



hear by right

for Children and Young People's Trusts and local authorities



"Children and young people are today's citizens. They are integral to every community. They have a right to be heard and taken seriously and their voice and influence is crucial to improve services to achieve the *Every Child Matters* outcomes. The Children Act reflects this. Children and Young People's Trusts are vital to help achieve this. As strategic lead, provider and commissioner, it is essential that Trusts consider and respond effectively to the needs and aspirations of children and young people and involve them in decisions that affect their lives. *Hear by Right* encourages a strategic and systematic approach to build in their participation and has our full support."

"*Hear by Right* offers 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 with local authorities and partner organisations. It is used widely by councils and other public bodies such as Primary Care Trusts, schools, the police and housing authorities and across the voluntary and community sector. *Hear by Right* is an excellent tool to use across Children and Young People's Trusts, to map current evidence of participation practice and to plan priority developments. We commend it to you."



Janice Shiner, Chair, The National Youth Agency
Councillor Margaret Eaton, OBE, Chair, the Local Government Association

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 elected members and strategic leads across local authorities and their partners. It draws on successful examples of using *Hear by Right* at strategic and operational levels to make participation safe, sound and sustainable. The standards framework is based on the established seven S model of organisational change and operates at three levels: Emerging, Established and Advanced. Advanced level is particularly relevant to partnership working across Children and Young People's Trusts.

1. The requirement of Trusts to involve children and young people

Children and Young People's Trusts exist to ensure effective partnership working across services to achieve improved outcomes for children and young people and their families. They are usually led by the Director of Children's Services and Lead Member for Children. Legislation, guidance and inspection expect children and young people themselves to influence the Trust's strategic direction and the design, delivery and evaluation of services. "Children's Trusts need to empower

- young people: increasing their influence
- over the design and delivery of services ...
- and offer them opportunities to contribute
- to their communities. When young people
- are involved in the design and delivery
- of services, they are more likely to
- access them and sustain their
- participation."
- **– DCSF, Children's Trusts: Statutory**
- **Guidance on inter-agency cooperation**
- **to improve the well-being of children,**
- **young people and families, 2008,**
- **page 23, para 2.19.**
- **Partners with a legal duty to cooperate**
- within Children's Trusts include the District
- Council (in two tier authorities), Strategic
- Health Authority and Primary Care Trust,
- Police Authority, Learning and Skills Council,
- Youth Offending Team, Housing,
- Connexions Partnership and the Local
- Probation Board. Other partners frequently
- involved are the voluntary sector, other
- health and community services, schools,
- parents and carers and, importantly,
- children and young people themselves.
- Government is strengthening trust
- arrangements, extending the "relevant
- partners with a duty to cooperate" to
- maintained schools (and Academies), Sixth
- Forms, Further Education Colleges and Job

Centre Plus. The Trust Board is to be placed on a statutory footing, with partners shared responsibility for the Children and Young People's Plan.

– **Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Bill, 2009, Clauses 184 and 185.**

The expected range and scope of children and young people's participation

across Trusts includes inter-agency governance arrangements, joint audits, plans, commissioning and pooled budgets. Shared processes are required across the partnership at strategic and operational levels. Statutory Guidance indicates "The voice of children and their families should be heard at each of these levels and inform local design and delivery of arrangements" (2005, p.3, para 7).

Local authorities have a "duty to involve"

the local community by providing information about their functions, consult on these and involve people in them. Following passing of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill, 2009, this duty will be extended to a range of other local agencies. This duty is inspected through the Comprehensive Area Assessment of Local Area Agreement implementation. Evidence will be based in part on National Indicators, including community cohesion (1 and 2), civic participation and community engagement (3, 4), volunteering (6) and positive activities (110). 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.**

"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. Benefits of children and young people's participation in Children's Trusts

Children and young people have the right

to participate in the issues and services that affect them. Their engagement is essential to achieve the best possible outcomes for them, as set out in Every Child Matters: being healthy, enjoying and achieving, staying safe, making a positive contribution and achieving economic wellbeing.

