

Somerset Children, Young People and Parent's Participation Strategy

A Review of Participation Work

Across

Somerset Children's Trust

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1 Executive summary

- 1.1 There is some well-formed and sustained work with children and young people who are actively engaged in developing and improving services. However, there is limited evidence to support planning for participation and engagement of young people is being developed consistently throughout the County. The authority has a depth of experience in the engagement and participation of children and young people but does not have the robust systems in place for managers to be confident that work in local services is influenced and informed by the active engagement and participation of young people.
- 1.2 Somerset has a good reputation for involving young people. Ofsted noted 'young people have many opportunities to contribute to decision-making at county and local level and receive very good support'.
- 1.3 There has been a loss of some key posts through the termination of short term funding and posts frozen due to the current financial situation. This requires services to work smarter and explore other ways to ensure the voice of children and young people is being heard, influencing decision-making and service delivery.
- 1.4 In order to meet the Government's agenda and requirements (Section 7) the work needs to be centrally led and treated as a priority.
- 1.5 The authority has an approved strategy with standards, policies and guidelines, which should be driving and informing current practice.
- 1.6 The maintenance of ongoing groups requires intensive and high quality support from experienced workers to enable young people to take part, thrive and develop through these experiences. The support required to provide high quality experiences for young people should not be neglected.
- 1.7 A varied and dynamic approach should be taken utilising the skills of current staff to capture the voice of children and young people, bringing together intelligence, which is currently not being collated.
- 1.8 A balance between the direct and indirect voice of children and young people should be developed within the strategy. This should follow a rigorous analysis of what information is required directly from children and young people by engaging them in groups, panels and consultations. The analysis should also clarify where quality information can be gained from those who work closely with children and young people. Processes need to be established so the information presented on behalf of young people is robust, based on high quality evidence, and timely.

- 1.9 The participation steering group should take the lead in establishing new ways of working. This could include: conferences; workshops on key issues; enabling focus groups with young people to identify responses to current issues or concerns. This should create a culture of openness and energy with staff from universal, individual and targeted services providing and promoting good feedback to and from young people.
- 1.10 The commissioning team, working with key workers should lead on intelligence gathering to establish data systems, which collate information from those working with young people to fulfil the criteria of robust needs assessment.
- 1.11 The idea of a champion be considered in the new area teams. This should be a manager within the area team whose role will be to ensure opportunities for the direct and indirect voice (see appendix 1) of children and young people is heard to ensure services provided link directly to local commissioning processes.
- 1.12 Commissioning arrangements made with organisations or services should include a specific commitment from the organisation to facilitate the direct and indirect voice of children and young people. This should include a commitment from the organisation to provide robust data, which stands scrutiny, leading to the enhancement of experiences for young people.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Children and young people's experiences
 1. The purpose for engaging and involving young people in organised groups and consultations be made clear to both staff and young people
 2. The value of real engagement with children and young people be recognised to avoid it becoming a tick box culture and ensuring young people have realistic expectations of what can be achieved
 3. Communication and feedback loops be clarified to inform those who have taken part in consultations of decisions made
 4. Training for adults around 'involving young people' in meetings be established along with 'top tips' for engagement emphasising young people do want to take part in meetings, not just sit in on them
 5. Foundation Stage Advisers work be linked to the co-ordinator for the authority quality certificate to embed practice across all play and early years provision
 6. The contract with Barnardos be reviewed to ensure it is maximising impact in schools
 7. Opportunities be developed to involve under elevens in community developments
- 2.2 Good practice
 1. Ways of identifying and sharing the ideas from good practice be established by the participation steering group.

2.3 Strategic leadership

1. The role, purpose and function of the Strategic Steering Group be reviewed and membership agreed to ensure those attending can meet and deliver the group's aims
2. The style and nature of the group be reviewed to confirm if an ongoing standing group is the most effective way of leading innovative practice, alternatives such as standing or working conferences could be considered.

