

**Report to:** Children & Young People's Cabinet Panel

**Date:** 12<sup>th</sup> March 2009 19<sup>th</sup> March 2009

**Subject:** Children and Young People's Participation

**Report of:** The Executive Director of Children and Young People

**Contact officer:** Sue Astbury - sue.astbury@wigan.gov.uk  
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**Purpose / summary:** Elected members to consider establishing a role for children and young people to make decisions about the design and delivery of the services they receive.

**Alternative options considered and reason for selecting the one recommended:** Current arrangements which are in place require improving in order to fulfil key legislation and involve service users in the local authority agenda. In consultation we have agreed an alternative to existing activities which will relate more closely to the successful outcomes for the CPA.

**Recommendation / decision:** To agree to the attached proposed Participation structure in order to recognise children & young people's role in scrutiny and decision making.

**Key Decision:** This report does not involve a key decision.

**Risks / Implications:**

Financial:	None at this stage
Staffing:	Re-alignment of staff roles
Policy:	Participation Strategy Document, 'Things to Do, Places to Go' Strategy.
Equal Opportunities - Has a Diversity Impact Assessment been conducted?	Yes
Wards affected:	All

**Property Implications – Does the proposal involve a reduction, addition or change to the Council’s asset base or its occupation?**

None

**If yes, have the property implications been agreed with the Corporate Property Officer?**

**Does this proposal have significant implications for the Council and the local population?**

No

**Does this proposal involve a new policy or procedure or significant changes to an existing policy or procedure?**

It is significant in terms of improving young people’s involvement

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Has the Service Director - Borough Solicitor confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council’s Constitution?	<b>Yes</b>
Has the Service Director - Corporate Services confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council’s budget?	<b>NA</b>
Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council?	<b>No</b>

\* delete which applicable

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**For Cabinet reports only :**

Categorisation of the report:	<b>x</b>
Discussion leading to a decision	<b>x</b>
Monitoring	
Sharing for corporate understanding	

	<b>x</b>
Discussion	
Decision	
Information	

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**Tracking/Process:**

	Consultation	Ward Members	Partners
	Cabinet (local Democracy Week) Cabinet lead member for Children & Young People Children and Young People's Panel Wigan Youth Parliament Youth Participation Strategy Group		
Panel	Overview & Scrutiny	Cabinet	Council
12.03.09		19.03.09	

Proper Officer



Date

25<sup>th</sup> February 2009

# **Background: Children and Young People's Participation in Wigan 2003-2009**

## **1. Introduction: Legislative Background**

**1.1** In 2003 a joint strategy for participation was developed in Wigan. Nationally there was an increasing recognition of the value of involving children and young people in making decisions about issues which affected their lives. Participation has many benefits when identifying needs and designing services for children and young people.

**1.2** The UK signed up to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989 and the European Convention on Human Rights became part of UK law in 1998. These pieces of legislation served to emphasise the recognition of the importance of involving children and young people in decision making.

Specifically within the UK, key legislation included:

- The Children's Act 1989 included the need to give due consideration to the wishes and feelings of children in decision making.
- The Local Government Act 1999 introduced Best Value principles, including the principle of establishing user satisfaction.
- The Education Act 2002 (protecting and involving young people)
- The Health and Social care Act 2001 (Public Patient Involvement).

**1.3** 2003 was also the year the Government published the Green Paper called Every Child Matters which was a significant step forward to embedding the principles of listening and responding to young people.

**1.4** Youth Matters (2005) and (Youth Matters Next Steps 2006) has reinforced this view that involving young people in reshaping services provides an improved learning and social experience leading to increased opportunities for positive involvement and contributions to communities by young people.

**1.5** In 2007 The Department for Children Schools and Families produced the Document: Aiming High for Young People: A Ten Year Strategy for Positive Activities. This strategy states:

*"The Government's long term aspiration is that, by 2018, young people could actively shape decisions on 25 per cent of Local Authorities' budget for positive activities."*

## **2. Establishing Opportunities in Wigan**

**2.1** The Children and Young People's Participation Strategy informed adults and young people about the importance of Participation and how young people's involvement in Wigan could be effectively extended.

**2.2** Through the strategy:

- Youth Councils were established across the borough, linking into the township models and contributing to the borough's community plan.

- A network of schools councils and the Communik8 structure involved young people in decision making in schools,
- Two Members of Youth Parliament for Wigan were elected to contribute to the wider debates across the borough.

### 3. Stage 2 Joining up Communication and Creating Meaningful Dialogue

3.1 The lead focus for the ongoing development was the Strategic Participation Group made up of managers from across CYPS and partners.

