

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 15th November 2007

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director
Children and Young People

SUBJECT: A Participation Strategy for Children and Young People: "Hear by Right" update

WARDS: All

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide information to the Executive Board on the involvement and VOICE of children and young people within organisations, schools and council services; and how this links into the drivers for Children & Young People's Services.
- 1.2 To present the three year 'Hear by Right' development and delivery Plan to the Executive Board.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- (1) **The three year 'Hear by Right' Delivery Plan is approved.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The "Children and Young People's Plans: A review of the first year" published by the Office of the Children's Commissioner (Oct 2006) found that;
"Children and young people want participation, not consultation – local authorities and their partner agencies need to understand the difference. Participation strategies need to be designed at whole authority/partnership level, with lead responsibility taken at an appropriately senior level. Existing frameworks are extremely valuable, such as the Hear by Right and Youth Matters frameworks."
- 3.2 The "Arrangements for the Annual Performance Assessment of Children Services 2007" states that;
The grade descriptors help to define key areas for scrutiny and focus on elements such as
 - *How resources are allocated to priorities and the involvement of children and young people.*
 - *Children and young people are encouraged to participate in decision making and in supporting the community*
 - *Children and young people are encouraged to participate in the planning and management of services and activities*

- 3.3 The “Shared Values” within the 2006-2009 Halton Children and Young People’s Plan (C&YPP) vision states;
“All providers of services are accountable to the children and young people they serve”.
The 2007 C&YPP review states one of our principles as;
“Children and young people should be treated with respect and have their individual needs recognised as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child”(UNCRC).

4.0 BACKGROUND IN HALTON

- 4.1 A Participation Strategy was accepted by the Children and Young People’s Alliance Board in July 2006 which agreed the development of the involvement of children, young people and parents/carers using the Hear by Right standards. A pilot led by the Cross Alliance Consultation, Participation & Engagement Group, and supported by consultants from the Regional Youth Work Unit took place from October to March 2007. It involved 8 organisations across sectors and ages and offered a set of recommendations for the development and roll out of a Halton-specific set of Hear by Right standards.
- 4.2 The principal findings of the pilots were;
- 4.2.1 There was already some impressive work being done to promote the active involvement of children and young people taking place and organisations were doing more than they thought.
- 4.2.2 The range of work was not embedded across the pilots.
- 4.2.3 The pilots did not have a common interpretation of the “Shared Values” that are in the Children & Young People’s Plan; respecting the UNCRC; recognising the contribution of children and young people and being accountable to them; and hearing respecting & meeting their individual needs.
- 4.2.4 Organisations within the Alliance Board were insufficiently aware of Hear by Right and had not been “sold” the benefits of embedding the standards into their work.
- 4.2.5 There needed to be Hear by Right Champions in senior positions as practitioners felt unable to challenge resistant attitudes and cultures within some organisations or within some staff teams
- 4.2.6 The Alliance Board has developed a protocol in its commissioning processes to ensure all commissioned agencies work towards Hear by Right. This is seen by the consultants as good practice.
- 4.3 For the positive vision in Halton’s Children and Young People’s Alliance Board come a reality everyone involved, at whatever level, has to make their own contribution towards the full involvement of

children and young people in the Borough. Hear by Right provides a tool to recognise the excellent work already underway, to map progress, and plan for continuous improvement. These recommendations need to be driven by named people who will call meetings, provide documentation etc.

- 4.4 The principal recommendations are;
 - 4.4.1 The Hear by Right standards need “Haltonising” to create “best fit” to the needs of the Borough and to ensure relevance for younger children.
 - 4.4.2 This is a journey not a “tick box” process and so needs to be seen as a longer journey. There needs to be a five year plan to incrementally improve the delivery of children & young people’s sharing of power within organisations. Each year needs a minimum standard that all Alliance members need to meet.
 - 4.4.3 The Alliance Board should confirm the Shared Values contained in the Children & Young People’s Plan and encourage organisations to look at how they can move towards meeting these values
 - 4.4.4 There should be a clear link to the full portfolio of plans within the Alliance Board. Whilst ‘Hear by Right’ is in “making a positive contribution”, the process will contribute to all 5 outcome areas of ‘Every Child Matters’.
 - 4.4.5 Heads of Service and senior officers in the Alliance Board should lead by example and model good practice and be wherever possible, champions of the participation process.
 - 4.4.6 A senior practitioner within each organisation should be made responsible for supporting staff within this agenda
 - 4.4.7 There should be a Hear by Right champion who is a member of the Council’s Executive Board.