2.4 Strategy and policy

1. The Participation Strategy for Somerset 2009-12 and the participation standards be reviewed to ensure they are fit for purpose, promoting the direct and indirect voice of young people and provide coherence for all services working with children and young people
2. Standing groups be reviewed to ensure they are adequately supported and clear about which voices of children and young people they are supporting
3. Structures be reviewed to ensure children and young people from vulnerable groups are actively included in participation opportunities and influencing decisions which directly affect them
4. A consistent approach to needs analysis be established so future developments take into account children and young people's views and experiences
5. Commissioning and Children's Trust processes be clarified so it is clear where children and young people are influencing decision making, including the Youth Offer
6. Champions be created in area teams to:
 - a. Promote the participation of children and young people
 - b. Ensure processes for the direct and indirect voice of children and young people are effective
 - c. Local services commissioned for children and young people are responding to their needs and issues
 - d. Ensure data is collected analysed and appropriate feedback systems are in place.

2.5 Management

1. The participation of children and young people needs to be centrally led to ensure the work is managed and co-ordinated to ensure statutory and Government requirements are being met
2. Staff working centrally on the participation agenda in universal and individual services be joined together so there is shared support and expertise across the age groups
3. A review of consultation processes be made and streamlined to ensure: no duplication; relevance to young people; informs decision making and the development of services.

2.6 Quality assurance

1. A review of systems and processes be instigated to ensure safe and effective practice is taking place
2. Creative ways be considered of ensuring good practice is shared including workshops, conferences and shadowing

3. A quality review against the current standards be initiated to ensure experiences and services are making an impact on young people's lives.

2.7 Culture

1. The development of participation be made a priority for all those engaging with, and delivering services for children and young people, to establish a culture which ensures it is everyone's responsibility

2.8 Communication

1. The central lead for participation be responsible for the development of a communication strategy across the whole sector, which is regularly updated and includes a web base

2.9 Resources

1. Staffing resources be reviewed to ensure all those working specifically on the participation agenda work together across services and age ranges
2. All staff identified in section 18 be expected to provide regular summative information on the issues and concerns of young people as part of on going needs analysis and data collection
3. A commitment to participation and the provision of robust data be included in all contracts and commissioned services.

2.10 Needs analysis

1. Data systems be established, with support of the corporate management team, to ensure the intelligence available from those working with children and young people is harnessed to inform decision making
2. All staff and services identified in section 18.2 be expected to provide regular summative information on the issues and concerns of young people as part of on going needs analysis and data collection.

3 Introduction

3.1 The purpose of the consultancy project is to:

1. Identify good practice in supporting participation, both in Somerset and in other parts of the country
2. Establish how Somerset County Council and the Somerset Children's Trust effectively harnesses and responds to the views of children and young people
3. Identify evidence of the impact of participation on the design and delivery of services to children, young people and families, and assess whether children and young people are able to challenge Somerset County Council and Somerset Children's Trust
4. Clarify arrangements for co-ordinating participation across the Children's Trust partners, including the role and function of the Participation Steering Group
5. Identify good practice in the involvement of elected members in participation
6. Make recommendations for how current resources can be used most effectively to support participation.

4 Scope of the project

- 4.1 'The project will consider work undertaken to enable children and young people aged 0-19 to participate in decisions that affect their lives. It will also consider how parents and carers are enabled to participate in decisions that affect their children, and will need to link with the Children's Trust's developing Parenting Strategy'. (Learning South West Regional Youth Work Unit Proposal. p1)
- 4.2 The review did not examine how service providers seek to engage individual children, young people and parents in decisions about particular interventions affecting them as individuals, such as care proceedings and treatment plans. The focus was on work where children, young people and families involved were seen as having a 'representative' function, speaking on behalf of a cohort of their peers, or where the views of children, young people and families were sought by service providers and commissioners as part of consultations about how services are designed or delivered. We looked at representative forums operating at county level, and therefore recognise that we have not acknowledged important work going on within local projects and locality service teams which involves children and young people in local decision making. Clearly this work informs and supports county wide initiatives.
- 4.3 The review considered participation work undertaken across the Children's Trust partners including:
1. Projects operating across the whole county sometimes linked to regional, national and international initiatives. These included UK Youth Parliament Advisory Group and Somerset Youth Opportunities Fund Panel
 2. Projects targeting children, young people and families from specific groups, such as young people looked after and children with disabilities
 3. The extent to which children and young people from disadvantaged and 'hard to reach' groups engage in participation activities
 4. Projects focusing on children, young people and families in particular geographical locations such as individual School Councils, neighbourhood engagement, involvement of children and young people in Area Management arrangements, involvement of children and young people in design of schools and youth facilities.

