

# report



## NOTTINGHAMSHIRE CHILDREN’S TRUST BOARD MEETING

23<sup>rd</sup> November 2009

Agenda Item 5

REPORT FROM Derek Higton, Service Director, Engagement and Enrichment

### **Nottinghamshire Children’s Trust Participation Strategy**

#### **Purpose of item**

1. To introduce the Nottinghamshire Children’s Trust Participation Strategy and seek approval for its implementation.

#### **Information and advice**

##### **Background**

2. In July 2006, Nottinghamshire Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership approved the strategy for the participation of children and young people in Nottinghamshire. This strategy was developed by a multi-agency subgroup of the Partnership (the Participation Strategy Group) and established the following vision:

“In Nottinghamshire, all children and young people will have the opportunity to participate in decisions which affect their lives. They will have access to services which they need and the opportunity to shape how these services are planned and delivered.”

3. Over the following three years, the Participation Strategy Group was tasked with overseeing the implementation of the strategy. This included publicising the strategy, developing a charter of children and young people’s expectations around participation, developing a range of training opportunities for staff, coordinating consultations undertaken with children and young people and parents/carers, providing capacity to support organisations in embedding participation in practice, linking in with regional and national developments around participation and accessing external funding to develop innovative practice in relation to participation.
4. Towards the end of 2008, the Participation Strategy Group began a review of the strategy, involving colleagues from across the partnership and young people through the Young People’s Board. A revised strategy has now been drafted (appendix 1), covering the following areas:

- The legislative context for participation
- The benefits to children and young people, services and communities
- Our principles for participation
- The impact of participation
- Areas for development and steps needed to achieve progress
- The role of the Participation Strategy Group in implementing the strategy

### **Suggested approach or way forward**

5. The statutory guidance for Children’s Trusts (Autumn 2008) requires that the Children’s Trust Board must have appropriate arrangements in place to ensure that the Board is generally attuned to the needs of children, young people and families so as to empower them to influence the design and delivery of services, along with developing opportunities for them to contribute to their communities.
  
6. Progress made since the adoption of the participation strategy in 2006 means that the Trust is well placed to meet these requirements. The Joint Area Review inspection in 2008 found that “consultation and participation arrangements in the county are very effective”. The Participation Strategy Group provides the capacity to develop approaches to ensure children, young people and families can influence the design and delivery of services and to disseminate these approaches amongst Trust organisations.
  
7. However, participation is not yet fully embedded in all organisations within the Trust, and in order to achieve this, there are a number of proposals for the Trust Board to consider. To strengthen the Trust’s strategic commitment to the participation of children and young people, it is recommended that:
  - a. The Trust, all subgroups and member organisations commit to the participation of children and young people and article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in their terms of reference or equivalent. Article 12 grants every person aged 17 and under the right to express their views and to have these views given due weight in all matters affecting them (see page 5 of the full strategy document).
  
  - b. The Trust Board identifies a champion to promote the participation strategy in the work of the board
  
  - c. Each member organisation of the Trust identifies a senior participation lead. In large organisations there may need to be more than one named lead for different departments/functions. Many organisations already have this in place through representation on the Participation Strategy Group. District Council representatives on the Nottinghamshire Partnership Community Engagement Delivery Group may be appropriate nominees for this role.

The participation lead would be responsible for:

- Receiving participation related information from the Participation Strategy Group and disseminating this amongst staff within their organisation/service area.
- Annually collating participation evidence from their organisation to share with the Participation Strategy Group to assess the impact of the strategy and inform the Comprehensive Area Assessment.
- Ensuring that staff, where appropriate, are supported to spend time in this area e.g. to attend training, to provide feedback on children and young people's views to inform planning.

Where an organisation has commissioning responsibilities, they would be responsible for ensuring that contracted organisations evidence the participation of children and young people, and for ensuring that participation is built into the commissioning process.

8. Additionally, the strategy recommends that specific focus is given to improving the opportunities that children and young people have to participate, and to ensuring that the workforce has the appropriate skills, knowledge and commitment to supporting children, young people and parent/carers to participate. Capacity to support this would be provided by the Participation Strategy Group.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that:

1. The Children's Trust Board accepts the recommendations outlined in the report and actions them accordingly
2. The Children's Trust Board endorses the revised participation strategy and instructs the Participation Strategy Group to incorporate the agreed recommendations into the body of the strategy and create an action plan to support implementation of the strategy
3. Member organisations of the Children's Trust consider implementation of the strategy within their own organisations, accessing support from the Participation Strategy Group where necessary.

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