"I aimed to promote the right of young people to influence the environment in which they lived and worked. I became interested in *Hear by Right* as I learnt from the young people involved with it that it really did work and was effective in getting young people heard in an organisation that needed to take young people's views to their heart."

– **Ceri Wills, young person, Gloucestershire.**

Benefits for organisations

- "Our services and policies are likely to be better if they are designed, delivered and evaluated on the basis of identified – rather than presumed – needs, wants and interests of children and young people. This cuts waste and saves money."
- "It will help make good practice even better."

Benefits for the community

- "The participation of children and young people leads to a healthier democracy and contributes to community cohesion."

Benefits for meeting external requirements

- "It will help us ensure we meet the requirements of the Statutory Guidance on the voice of young people."
- "Inspectors of children's services look for evidence that children and young people are encouraged to participate in decision making and to support the community."
- "Funding often depends on evidence of children and young people's participation."
- "This work contributes to the required Every Child Matters outcomes."

"A driver for the Youth Intervention team is to prevent children and young people coming into the criminal justice system and to improve their Every Child Matters outcomes. Looking for children and young people's involvement in everything we do has come about through our use of *Hear by*

Right, supporting the first strategic priority of the Trust and police national indicator 1.17. It dovetails into the Children and Young People's Plan using *Hear by Right* to support it across Devon and Cornwall Police."

– **Police Sergeant, David Aynsley, Cornwall Children and Young People Partnership.**

3. Strategic leadership and coordination to embed participation

3.1 Strategic leadership

Statutory Guidance requires Directors of Children's Services and Lead Members for Children to lead Trust partnerships. One of the five essential building blocks is a child-centred, outcome-led vision, informed and influenced by the views of children, young people and their families. Strategic leadership on participation is at the heart of ensuring a systematic and sustained approach, with inbuilt accountability of services to the Board and to children and young people themselves. A designated participation champion is often critical in driving forward change and ensuring improved services and outcomes.

– **Audit Commission, October 2008, Are we there yet? Improving governance and resource management in children's trusts, p.25, para 62.**

"*Hear by Right* is a very clear and powerful framework. Used as part of partnership working it gives clear pathways for development from Emerging to Established and Advanced levels. *Hear by Right* has enabled partners to share a common language for participation and a common framework for development."

– **Sheila Lock, Chief Executive, Leicester City Council and Strategic Partnership.**

A three year DCSF funded programme across 15 Trusts demonstrated *Hear by Right's* impact on building in the voice and influence of children and young people at strategic and operational levels. Key findings included the need for a sustained approach across the partnership with a clear strategy, an accountable and committed style of leadership and time to develop shared values, structures, systems and staff skills to embed participation, including in commissioning, budgeting and review. These form the seven S model of *Hear by Right*.

“Clear leadership has been one of our most significant areas of development since using *Hear by Right*. We have an active Champions Group which is led by the Independent Chair of the Children’s Trust. Young people work side by side with officers on a range of projects and share developments with the County Council and lobby on particular issues as appropriate.”

– Rachel Henderson, Team Leader, Participation and Democracy Development Team, Devon Youth Service.

3.2 Effective coordination

Strategic leadership needs to empower executive coordination to harness partners to a common purpose to agree and act upon participation priorities across the partnership as well as through to services at an operational level. This may be through internal annual performance targets or external commissioning processes. Authority may be vested in a task or sub group of the executive arm of the Children’s Trust Board or within a central department.

– Audit Commission, October 2008, p 22, para 53 and Table 2.

This model is used, for example, in Leeds, Leicester and Staffordshire. It helps build in participation in a sustained and effective manner, reduce duplication, share resources, review and implement *Hear by Right* action plans systematically.

“Staffordshire Children’s Trust adopted *Hear by Right* in 2007. It recently established an executive level group which includes senior managers from most of the partners with a duty to cooperate. It is accountable to the Executive and Trust Board for the participation strategy and developing and implementing an annual action plan based on clear participation priorities across the partnership and down to services both managed in house and those commissioned.”