5 Report methodology

- 5.1 To establish the report's recommendations the process outlined below were followed:
1. A review of a number of local authorities and national organisation's policies and strategies
 2. Interviews with a range of officers, organisations and service providers and managers responsible for and delivering participation including members of the strategy group. A list of those interviewed and involved with the review is identified in Appendix 2
 3. Young people's views were gathered through focus group consultations.

6 Outcomes

6.1 The report includes:

1. National policy, guidance and practice, current practice in Somerset and recommendations based on the issues arising from interviews with key staff, organisations and services
2. Examples of practice (Appendix 3) based on a experiences of other authorities policies and national good practice

7. National policy, guidance and practice

- 7.1 Young people have a right to be involved in the decisions that affect them, which has become an expectation in the development of services. 'This is promoted in law, policy and guidance: the Convention on the Rights of the Child, *Every Child Matters*, the Children Act 2004, *Youth Matters*, Children's Trusts and inspections. Their participation is essential in order to achieve change: to improve policy and services and ensure the best outcomes for them as set out in *Every Child Matters: being healthy; staying safe; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution; economic wellbeing*'. (NYA 2009)
- 7.2 *Aiming high for young people: a ten year strategy for positive activities*, sets out the Government's commitment to increasing young people's influence over activities and provision, including direct control of budgets. Opportunities for participation must be linked to achieving change and improving policy and services. This can take two aspects: changes within organisations, and changes in the lives of children and young people.
- 7.3 The Government White Paper, *Care Matters – Time for Change*, includes an increased expectation of providers and care staff to develop the mechanisms for participation across all children's services. There is a real emphasis on service users' views and participation. 'It is important that children have a chance to shape and influence the parenting they receive at every level – from expressing their wishes and feelings about the individual care they receive in their placements, through to helping to shape the overall strategy for children in their area through a Children in Care Council'. (DfES *Time for Change* 1.21 page 20)
- 7.4 *Targeted Youth Support – Next Steps* highlights the need for 'strengthening the influence of vulnerable young people, and their families and communities, and their ability to bring about positive change' (p 03), which is one of the seven key delivery elements in the paper.

- 7.5 In 2004 The National Youth Agency (NYA) and the British Youth Council (BYC) surveyed statutory and voluntary sector organisations in England between November 2003 and January 2004, in order to establish a systematic picture of the levels and ways in which they involve children and young people up to 19 years in public decision-making. The key findings from this report state:
1. Strong messages emerged from both the voluntary and statutory sectors about the need for participation work to be adequately resourced on a long-term basis and for children and young people to be supported in order to avoid tokenism
 2. In organisations which are taking participation seriously, some key activities, such as monitoring and evaluation, training for adult decision-makers, and ensuring that children and young people receive feedback on the results of their involvement, are being neglected.

8 Summary

- 8.1 There is some well-formed and sustained work with children and young people who are actively engaged in developing and improving services. However, there is limited evidence to support participation and engagement of young people is planned and developed consistently throughout the County. The authority has a depth of experience in the engagement and participation of children and young people but does not have the robust systems in place for managers to be confident that work in local services is influenced and informed by the active engagement and participation of young people.

9 Children and young people's experiences

- 9.1 Teenage engagement
1. The Children's Parliament and United Kingdom Youth Parliament (UKYP) advisory group are highly valued by senior officers. The UKYP advisory group currently provides most of the representatives on consultative groups, however there is a concern it does not engage actively enough with the broad range of service users especially those who are less motivated and harder to reach young people. Currently there is no direct link between the UKYP advisory group and the children in care council and other similar groups.
 2. The Somerset Youth Opportunities Fund Panel (YOF) involves a range of young people including special needs, a young carer, a traveller, representatives from isolated rural areas and from Somerset's top deprived ward in Bridgwater.
 3. The evidence from consultations with children and young people consulted with during the project identified about a third felt changes had been made as a result of their involvement. The majority feel they were listened to and respected. Some 'don't knows' felt they may have been listened to at the time, but afterwards their views would be rejected. A few had negative experiences, usually in schools, but also in some community groups, where their views were ignored and dismissed as irrelevant.