This group has continued to review and update the Participation Action Plan and strategy document and ensured that what young people say has a destination and a response

3.2 The Plan contains a series of tasks to ensure both the structures and opportunities for young people to contribute to decision making have continued to develop. E.g.

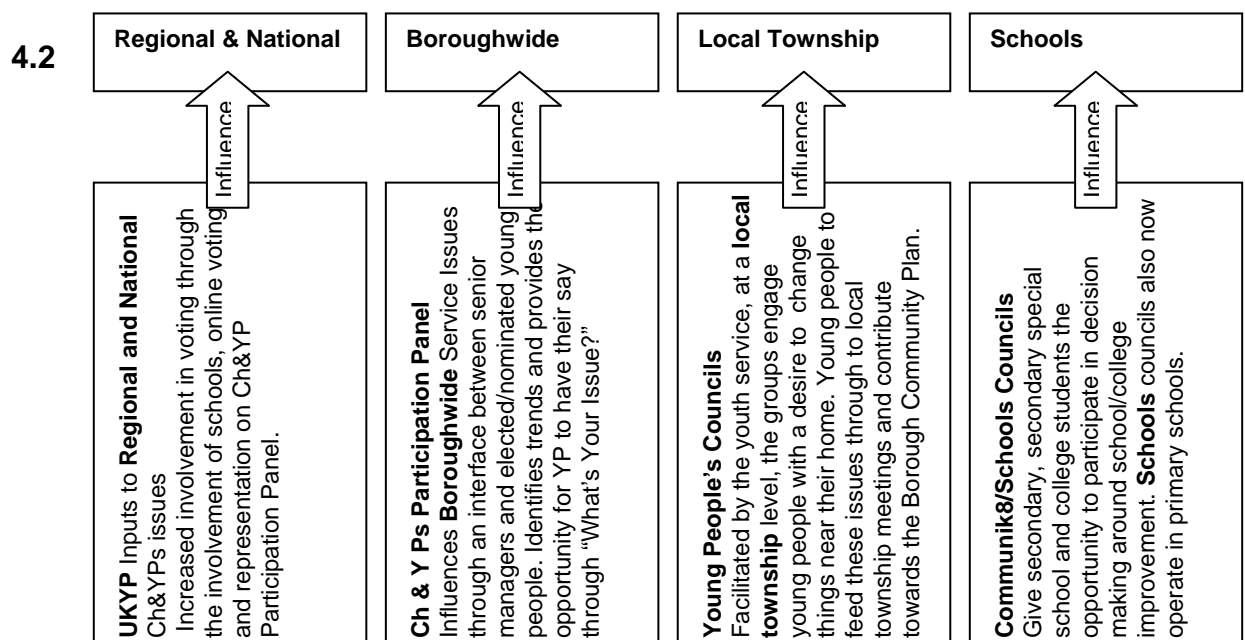
- An increased involvement of young people in recruitment and selection of staff
- Embedding Ch&YPs involvement in commissioning services
- Contributions to Wigan Safeguarding Children’s Board Strategy
- Democratic events such as Circles of Influence and UKYP elections.
- The Development of a co-ordinated approach to ensuring positive images of children and young people appear in local media

### 4. Decision Making and Increased Democracy

4.1 The existing framework has four main key structures that children and young people can be elected/nominated to (see diagram below).

Through each of these groups young people have the opportunity to attend joint events and be engaged in activities such as recruitment and selection.

The young people who are active and interested in different parts of the Ch & YP Participation structures are some of the primary contacts which contribute to the wider opportunities for Ch& YP to have their voice in Wigan



## **5. Embedding Good Practice For Children & Young People**

5.1 Improved communication with children and young people has created a more inclusive and purposeful dialogue in Wigan. A proposed new structure will embed and integrate young people's Participation, to create an environment where young people have an established and acknowledged input which is an accepted part of the decision making processes.

5.2 Key priorities expressed by children and young people are to:

- Ensure actions and consultations are valuable and meaningful for Ch&YP
- Ensure Ch&YP know what the outcome of their involvement is
- Ensure Ch&YP are able to develop a coherent and joined up message about their concerns, communicating not only their needs, thoughts and ideals but having the opportunity to debate and exchange thoughts and ideas between different forums and effectively communicate these to people who can make a difference.

5.3 It is an essential part of local authority function that Participation by children and young people continues to evolve and improve.