5.0 PROGRESS SINCE THE PILOT

- 5.1 The Hear by Right standards have been reviewed and the format for a Halton specific version completed together with year one floor targets across all 7 Hear by Right areas (see appendix 1).
- 5.2 The 1st draft of the Hear by Right Plan is written and delivers the full framework over a three year period.
- 5.3 The “Shared Values” within the 2006-2009 C&YP Plan vision state that “All providers of services are accountable to the children and young people they serve” This remains the foundation stone of the development of the participation of children & young people agenda.

This shared value will be enshrined in a proposed **Hear by Right Pledge** which organisations and departments/services will be asked to sign up to as part of the 3 year plan

- 5.4 The 2nd draft of Job Role document for the Elected Member Champion has been developed along with ones for Chief Officers (Appendix 2)
- 5.5 The Consultation, Engagement and Participation Group (CPE) organised a multi agency planning workshop which took place on 20th June and developed the framework and timelines for the 3 year Hear by Right plan discussed in this report.
- 5.6 Arrangements have been made for the workforce development pilots to embed Hear by Right workforce requirements in their planning
- 5.7 An Under 11s Participation worker is in the process of being seconded for 12 months from Brookvale Children's Centre to the Youth Service Participation Team via Barnados. This will bring capacity to support organizations working with under 11s to develop the Hear by Right standards within their organizations. The post is joint funded by the borough's Children's Fund and Barnados.
- 5.8 In July the Youth Cabinet, supported by the Youth Bank and Area Youth Fora, launched the Integrated Youth Support Services. 120 young people attended the all day conference where all workshops were facilitated by young people for young people. Young people looked at their needs, preferred outcomes, and their experiences of services. We are awaiting the full conference feedback which will inform workforce development pilots, and the structure of future Integrated Youth Support Services. One resounding piece of immediate feedback was their demand to be involved in decisions that affect them now and will affect them in the future. Two examples were given: Building Schools for the Future programme, and the proposed second crossing.

6.0 ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

- 6.1 There is some Youth Service allocated time and a 12 month Barnados/HBC funded post to support the roll out of this agenda focussing on the under 11s. A review will be undertaken at the end of the first year of roll-out on the effectiveness of the resource.
- 6.2 Who will champion the 'Hear by Right' agenda within Halton for it to be most effective? (appendix 2 a/b).

7.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 All relevant policies need to be reviewed and adapted as required to reflect the involvement of children and young people in influencing decision outlined in the Hear by Right Standards.

8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

8.1 Children and Young People in Halton

Children & Young People will be involved in decision making that affects them and their communities at all levels of the council and the partners the council works with. This will mean a change in culture for most organisations, and children & young people themselves.

8.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

Children & Young People will learn the practical skills and understandings needed in presenting a case, public speaking, how organisations work, and how the democratic process works. These are key skills for life and for work. Young people will increasingly receive nationally accredited qualification for their learning for example Assessment Qualifications Alliance (AQA's).

8.3 A Healthy Halton

A Healthy Halton involves the participation of our residents in working alongside the council to deliver services that meet their Health needs. Underpinning this is the development of the skills to have their voice heard particularly by young people.

8.4 A Safer Halton

Young people's voice and participation is key to Halton understanding actual and perceived safety needs of its young people.

8.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

Young People have a real interest in the regeneration of their Borough. The 'Hear by Right' standards help to meaningfully involve them in the process.

9.0 RISK ANALYSIS

9.1 That Organisations may not be committed to the "culture shift" necessary to embed the Hear by Right standards within their organisations.

In response a marketing strategy will be put in place to win the "hearts & minds" of organisations. This will include support from the newly formed 0-19 Participation Support Team and inspiration from local "Champions". The multi-agency Consultation, Participation & Engagement Group will be responsible for this.

10.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

10.1 The 'Hear by Right' standards are there for all young people in our Borough. We need to encourage a range of children within minority groups to find their 'voice'.

11.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Hear by Right	www.hearbyright.info or via Youth Office 107 Albert Rd Widnes	n/a
Halton Children & Young People's Participation Strategy	Youth Office	Dave Williams Head of Youth Service 0151 422 5503 dave.williams@connexions-gmerseyside.co.uk
Halton Hear by Right 3 year plan	Youth Office	Dave Williams
The "Children and Young People's Plans: A review of the first year" published by the Office of the Children's Commissioner (Oct 2006)	www.11million.org.uk	n/a
"Arrangements for the Annual Performance Assessment of Children Services 2007"	www.everychildmatters.co.uk	n/a