4. Young people are divided on whether being a representative on a local partnership group was effective in terms of making a difference to decision making. A number of negative experiences were highlighted, particularly in schools. Whilst some schools are exemplary in their engagement, others seem to be tokenistic, and in one case, almost wilfully asking young people what they thought and then doing the opposite!
5. Young People involved in the YOF Panel considered their involvement in decision-making through the panel was making a difference. Their peers were able to access new activities due to the Panel's decisions. They also felt the kind of opportunities provided were different from what had been there in the past. Areas with no previous youth activities now had some.
6. Motivation was a key factor for young people staying involved. Several stating they felt they were helping other young people to achieve and do things for themselves.
7. There was overwhelming agreement that being involved in decision making and service planning was a positive experience for those involved. For some it increased confidence, understanding of processes, training and accreditation as well as a belief in themselves. They considered it enabled them to deal with other issues in their lives. Some highlighted it looked good on their CVs when applying for jobs and university.
8. One young man highlighted involvement in the Panel had changed the way other people thought about him. Staff in school, gave him more respect as a result. He felt that without his involvement in the Panel he would have been unlikely to stay in school.
9. For some young people the down side of being a representative was it could take over your life. Being in a representative position could be seen as 'rent a mouth' and not representative of all young people. They also pointed out it is not realistic to expect one young person to speak for all young people, and there was a danger they were being used to tick the participation box, rather than as part of a meaningful process.
10. There is good representation of young people at a County level but this is not so well developed at locality or area level.
11. A young person was observed in feeding back about the Children's Trust - it was clear they did not really understand the issues discussed. This highlights the importance of whenever young people are engaged, they need to be able to take an active part and understand the matters in hand.
12. Young people valued greatly the support required to keep them involved as many of them are leading complex lives and need considerable support and encouragement to be part of a panel, or being in a meeting with articulate, confident adults.

9.2 Early years and childcare

1. Early years and child care supports over 350 providers and 500 Child Minders. The service has developed a local authority certificate for services listening to children. This involves a two-day course and inspection process to ensure listening to children is built into plans, recruitment of staff, evaluation and behaviour policies. Further quality assurance is provided by Foundation Stage Advisers for the Flying Higher Award, which includes a module on listening to children. These two processes seem to be working in parallel, to ensure consistency of practice the Foundation Stage Advisers should co-ordinate their work with the co-ordinator for the authority quality certificate. This will embed practice across all nurseries, play and early years provision.

9.3 Primary and play provision

1. The engagement of children in primary schools is increasing and a number of schools have well developed practice. Schools have developed their own methods and approaches to participation of students. Many have well developed schools councils whilst others use other methods to ensure the voice children is being heard and influencing decisions.
2. The Healthy School initiative builds into the work the influence and voice of children. The role of Barnardos is seen as positive by using a range of methods to engage children. They support three schools per term so impact is limited.
3. The Children's Parliament is seen as an example of good practice in giving of those under 11 years a voice in both school and world issues, which affect them.
4. Apart from schools there are limited opportunities for children to have their voice heard directly. The role of advocacy on behalf of primary aged children, is seen as important and a vital role for heads teachers, commissioned organisations like Barnardos and the Executive Officer of the Association of Primary Heads and Officers, who attends a broad range of panels and partnership boards and meetings.

9.4 Recommendations

1. The purpose for engaging and involving young people in organised groups and consultations be made clear to both staff and young people
2. The value of real engagement with children and young people be recognised to avoid it becoming a tick box culture and ensuring young people have realistic expectations of what can be achieved
3. Communication and feedback loops be clarified to inform those who have taken part in consultations of any decisions made
4. Training for adults around 'involving young people' in meetings be established along with 'top tips' for engagement emphasising young people do want to take part in meetings, not just sit in on them
5. Foundation Stage Advisers work be linked to the co-ordinator for the authority quality certificate to embed practice across all, play and early years provision
6. The contract with Barnardos be reviewed to ensure it is maximising impact in schools

7. Opportunities be developed to involve under elevens in community developments

10 Good Practice

- 10.1 There are examples of good practice across services but there is not a framework for sharing what works best to develop a continuum of practice. The way the Somerset Youth Opportunities Panel is supported and developed is cited as a good example of participative work. Ofsted noted 'young people have many opportunities to contribute to decision making at county and local level and receive very good support in overseeing the spending of Youth Opportunity Fund and Youth Capital fund monies'. A way of sharing and developing 'good practice' should be identified to ensure this impacts on work with young people and influences services.
- 10.2 The Children's parliament is seen as a way of positively engaging children in primary schools and the MIAR project for children in the community.
- 10.3 A special school involved young people in the induction of new senior staff member, helping to shape the expectations once they are in post.
- 10.4 Children and young people are being involved regularly in interviews both for front line staff and senior managers, including head teachers, deputies and local service team managers.
- 10.5 Children and young people are helping to run parts of the organisation. A Bridgwater school has a highly developed 'restorative justice approach' in which young people often take the lead on conflict resolution, even when it is between staff and students.
- 10.6 Other examples of good practice include peer mentoring and young people involved as trainers in the workforce development team
- 10.7 Recommendations
1. Ways of identifying and sharing the ideas from good practice be established by the participation steering group

