

Information/Discussion Paper

Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 2nd April 2007

Hear By Right - Children and Young People Engagement

This note contains the information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Committee, but where no decisions from Members are needed

1. Why has this come to scrutiny?

- 1.1 To present to scrutiny recent activity undertaken to evaluate Children and Youth Engagement in Cheltenham and inform scrutiny of the suggested areas for improvement identified for inclusion in the emerging Children and Young People's strategy.

2. Summary of the Issue

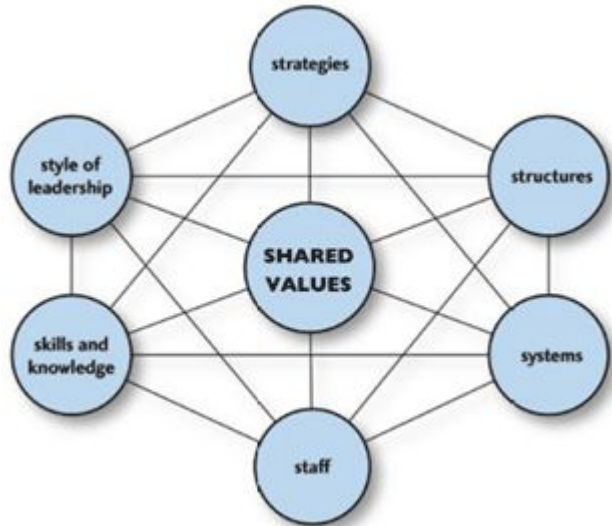
- 2.1 The importance of engaging and involving our communities in decision making and shaping services in Cheltenham is well acknowledged and supported by the council. The specific engagement of Children and Young People has nationally gathered further momentum with the Every Child Matters Agenda and locally through the development of the Gloucestershire Children and Young People's Plan.
- 2.2 Locally the Gloucestershire Children and Young People's Business plan includes a target for partnership agencies to undertake Hear by Right audits to support strategic consultation with children and young people.

3. Summary of evidence/information

Hear By Right

"Hear by Right is a tried and tested standards framework for organisations across the statutory and voluntary sectors to assess and improve practice and policy on the active involvement of children and young people." National Youth Agency (NYA)
"The standards framework in Hear by Right is based on the Seven S model of organisational change: Shared values; Strategy; Structures; Systems; Staff; Skills and knowledge and Style of leadership. It relies on self-assessment, divided into three levels of 'emerging', 'established' and 'advanced', with each level building on the last. This ensures that young people's involvement is built in and not just bolted on." NYA

By using the Hear By Right 'Mapping and Planning' tool, an organisation can identify at what level they are currently working at and what improvements are needed.



The 'Mapping and Planning' tool e.g.:

Standard Level – Emerging, Established or Advanced	Standard		SHARED VALUES: Mapping				What's the evidence of meeting the indicator?	What do the children and young people say about how this indicator is being met?
	Indicator		1	2	3	4		
Emerging	1.1 The active involvement of children and young people is a central commitment of the organisation							
								<i>Evidence by which the indicator level has been decided</i>

Indicator level

Application of Hear by Right Planning Tool in Cheltenham Borough Council

Process undertaken by staff, MAD youth council and children accessing council services

Stage 1 – CBC Officers

CBC Officers involved:

Kim Gibbon – Co-ordinator of MAD Young People's Council

Tracy Brown – Community Play Development Worker

Arran Dyde – Policy and Consultation Officer

CBC Officers have come together to work through the 7 Standards and to assess where they feel the Council fits within the framework. Using the 'Mapping and Planning' tool from Hear By Right, they managed to assess the Council by using examples of evidence to support the level they felt the Council was for each of the statements within the 7 standards, producing an overview of how well the Council are currently working with and involving young people, and highlighting both strong points and areas for improvement.

Stage 2 – MAD Young People’s Council

On Saturday 3rd February, MAD Young People’s Council, the youth council of Cheltenham, had an Away Day to look through the Hear By Right ‘Mapping and Planning’ tool and assess Cheltenham Borough Council on the 7 standards as to what level they considered the Council to be at through their own knowledge and experience.

They decided to go through this on their own as a group rather than refer to the initial assessment done by the CBC Officers to see how they well they thought the Council worked with Children and Young People.

Following the completion of this exercise by MAD it was particularly interesting to note that for the majority of the indicators both staff and MAD did in fact share the same view as to current levels of practice.

