** based on the 7 S model of organisational change developed by Peters and Waterman of McKinsey Consultants. Using the standards framework secures the effective participation of children and young people, beneficial to the individuals concerned, the communities they live in and the organisations involved. It can be applied to all services that directly or indirectly affect children and young people in the statutory, private or community

- and voluntary sectors. The standards
- encourage inclusion of a wide range of
- children and young people, while urging
- care in choosing approaches appropriate
- to different ages, abilities and
- understanding.
- There are seven standards: **shared values, strategy, structures, systems, staff, skills and knowledge and style of leadership**. They form 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. The standards require self-
- assessment at three levels of performance,
- described as Emerging, Established and
- Advanced. Each level builds on the
- previous one. Emerging level covers the
- fundamental elements of participation
- in any organisation. There are seven
- indicators for each of the seven standards.
- The process of using the standards ensures
- that young people's involvement is **built**
- **in and not just bolted on**.



1. Building blocks: the requirements for participation



Chartered Institute of Housing

Effective empowerment is integral to CIH's vision for sustainable homes and communities. CIH believes empowerment provides an opportunity for people to influence and shape decision making processes, also fostering a more genuine sense of community, social cohesion and collective responsibility.

"The participation of children and young people in neighbourhoods as residents, home dwellers and citizens has often been marginalised, but needs to be central. CIH supports The NYA's pioneering work on youth empowerment. *Hear by Right* uses measurable standards to map the current level of young people's participation across a wide range of service providers and then develop a strategic action plan to further this."

—John Thornhill,
Senior Policy and Practice Officer, CIH.



Tenant Services Authority

The Tenant Services Authority was established in 2008 as the independent regulator for affordable housing. It aims to raise standards by putting tenants first. TSA represent the interests and aspirations of ten million social housing tenants and the further five million who require affordable housing. TSA challenges housing providers to constantly improve, deepen and accelerate their engagement with tenants. Their power can ultimately involve the management of failing estates being transferred to another landlord.

"More than ever it is critical for housing providers to champion tenants' needs and aspirations, standing up for what tenants want and making sure they have the information they need. There is already some excellent practice across the housing sector. We encourage all providers to

learn from the best – where young people are given a real say in the design and delivery of local services. With anti-social behaviour and the disaffection of young people being one of the key challenges of successful neighbourhood management, housing providers that work with and listen to their young residents will be better placed to deliver thriving and sustainable communities where people want to live."

—Peter Marsh,
Chief Executive, Tenant Services Authority.

Audit Commission



The Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) are the Audit Commission's quality assessment tool. The Resident Involvement indicators seek to identify the opportunities, systems, processes and impact of resident involvement. The Audit Commission is particularly keen to see wider tenant participation, proactive approaches to engaging whole communities and the creative involvement of children, young people and families in representative and inclusive ways.

"Resident involvement good practice demonstrates that the people who are being consulted reflect the make-up of the community or section of the community concerned. Often the voices that particularly need to be heard are the very ones that are most likely to be unrepresented. The introduction of short notice inspections requires organisations to work continuously to improve their service delivery in all aspects of their business."

—The Audit Commission



Government policy

Neighbourhood renewal policy seeks to close the gap on outcomes for children and young people and ensure that no one is seriously disadvantaged by where they live. Children and young people often make up 40 per cent of the population in renewal areas. They are most affected by poverty, keen to see change and take part in making where they live a better place.

Local authorities and partners, including housing providers, have a "duty to involve" the local community by providing information about their functions, consult on these and involve people in them (Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill, 2009). This duty is inspected through the Comprehensive Area Assessment of Local Area Agreement implementation. Existing practice with children and young people may often be leading the way and an example to build on.

—Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act, 2007, Part 7, Sec 138.



department for
children, schools and families

Every Child Matters enshrines children and young people's right to shape, influence and review services they receive to ensure improved outcomes: being healthy, staying safe, learning and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic wellbeing. Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by the UK in 1991, establishes the right of all children and young people to be heard and taken seriously on matters that affect them.

Children and Young People's Trusts

exist within every local authority area in England to ensure effective partnership working to achieve improved outcomes.

Partners with a legal duty to cooperate include Housing, the District Council (in two tier authorities), the Strategic Health Authority and Primary Care Trust, the Police Authority and Youth Offending Team. Others frequently involved are the voluntary sector, other health and community services, schools, parents and carers and, importantly, children and young people themselves. Legislation, guidance and inspection expect children and young people to influence the Trust's strategic direction and the design, delivery and evaluation of services.