11 Strategic leadership

- 11.1 The strategy lead for participation and engagement is currently the responsibility of the Assistant Director Partnerships with delivery initiatives being established by a temporary secondment from the Youth Service. Funding for this post as a Commissioning Manager was only temporary and ceased on the retirement of the post holder in July 2009.
- 11.2 There is a strong commitment from Members to support the participation and engagement of young people this is evidenced by: an approved participation strategy; commitment to Hear By Right Standards; a standards framework; a three-year development plan to 2011.

- 11.3 To embed the participation and engagement of young people a Strategic Steering Group was established, chaired by the Assistant Director Partnerships, to ensure the authority's obligations and commitments are met.
- 11.4 The role and function of the group is not totally clear and whether the membership reflects fully the range of staff and partners who are able to develop and support the involvement of young people to influence practice. The group is valued as a way of keeping up to date and making contacts but two of those interviewed were not aware of its existence and one strategic manager did not know the purpose and function of the group. It is not clear if the group is:
1. Fulfilling a strategic function
 2. Providing a focus for an interchange of ideas
 3. Leading the agenda to develop innovative practice
 4. Co-ordinating the work across the authority.
- 11.3 Senior managers and Members are not seen as championing the agenda and driving change through participation, leading to a gap between strategy and action.
- 11.4 A number of resistances were noted, for example: 'the expectation of participation is more than just a council – getting participation beyond the school is difficult. Need to avoid tokenism and include the views of staff as well – it needs to be meaningful for young people.'
- 11.5 Recommendation:
1. The role, purpose and function of the Strategic Steering Group be reviewed and membership agreed to ensure those attending can meet and deliver the group's aims
 2. The style and nature of the group be reviewed to confirm if an ongoing standing group is the most effective way of leading innovative practice, alternatives such as standing or working conferences could be considered.

12 Strategy and policy

- 12.1 There is an approved participation strategy and action plan for 2009-12. The strategy sets the framework and outlines a process but does not appear to be directing the work. A number of those interviewed did not know about the strategy, especially those outside of youth work, in schools and the third sector.
- 12.2 The strategy needs to clarify who is being consulted and listened to. The role of advocacy is also not clear, especially how the indirect voice of young people is promoted.
- 12.3 The organised groups for young people's participation are centrally managed and do not link readily to those supporting vulnerable groups, schools and third sector. This leads to participation and engagement not being joined up, especially the further away the services are from the centre.

- 12.4 There is no consistent needs analysis emanating from participatory work leading naturally to joint working and a shared agenda across services. The Children in Care Council appear to be isolated and not linked to the UKYP advisory group or the consultation group. There is no link between the pledge for CIC and the participation standards.
- 12.5 There is a challenge to ensure structures enable vulnerable groups to be included in participation opportunities so their voice is being heard. There is a perception the current county groups are not representing young people from vulnerable groups. This view requires examination as the current county groups involve a wide range of young people. (See section 9.2)
- 12.6 It is not clear how the strategy links to the Children's Trust and commissioning processes and how young people are influencing decisions. The participation and engagement of young people is included in both Connexions and Barnardos contracts.
- 12.7 There is a strong view participation should be focused and developed in the new area groupings and commissioned at this level.
- 12.8 Stronger links need to be made with the Youth Offer.
- 12.9 Recommendations
1. The Participation Strategy for Somerset 2009-12 and the participation standards be reviewed to ensure they are fit for purpose, promoting the direct and indirect (see appendix 1) voice of young people and provide coherence for all services working with children and young people
 2. Standing groups be reviewed to ensure they are adequately supported and clear about which voices of children and young people they are supporting
 3. Structures be reviewed to ensure children and young people from vulnerable groups are actively included in participation opportunities and influencing decisions which affect them
 4. A consistent approach to needs analysis be established so future developments take into account children and young people's views and experiences
 5. Commissioning and Children's Trust processes be clarified so it is clear where children and young people are influencing decision making, including the Youth Offer
 6. Champions be created in area teams to:
 - a. Promote the participation of children and young people
 - b. Ensure processes for the direct and indirect voice of children and young people are effective
 - c. Local services commissioned for children and young people are responding to their needs and issues
 - d. Ensure data is collected analysed and appropriate feedback systems are in place.