– Gill Stanford, Commissioner for Children, Staffordshire Children’s Trust.

The challenge for Children’s Trusts is to ensure appropriate methods for effective participation. (See *Involving children and young people: an introduction*, included in the *Hear by Right* resources, and the Participation Works How to Guides at www.participationworks.org.uk.) Successful engagement takes time, support for the

children and young people, effort and resources. It is a sound investment. Given commitment and expertise, any individual or group can influence the quality of services and wider decision making, be that in planning and organising, doing and delivering, checking and reviewing.

“I took part in the *Hear by Right* workshops so that the children and young people who don’t know they have rights can be told about their rights to help make life easier for them. Over the last year I think things have got a lot better from my experience both with my social worker and my reviews and for children and young people more widely. But there is a lot more still to do.”

– Samira Abdeslam, young person, Barnet.

4. Using *Hear by Right* to improve the participation of children and young people

4.1 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.

4.2 Approaches to mapping and planning

First, coordinators need to decide how best to set participation priorities at strategic and operational level. Ensuring

adequate participation (*Hear by Right*’s Emerging level) may be the principal requirement within a commissioning framework or simply to get started and build logically to Established and Advanced levels in subsequent years, as in South Tyneside. Sifting priorities down to one for each standard may be more practical for building targets into annual performance plans, as in Hampshire. Or priorities may be those agreed with children and young people, as in Nottingham, Leeds or Bracknell.

Early clarity is needed about whether the map and plan relates to strategic partnership activities or to operational services. One can of course lead to the other. Rarely will it be appropriate to try and complete the full *Hear by Right* map and plan in one go, though some have done so successfully, for example with young people from Nottinghamshire Connexions and Kensington and Chelsea.

Gateshead Council has embedded *Hear by Right* across local authority and partner services, regularly mapping progress and updating improvement plans.

“Responsibility for driving forward *Hear by Right* was initially within the Chief Executive’s Office. In 2003 it was transferred to a new Head of Young People’s Service. Senior representatives from each service group gather the necessary information to complete the map and plans. This oversight group meets regularly to monitor progress and submit biannual reports to Cabinet and senior staff. Gateshead has found having national standards really important to ensure the legitimacy of our active involvement work and to gain political support for a dedicated *Hear by Right* implementation officer.”

– Chris Nevis, Head of Children and Young People’s Unit, Gateshead Council.

Second, coordinators need to offer a range of relevant, practical approaches to 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. Young people from a range of services gathered with managers and leaders to help make Bracknell a better place for children and young people. Using *Hear by Right's Building Standards*, the group agreed 21 top priorities and produced a map and plan signed by the Trust Board. Three young people at the event indicated what changed as a result for them.

"I was on the youth forum and I was part of a group that felt sexual health wasn't the best in Bracknell. We created the sexual health awareness and guidance card." "I have changed the front of Rainforest Walk where I live." "We raised £26,000 for a new room at The Wayz club and transformed it from useless to useful!"

– Young people, Bracknell

4.3 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.

Portsmouth Children's Trust believes in children and young people's right to take part in shaping where they live, the services they use and helping run local organisations, seeing this as essential to improve services and outcomes for them.

"Portsmouth is proud to be the first Trust and council in the country to bring together in one programme the nationally recognised *Hear by Right* standards and the means of external validation of participation and change through direct evidence from children and young people – the Investing in Children Membership Scheme."

– Lynda Fisher, Strategic Director, Portsmouth City Council, Chair – Children & Young People's Strategic Partnership Board.

5. From words to action: 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 would encourage you to:

- Go to www.nya.org.uk/hearbyright to see how others have made the most of *Hear by Right*. Contact The NYA Participation team for support.
- Gain backing from leaders, staff and children 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.
- Ensure strategic ownership and effective

coordination across partnership services and council departments.

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. For example, one authority gave itself two years to reach the emerging level.

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 with *Children and Young People Now* and the 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, The NYA, June 2009