

Brilliant basics: How to successfully engage children & young people so that they can influence policies, services and decisions that affect them



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Why involve children and young people?

- The Croydon Children & Families Partnership values the views of children and young people and promotes their involvement in policy development and service delivery
- The participation of children and young people is enshrined in law i.e. Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and Children Act 2004
- The engagement of young people provides for a sense of belonging within the community, communities become stronger and decisions subsequently taken regarding services are more likely to have an impact
- Participation will result in the design of services and facilities that are responsive to young people's ambitions, aspirations and needs

Principles

- Regularly consult with young people on priorities, changes to services and significant issues
- Regularly assess the impact of young people's involvement to ensure that your policies and services are making a difference to young people's lives
- Draw on good practice in settings and organisations other than your own
- Ensure communications includes: regular publication of priorities and achievements, web-site regularly updated with interactive consultation opportunities, creative and appropriate use of social media (twitter, Facebook etc.)
- Set timescales including a date by which you wish to review progress
- Ensure there is clear vision and purpose which is understood by all involved, including who will do what
- Provide feedback to the participants on the outcomes of your engagement activity
- Include children and young people up to the age of 25
- Take account of the communication needs of the children and young people, whether this is due to age, language or specific communication difficulties
- Be conscious of safeguarding issues. Young people not to be left alone unsupervised. Where appropriate adults are DBS checked.
- Get parental consent where appropriate
- Ensure young people from different backgrounds and with different needs are involved and that no groups of young people are excluded or discriminated against in the process. Examples of how to reach young people include: Croydon youth council, children in care council, young carers, environment groups, voluntary sector organisations, schools and colleges

- Ensure meetings are in a setting which facilitates young people's participation and is not intimidating (taking account of young people with particular needs whether physical, cultural or emotional). This includes transport, access to ICT, care requirements and an appropriate and accessible meeting space/accommodation.

Case Study Examples

Case 1

- Families living in temporary accommodation were invited to share their views and experiences so that service delivery could better meet the needs of these families. The children/young people in these families were spoken to so that their views and experiences would be included in service development.

Case 2

- Three young people from Croydon children in care council were invited to validate the view of professionals who were taking part in an audit for Croydon Safeguarding Children Board to improve outcomes for vulnerable young people. The young people's views were compared with those of the professional audit. Views given were based on their experience as service users to offer an opinion on the work of practitioners. Young people were given the opportunity to make further suggestions re child's needs.

Case 3

- A commissioning review regarding specialist therapies and special school nursing was carried out. In addition to surveying the views of parents/carers, arrangements were made to meet with seven children at a special school to canvass their individual views, experiences and expectations.

Case 4

- Twelve young people were trained to be young inspectors. They identified services they wished to inspect and their first inspection was the Drop in Zone run by CAYSH in the Turnaround Centre. For the inspection the young people carried out two mystery shops, one known observation, staff interviews and a young people questionnaire. They collated the results and produced a report with recommendations to CAYSH. A follow up inspection was carried out a few months later at which point nine of their thirteen recommendations had been implemented.