13 Management

- 13.1 The management issues concern structure and accountability. It is felt there needs to be a lead to drive the agenda and needs analysis between services and directorates so work is co-ordinated. It is important central structures facilitate and enable area working so they are not be duplicated. (See Appendix 4)
- 13.2 Accountability for participation is unclear for partners in the third sector and those in individual services.
- 13.3 Shared systems need to be established so children and young people are not over consulted. A joined up system should be established, which is flexible enough to ensure there is a breadth of views. Currently there is no central database of activities; a review of all engagement activity was suggested.
- 13.4 There is limited evidence to suggest how plans are informed following consultations with appropriate feedback distributed to specific groups and school councils to inform them of progress. It appears there is no link between participation and a robust needs analysis eg outcomes from the Tell Us Survey.
- 13.5 Joining up of participation was not seen as a priority for example there is not a direct link between CIC, CLC and the participation strategy. Responsibilities are currently fragmented in different teams and need to be co-ordinated.
- 13.6 New methods of working should be explored with staff in areas being empowered to respond creatively to the needs and issues of young people, with encouragement to do things differently.
- 13.7 It is noted resources are under pressure but a range of resources were identified (see section 17) and need to be co-ordinated. As one respondent noted 'sharing resources is a must in order to reduce duplication'.
- 13.8 The role of the county project team supports a range of initiatives to promote actively the participation of teenagers. At present the team's work is not co-ordinated across universal and individual services or with those under 13 years. The expertise within the team could be used to co-ordinate some of these links, especially when the commitment to the YOF comes to an end next year.
- 13.9 Recommendations
1. The participation of children and young people needs to be centrally led to ensure the work is managed and co-ordinated to ensure statutory and Government requirements are being met (see appendix 4)
 2. Staff working centrally on the participation agenda in universal and individual services be joined together so there is shared support and expertise across the age groups
 3. A review of consultation processes be made and streamlined to ensure: no duplication; relevance to young people; informs decision-making and the development of services.

14 Quality assurance

- 14.1 Evaluation, especially the impact of participation on the development of services, needs a higher profile. It is not clear how evidence is co-ordinated. Robust data is required with a balance between quality and quantitative information. There is no substantial link with County or community consultations led by the corporate management team, which affect young people. Currently there are limited mechanisms to ensure issues are being pulled together so they link up at the centre and support area activities.
- 14.2 The Government agenda is encouraging Local Authorities to demonstrate the impact of services on young people; currently the participation evidence to identify this is limited. Good practice is not being shared and the authority is 'not harvesting the energy'.
- 14.3 A number of concerns are identified around working practices in particular:
- 1 The procedures to support the CIC worker who is lone working
 - 2 Current staff in the commissioning team are not trained in working with young people, especially around basic health and safety
- 14.4 Recommendation
1. A review of systems and processes be instigated to ensure safe and effective practice is taking place
 2. Creative ways be considered of ensuring good practice is shared including workshops, conferences and shadowing
 3. A quality review against the current standards be initiated to ensure experiences and services are making an impact on young people's lives.

15 Culture

- 15.1 Participation work should be built into everyday practice and there is a need for staff to ensure parents and carers are actively engaged and involved. This requires commitment throughout the organisation as well as a commitment to change.
- 15.2 Currently participation work in the authority is fragmented opportunities should be more open to a greater range of young people.
- 15.3 A number of respondents felt there is a culture of silo working and there is a tendency to blame rather than create solutions with respect to the participation agenda.
- 15.4 Schools feel there is a problem about seeing the elections to the UKYP as a priority as head teachers do not value it. 'Worthy but not practical' they question whether the authority should engage with the project, as participation needs to be local and meaningful. However, the young people involved in this review would not support this view. They have gained much from their experiences, especially those acting as county representatives.