"The DCSF is committed to embedding the participation of children and young people in the design, delivery and evaluation of services that affect them at a national, regional and local level. *Hear by Right* offers an excellent set of standards and a highly practical handbook which enables organisations to embrace participation as part of their everyday work."

—Tom Jeffery, Director General – Children and Families, DCSF.

2. Building blocks: the benefits of participation

Seven reasons for the participation of younger residents:

- Children and young people's voice and influence lead to significant changes for them and the wider community.
- Housing providers respond better to issues faced by children and young people and their families.
- Housing services are more accountable and effective, better targeted and received. This improves reputation and saves money.
- The health of communities and neighbourhoods is improved. Children and young people are engaged as active residents, not disaffected bystanders.
- Local and national policies encourage and require it and performance is evaluated on how well this is done.
- The involvement of children and young people helps gain funding and sustaining developments.
- And it is children and young people's right to be involved in the decisions that affect them.

There are a range of ways to involve children and young people. For example:

- Community consultations through residents' feedback, neighbourhood design and environmental improvements.
- Project development, such as Section 106, tackling anti-social behaviour and creating community facilities.
- Strategic influence through wider partnerships on housing and other key public issues, such as transport and access to shops and leisure facilities.
- Governance and decision making within the organisation.

The benefits of participation are considerable for the organisation and its partners, leading to evidence of change for young residents and the wider community.

Benefits for the organisation and its partners:

- Information gained from young residents about their needs and aspirations, their views about living in the area and barriers to accessing services.
- Fresh perspectives about services, policies and community processes, helping tackle key objectives and promoting social inclusion.
- Improved housing services based on

actual rather than assumed needs, improving length and quality of tenure among young tenants.

- Preventative action reducing arrears and evictions among those under 25 who have the highest allocation of social housing and most failing tenancies.
- Common solutions through shared understanding and responses to local issues.
- Improved profile and reputation through improved community engagement.

"It is key for Housing Associations to engage with young people to effectively plan for future housing needs. The young people of today may be the tenants of tomorrow."

— Pat Smith, Head of Housing, Sevenoaks District Council.

West Kent Housing reviewed its structures for resident participation, identifying young people as severely under represented. It dedicated a part time specialist post to develop and sustain Youth Extra, its youth involvement project. *Hear by Right* was adopted and used from the start to establish shared values, an agreed action plan, robust structures and systems backed by expert staff with relevant skills. It established partnerships with local agencies to respond to the issues affecting young people.

"Getting to the heart of what matters to young people requires a little bit of extra work, but it's worth it. The dividends to the organisation and to communities are substantial. Our investment in young people through Youth Extra goes from strength to strength."

— Barbara Thorndick, Chief Executive, West Kent Housing.

Benefits for children and young people:

- Increased skills and aspirations among children and young people.
- Greater trust and improved relations with housing providers.
- Better relations with other members of the community.
- Improved facilities.
- Improved support for preparing and moving into own tenancies.

Plus Dane Housing in Cheshire, in partnership with Bromley Farm Community Development Trust, consulted young people to identify their key issues. Their priority was somewhere to go which was safe, close to home and affordable. As a result, the

organisation worked in partnership to set up a local youth club. They dedicated two staff and supported volunteers to facilitate sessions. The club's success included over 30 young people attending each session, strong community support and reduced community tension from young people perceived as hanging around. As a result, further funding was sought to extend provision for the older age group.

"Involving young people in decision making is vital to ensure services are successful and fit for purpose. Using *Hear by Right* has enabled us to ensure their participation is built into our culture, supporting all young people to achieve their full potential and play an active role in their neighbourhood, helping to make them great places to live for everyone."

— Jackie Perry — Neighbourhood Director (Young People), Plus Dane Housing.

Benefits for the wider community:

- Inclusive and accessible consultation and decision making processes.
- A new generation of activists and volunteers, investing in where they live now and for the future.
- Improved accessible facilities and activities that benefit all residents, increase community cohesion and reduce negative stereotypes.
- Thriving, sustainable communities, with residents wanting to continue to live there and wanting to be part of planning and maintaining improvements.

Town & Country Housing launched their youth involvement project through a *Hear by Right* training event for partners, including representatives from the local authority, police, the community and voluntary sector and tenant and resident groups. Developing shared values and a common commitment, partners pledged to contribute to and support the organisation's youth involvement project, Town & Country Crew.

Jenny Hayes, a Tenant representative, said "We need to understand what young people's needs are and give them a voice in the community. They are residents here too." Tom, aged 13, who attends a local youth club said "If you don't ask young people how to improve estates, things will get worse. You should set good standards for young people. We want to feel proud of where we live. Just because we wear hoodies doesn't mean we are all bad and that we don't care."

