

## ~ Case Study ~

### Gloucestershire County Council's Hear By Right Co-ordinator

#### When was the post created?

The Hear By Right post was created in April 2005.

#### Why was the post created?

At the time, the Youth Service had 2 participation workers with a remit to develop young people's participation within the service, but not across the whole council. The Youth Service was often being asked to help with consultations or give advice to other county council departments and external organisations like the PCT regarding best practice in the active involvement of young people. Managing these demands and expectations was difficult and they didn't form part of any strategic approach for the council. Hence the idea to create the post was born!

#### How was it created?

Senior managers from the Youth Service approached the County Council Cabinet for the money to develop a Hear By Right (HBR) post that would work across the council and also develop HBR standards. Directors were on board and could see the value of actively involving and improving mechanisms to consult with children and young people (though not necessarily all of them felt it was about changing practices to reflect the views of young people!). The Cabinet could see how achieving HBR could deliver benefits and meet the needs of children & young people. They agreed to grant extra funds for the post, which did not impact on the budget already allocated to the Youth Service.

#### Who does the post holder report to?

Before the re-structure of the Children and Young People's Directorate (CYPD), the post was still part of the Youth Service, but had a clear cross council remit. From April 2007, it moved from the Youth Service to the 'Programme & Partnerships Team' within the CYPD. It's now in a position where it is centrally placed and can influence strategically across council departments and provide support to the Children & Young People's Strategic Partnership. But it's fair to say that at the moment, some departments haven't made full use of the opportunities offered by the post.



#### What are the main activities of the job?

The HBR Co-ordinator works alongside a young people's steering group enabling young people to be at the core of the development and implementation of the strategy. There is a clear work plan that feeds into service plans and links to priorities for services and the county council.

The work of the young people's steering group and HBR Co-ordinator are inter-linked, activities include raising awareness of HBR standards with elected members, directors, managers, practitioners and children and young people through the website, leaflet and

a DVD. Also building relationships with stakeholders using activities and events like 'political speed dating' and 'director for a day'. I train young people and practitioners in recruitment and selection and form youth panels to input in to recruitment processes.

I also do HBR mapping and training and consult children and young people to gain their views and ideas on how they can engage effectively with our C&YPs Strategic Partnership. At one time the post did manage the Youth Opportunity Fund panel, but this responsibility now falls within the Youth Service.

### **What has the post been able to do that maybe wasn't possible before?**

There is now a Participation Strategy and action plan in place. The adoption of HBR standards across all departments is one of the key priorities of the plan and this post is key to raising awareness, building capacity and providing support across services and teams to make this a reality. There is a participation steering group in place to deliver that strategy with a calendar of activities and showing who's responsible for delivery. We always had a local network, but it wasn't anyone's job to take things forward – now that group works more effectively.

### **How has the post changed?**

I'm now doing more work around standards and working in a capacity building role - supporting organisations across the county more with their mapping & planning of how to progress against the HBR standards. This work also includes collating 'what's changed' examples to promote the impact of children & young people's engagement. Most of our district councils are now involved in HBR. I'm also more involved with supporting them to accredit young people's work on participation.



### **What have been the main achievements?**

The post has helped build a real culture of youth participation across the county by showcasing and evidencing what difference can be made when services actively engage children and young people.

The majority of district councils and many other partner organisations within the county have adopted HBR; many now have a dedicated participation worker and a youth forum/ council. All of the directors of Gloucestershire County Council have had young people involved in their recruitment process – that's set an expectation and standard across the authority and has built a

culture of listening to young people across services and projects and with their input seen as beneficial. I've even seen our Chief Exec start a water fight with young people as part of a joint team building day! People working face to face with young people get the support, training and guidance they need to help embed a culture of participation.

### **Any top tips for other authorities and what would you do differently?**

- You need cross departmental support and also support from councillors for it to work.
- You need to have a clear strategy and expectations about the role of the post – what the person will do, but perhaps more importantly what they don't do!
- Whoever is in post, that person needs a strong youth work background as well as the ability to manage strategic involvement and relate to people of all different levels - some working with young people and some who are not. Also, the ability to work alongside other professionals in different services with different ideas around youth work.
- The use of Hear By Right in the post title gives the job a focus and standards to work towards. If the post was 'Participation Officer' I could see the work drifting more towards consultation and getting the views of young people and not about changing cultures.
- We've learnt that children and young people are willing to contribute providing they enjoy and understand the process.

**With thanks to Lyn Green, Sally Little & Della Price from Gloucestershire County Council**