15.5 Recommendation

1. The development of participation be made a priority for all those engaging with, and delivering services for children and young people, to establish a culture which ensures it is everyone's responsibility

16 Communication

16.1 The County Council website does not reflect how young people can be involved, air their views and receive feedback.

16.2 Some staff are not aware of the participation strategy and 'Hear by Right' both inside and outside the County Council and how the standards impact on involving and engaging young people.

16.3 A voluntary sector manager did not understand the structural links with CHYPPS, the functioning of Children's Trust and Local Strategic Partnership. This is of concern as they are a named lead in the Children's Plan and are not aware of their responsibilities.

16.4 Recommendation

1. The central lead for participation be responsible for the development of a communication strategy, across the whole sector, which is regularly updated and includes a web base

Resources

17.1 The following resources were identified:

1. Funding
 1. Contract allocated to Barnardos: £140,000
 2. Needs assessment for substance misuse: £15,500
2. Staffing:
 1. Integrated Youth Support Team
 - a. Senior Youth Worker Participation
 - b. Area youth worker
 - c. 0.4 youth worker (disability)
 2. The Joint Commissioning Team
 - a. a graduate management trainee – part of their time is spent supporting young people's consultation groups
 3. Policy Performance Manager responsible for CIC
 - a. CIC support worker – post frozen
 4. Early years and child care:
 - a. 2 days/week worker to March 10
 - b. Frozen post to support Flying Higher
 - c. Early years advisers
 5. Corporate management team:
 - a. Have staff to support and advise on consultations, focus groups and data analysis
 6. Community learning partnership co-ordinators to ensure the voice of young people underpins the development of services
 7. Community directorate

- a. 2 community development workers linking to LSP, supporting communities and parish councils need to join up to ensure adult and young people's perspectives are supporting each other services

8. Barnardos Contract

- a. Workers for play and participation

17.2 Recommendation

1. Staffing resources be reviewed to ensure all those working specifically on the participation agenda work together across services and age ranges
2. All staff identified above be expected to provide regular summative information on the issues and concerns of young people as part of on going needs analysis and data collection
3. A commitment to participation and the provision of robust data be included in all contracts and commissioned services

18 Needs analysis and data collection

18.1 There are many opportunities for the indirect voice of children and young people's needs to be identified as many staff have a good understanding of the issues affecting young people. Currently the authority is not collecting and analysing this information in a direct and systematic way.

18.2 The following services and organisations have a wealth of data, which could be harvested to promote the needs and issues of young people more proactively:

1. Independent reviewing officers (CIC & CP)
2. CAF analysis and data from lead professionals
3. Initial Assessment and Core Assessment information
4. Children Centre Forums
5. Parent Partnership Service
6. SEN reviews
7. Transition plans
8. Permanently excluded and vulnerable pupils panels
9. Scrutiny Panel
10. Virtual School
11. Elective and Home Educators and Travellers
12. Promise mentors
13. Somerset Racial Equality Council
14. Care Leavers.

18.3 Harnessing information from the above services and organisations, with the addition of focus groups or short-term activity events, would ensure there is robust data and the voices of young people are influencing the development of services.

18.4 Recommendation

1. Data systems be established, with support of the corporate management team, to ensure the intelligence available from those working with children and young people is harnessed to inform decision making

2. All staff and services identified above be expected to provide regular summative information on the issues and concerns of young people as part of on going needs analysis and data collection.

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Appendix 1 - definitions

For the purpose of this report the following definitions have been used:

Direct voice of young people: this is where children and young people are directly involved and recruited to a working group, acting as a panel member and being part of group, which has been established specifically to promote participation and harness the voice of young people to engage them directly in decision making.

Examples include being:

- Elected as a member of the United Kingdom Youth Parliament
- A member of the Somerset United Kingdom Youth Parliament advisory group
- A member of the Somerset Youth Opportunities Fund Panel
- A young person's representative on the Children's Trust Board
- Attending the Children's Parliament as a representative.

Indirect voice: this where those who have knowledge of children and young people's views represent these on behalf of them in different settings and situations to ensure provision developed responds to their needs and issues.