3. Building blocks: using *Hear by Right* to build in participation

3.1 Resources on the CD and on the web

The *Hear by Right* resources include:

- The *Hear by Right* book, setting out the context, standards and indicators, with questions and ideas about evidence of meeting the standards.
- The electronic mapping and planning tool, setting out the standards and indicators in table form for easy completion to help develop the participation action plan based on evidence, self assessment and agreed priorities.
- *Building Standards*, tools developed with children and young people to involve them directly in the mapping and planning process.
- A range of briefings introducing *Hear by Right* to specific sectors such as schools, health, housing and youth justice.
- *What's Changed* – a tool to record, evaluate and celebrate what has changed because of genuine dialogue with children and young people. The archive of examples is at www.nya.org.uk/whatschanged
- The shared learning website at www.nya.org.uk/hearbyright. This shows maps and plans from a wide range of partnerships and organisations.

3.2 Leadership and coordination

First, strategic leadership on participation is at the heart of ensuring a systematic and sustained approach, with inbuilt accountability to the Board. A designated participation champion is often critical in driving forward change and ensuring improved services and outcomes.

Second, a designated coordinator or task group needs an agreed process to set participation priorities at strategic and operational level. Ensuring adequate participation (*Hear by Right's* Emerging level) may be the principal requirement or simply the best way to get started. Sifting priorities to one for each standard may be more practical for building targets into annual performance plans. Or priorities may be those agreed with children and young people. Rarely will it be appropriate to try and complete the full *Hear by Right* map and plan in one go.

Third, coordinators need to decide how best to undertake the mapping and planning

task. It may be managers and staff start the process, drawing on evidence from children and young people where possible, or including a core group throughout. Alternatively, a larger and wider group of children and young people may first set the priorities and then work in partnership with managers to agree the action plan.

3.3 Evidence of dialogue and change

Children and young people are often passionate about practical improvements to get a better deal from the services they use and critical of pronouncements and policies not leading to action and change. For this reason, *Hear by Right* is established on three golden rules to safeguard against tokenism. First, its use must map evidence of current participation and plan for improvement. Second, this evidence must come from children and young people themselves as well as adults. Third, it must record evidence of dialogue and change in the organisation and in the lives of children and young people.

Hear by Right is a self assessment process compatible with other quality assurance frameworks, such as The NYA's *Quality Mark*. The **NYA and Investing in Children partnership** offers a three year programme to partners, with services seeking external validation of participation through the Investing in Children Membership Scheme. This is based on evidence of dialogue and change from children and young people.

4. Building blocks: top tips on using *Hear by Right*

Getting started: *Hear by Right* is flexible as a tool and as a process. What suits your organisation or partnership best? The LGA and CIH would encourage you to:

- Go to www.nya.org.uk/hearbyright to see how others have made the most of *Hear by Right*.
- Gain backing from leaders, staff and young people by using, for example, the *Hear by Right* briefings and PowerPoint presentations on the CD.
- Make sure there is someone with clear responsibility to drive the process.
- Identify a budget for this work. Can young people manage some of this budget?
- Be prepared to start small and develop incrementally.

Developing a participation strategy:

- Involve children and young people on their own terms; the *Building Standards* tools can help them set their priorities and agree actions with managers.
- Use the tool on the CD to map your evidence and plan actions. Make it manageable by, for example, just doing one level or refine to just one priority for each standard.
- Run short workshops with leaders, staff and children and young people to give the mapping and planning a flying start.
- Base your priorities on the evidence from the map and plan. Cut and paste relevant text from the Word version of *Hear by Right* on the CD to underpin your strategy.
- Agree realistic timescales and targets for progress.

Sharing and celebrating achievement of change:

- Record successful evidence of dialogue and change using the *What's Changed* tool. See www.nya.org.uk/whatschanged
- Use newsletters and briefings for staff, leaders and children and young people.
- Share success stories in the national professional press and with local media.
- Put on showcase events that help share information and encourage further success.
- Involve children and young people directly to record and celebrate achievements.
- Use www.nya.org.uk/hearbyright to share plans, resources and stories more widely.

Hear by Right is available from The National Youth Agency, priced £10. Contact Sales on 0116 242 7427. E-mail: sales@nya.org.uk

For further information, examples and support in using *Hear by Right* contact: The Participation Team, The National Youth Agency, Eastgate House, 19–23 Humberstone Road, Leicester LE5 3GJ. E-mail: participation@nya.org.uk Tel: 0116 242 7406 Websites: www.nya.org.uk/participation; www.nya.org.uk/hearbyright

© Bill Badham and Sheena Field, The NYA, June 2009