Stage 3 – Play Consultation

MAD then formed a working group to convert the ‘Mapping and Planning’ tool into a consultation to take to the CBC’s Play Scheme at Whaddon Youth Centre on Tuesday 20th February. MAD and CBC officers wanted more children and young people’s opinions and this consultation would include 5-13 year olds so covering the younger children also.

Once both MAD and the Play Scheme consultations had been completed, all the ‘Mapping and Planning’ tools were brought together and made into one document to show an overall picture of how the Council is currently working with and involving children and young people and to what level.

Initial Findings and Actions for Improvement

The emerging priorities based on the findings of all 3 stages are detailed on the attached as Appendix A, with the addition of suggested actions for improvements to be fed into the Children and Young People Strategy.

4. Next Steps - possible next steps for the committee to consider e.g. potential witnesses, further report, site visit etc.

- 4.1** MAD Young People’s Council will present an overview of Hear By Right, their findings, and plans for the future to the CBC Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Monday 2nd April and welcome any comments from Scrutiny

Background Papers

Hear By Right – Standards for the Active Involvement of Children and Young People – National Youth Agency – Local Government Association

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Accountability

Councillor Regan Cabinet Member Stronger, Safer Communities

Scrutiny Function

Social and Community overview and scrutiny committee

Emerging Priorities from the 'Mapping and Planning' tool of Hear By Right.

	STANDARD & INDICATORS	SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENT	SUGGESTED ACTIONS
1	SHARED VALUES Throughout the involvement of children and young people, there are clear shared values where everyone is respected and is treated equally, with honesty, openness and sharing of information.	CBC work well in involving children and young people through working with groups such as MAD and the Play Schemes and work well with other organisations and partnerships	Listen to children and young people and agree shared values with them for a consistent approach across the Council.	Incorporate the agreed shared values into the new Youth Strategy.
2	STRATEGIES A strategy for the active involvement of children and young people that is simple, easy to understand, that works for the children and young people involved, is exciting and challenging and is young people friendly.	Within the Council there are resources and expertise with specific staff assigned children and young people's projects and schemes such as MAD and the Play Schemes who are consulted on with some strategies.	Properly map resources and expertise throughout the Council to assure a consistent approach of active involvement of children and young people including in the process of the new Youth Strategy.	MAD and other children and young people to be involved in writing the new Youth Strategy and assure Active Involvement is a part of the strategy.
3	STRUCTURES Effective structures for hearing children and young people's ideas and helping them take part, which are useful, reliable and simple and include a wide range of children and young people.	Cheltenham Borough Council has systems in place to involve and consult children and young people including MAD Young People's Council.	More children and young people to be involved and consulted with throughout the Council.	Information of ways children and young people can get involved in decision making to be sent to a wider range of groups including marginal groups in Cheltenham.
4	SYSTEMS Strong and reliable systems to be in place (like transport and money) to make it possible for children and young people to get involved easily and safely and which use technology in a friendly way.	Areas of Cheltenham Borough Council have good practise documentation in place to assure children and young people's participation is safe, sound and effective.	The reviewing of policies and systems could be rolled out wider to include all services and departments that have contact with children and young people.	Relevant Cheltenham Borough Council departments to be encouraged to share good practice.
5	STAFF All staff that children and young people meet should be good at their jobs and hard working, but also understanding, trusting and extremely friendly. They must also be fair and not patronising.	CBC has specific staff to work with children and young people who have the right skills and commitment to active involvement. These staff go through a safe recruitment process and relevant training.	Children and young people need to be involved in recruiting CBC staff, especially those who will be working with or for children and young people. This should be rolled out to senior members of staff too.	Relevant Officers to work with CBC's HR department to look at opportunities for children and young people to be actively involved in the recruitment process of CBC staff
6	SKILLS & KNOWLEDGE Staff to have skills that are varied and useful, including teamwork and getting on with children and young people. Children and young people to have the chance to develop their skills as well.	Staff that provide services for children and young people are encouraged to undertake training that help then build capacity for children and young people to participate.	Children and young people to get more involved in the training of CBC Officers and elected members.	Training opportunities for children and young people to be investigated to give them the knowledge and skills to be involved in training relevant CBC staff and members.
7	STYLE OF LEADERSHIP There should be a simple, fair and friendly style of leadership. There should be not just one leader and everyone should be able to be involved in all decisions.	Managers and elected members support innovative ideas for active participation and are committed to reflecting and acting on results. CBC is also good at publicly acknowledging and celebrating the active involvement of children and young people and take part in key consultation and participation events.	Children and young people to be more directly involved in projects and schemes throughout the Council.	Relevant Officers working on the initiation of projects to agree at the outset the involvement of Children and Young People.