Appendix 2

Staff and young people's groups involved in the consultation

Staff

Barry Bates	Executive Officer, Somerset Association of Secondary Heads (SASH)
Jeff Brown	Youth Services Manager - Quality and Development
Alice Crane	Artistic Director SPAEDA
Penny Docherty	Child Care Inclusion Officer
Cara Faulkner	CHYPPS Co-ordinator
Caroline Fry	Group Manager – Joint Commissioning
Michael Hammond	Children Services Manager, Barnardo's
David Hayward	Executive Liaison Officer, SAPHTO
Christine Hindle	Policy and Performance Manager, Children Looked After
John Kirby	Head of Service, Partnerships
Amanda Payne	DAAT Co-ordinator
Elisabeth Piecha	Area Manager Partnerships South Somerset/Strategic Lead for Integrated Youth Services
Joe Roberson	MAZE Advocacy
Nitin Sharma	Research and Consultation Manager
Sue Singleton	CAMHS Commissioning Manager
Sarah Stevens	Senior Youth Worker – Participation
Julie Walker	Project Director, Building Schools for the Future

Young people's groups

- UKYP Advisory Group
- Somerset Youth Opportunities Fund panel

Appendix 3 – Examples of Practice

What's Changed as a result of young people's participation – Places to go, things to do (National Youth Agency. 2008)

The following are the examples of good practice in the above publication and demonstrate the impact on young people and their communities.

'The National Youth Agency has developed a tool, *What's Changed for children and young people*, which records young people's own views on what's better for them as a result of their participation, linked to these five outcomes. The *What's Changed* tool accompanies other participation resources developed by The NYA, including *Hear by Right*, which provides a framework for organisations to involve children and young people in decision-making, and *Act by Right*, an accredited workbook to help young people gain the skills they need to make change happen.'

'This collection of *What's Changed* case studies focuses on a key element of the youth offer – 'things to do and places to go'. They show how young people in five different areas have worked together to gain facilities and provision that respond to their needs.'

'Young people in Nassington, Northamptonshire wanted a place of their own without an adult presence. They achieved this through working with others and building their own shelter, the Nassington Eco Friendly Youth Shelter, to their own specification.'

'The lack of youth service provision in Sunderland South led to young people taking action to change this. Young people have led on all aspects of the the Box Youth Project, and the result has been the successful building of a youth centre.'

'In Birmingham, young people living on Druid's Heath estate had nowhere to go and were fed up with being moved on all the time. A group of young people consulted with other young people to find out their views. They have instigated the building of a range of facilities including a Multi Use Game Arena and a new shelter and bench area.'

'Young people involved in a popular after-school club in Brixham, Devon, identified a need for an outdoor play area. Deciding upon a free play style, Indigos Go Wild has created a safe space for adventure with a range of facilities including a peace garden, tyre swings, tree dens and a cabin.'

'In Newham (London), local youth centres were mainly faith based but young people wanted somewhere where all could mix together. Working with a range of professionals, young people have created a new youth centre, E13 Mix, for young people with shared interests that cross racial lines.'

'The young people in these five projects have created facilities providing 'things to do and places to go' for themselves and for others. They have succeeded in getting their voices heard and have brought about tangible change.'

'Lord Ouseley said in his report after the Bradford disturbances: *'If the people who are supposed to benefit from change do not know that it's happening, then it probably isn't happening'*."

'It is clear from these *What's Changed* stories that change has happened and that young people made it happen.'

For more *What's Changed* stories, visit the *What's Changed* archive section of The NYA

Appendix 4 – County participation lead functions

The following are some of the key functions, which need to be co-ordinated centrally to provide a coherent lead for participation across services and organisations in Somerset:

1. To support the Assistant Director Partnerships to develop policy, strategy and practice to ensure the participation of children and young people leads to improved services responding effectively to their needs and issues.
2. To bring together in a coherent way the intelligence gained from participation groups and those working with young people to ensure services are responding to the needs and issues in the way services they are planned and delivered.
3. To ensure countywide groups, established to promote the participation of children and young people, are supported appropriately engaging a wide range of children and young people and link together universal and individual services.
4. To provide support and direction to area champions whose role is to promote the direct and indirect voice of children and young people and ensure locally commissioned services are responding to their needs and issues.
5. To ensure all commissioned work with children and young people includes a commitment to promoting participation and responding to their needs, issues and concerns.
6. To devise ways of ensuring good practice is developed, maintained and shared throughout the County.
7. To work with the Community Engagement team to link together consultations with children and young people with the broader community agenda and to develop efficient ways of data collection and information analysis.