The 1998 Comprehensive Spending Review introduced Public Service Agreements which set approximately 600 performance targets for around 35 areas of Government:

The HM Treasury Document for PSA Delivery Agreement 14:, identifies:

*“embedding and building on strategies to empower and secure the active participation of young people and their families in the commissioning, design and delivery of services – actively seeking the engagement of all groups, including the most vulnerable;”* ( “Increase the number of children and young people on the path to success” HMSO - April 2008 Section 3.3 para 5 )

## **6. Proposed New Structure**

Please see attached 6.1 – Participation Structure

## **7. Principles of Effective Engagement with Young People – How the Proposed New Structure Would Function.**

**7.1:** It is important that it is recognised that the structure needs to be built on firm foundations, and this begins with the engagement of young people at a local level, often in their own neighbourhoods, and that the approaches taken are as varied, flexible and accessible as possible.

**7.2:** It is essential that the values of young people are heard and responded to across the full age range (0-19 years) and inclusive of the diversity of need, and the life experiences of young people. It is critical that young people are seen as Citizens of the Borough, who are valued and who are seen as credible in the democratic process.

**7.3:** It is important that young people's involvement can range from them offering "raw ideas" to them being involved in a more sophisticated manner, and ultimately be seen in some cases as ambassadors for Wigan at a regional and national level.

**7.4:** The involvement of young people in the structure is voluntary and often involves young people embarking on a journey of involvement and personal development. There are three main stages of the journey: Engagement, Developing a value and Taking Positive Action. This will be demonstrated in the explanation of how the structure will function.

**7.5:** The structure is divided into two main parts, namely:

- Young People's For a.
- Engagement with Council Democratic Structures

**7.6:** Local Action Groups:

These represent the groundswell of young people's views. These allow dialogue at a local or neighbourhood level. Often this is the first step in engagement for a young person, and the ideas can range from raw to sophisticated, but none the less it is essential that it is captured and developed, and that there is a dialogue between the young people and Township Fora and Elected Members. These meetings should occur quarterly across the five geographical areas, and enable both local decision making all ideas being taken further up the structure.

**7.7:** Youth Opportunities Fund Panels to be established in each of the five areas, to enable local decision making, and effective response to a local need by local young people. There is an assumption that the panels will be drawn from the local action groups.

**7.8:** Youth Council – Boroughwide.

Young people from the broad range of local action groups will be supported and encouraged to meet as a youth council, and undergo training to work effectively at this level. It is envisaged that this group could number 40-50 young people.

The Youth Council would engage with elected members through debates on Key Themes (as demonstrated in 2008 Local Democracy Week).

The meetings would be chaired by a young person from the Young People's Cabinet. It is envisaged that this group can be instrumental in getting young people's voice heard at a Boroughwide level, and directly to both partners and elected members. The Youth Council would meet a minimum of 8 times per year.

**7.9:** Young People's Cabinet:

This would be a smaller constituted group of young people who will be elected from the Boroughwide Youth Council, and include UK Members of Youth Parliament. It is proposed that membership consists of :

- 2 UKMYPS
- 2 Deputy UKMYPS
- 6 Elected Youth Council Members.

The Cabinet would meet with the Executive Director for Children and Young People's Services, cabinet member with a lead for Children and Young People, and representatives from other Council Departments and Partner Agencies. The Cabinet would fulfil the following functions:

- Facilitate the Boroughwide Youth Council.
- Overview/Scrutiny role for Council Policy and Procedures. It is proposed that all papers submitted to Council which have a direct influence on young people

are considered and commented on by The Cabinet, as part of the formal democratic process.

- Direct influence and dialogue with the key Thematic Partnerships across council services.
- Consider actions taken and trends identified as a result of the “What’s My Issue?” process.

**7.9a:** UK Members of Youth Parliament:

Young People from across the Borough can elect to stand and voting will be Boroughwide in line with the existing process. It is expected that UKMYPS will represent Wigan at a regional and national level, and be instrumental in ensuring that they carry both national issues to Wigan and take key themes expressed by Wigan’s young people to a regional and national level.

The UKMYPS are seen as articulate ambassadors who represent young people of Wigan in a number of ways and should be afforded a profile across the Wigan Borough.

**7.9b:** “What’s My Issue?”:

It is proposed that the “What’s My Issue?” process is amended, and that they are afforded the same standing as the Council’s present complaints procedure and mirror the appropriate actions and monitoring process to ensure maximum efficiency of response and impact.

**Proposal:**

That the proposed Participation Structure is approved in principal, with a view to further developing an implementation plan, to be drawn up and approved by Council at a later date with full implementation by March 2010.

## Diversity Impact Assessment form

Section: Children and Young People's Services

Policy/Service Area: Making a Positive Contribution

Person Completing Form: Sheila Martland

Date:  
23.02.2009

Do any of the below groups suffer specific disadvantage (please indicate)

	Yes	No		Yes	No
Race		<b>X</b>	Disability		<b>X</b>
Ethnicity		<b>X</b>	Gender		<b>X</b>
Age		<b>X</b>	Religion		<b>X</b>
Class		<b>X</b>	Sexual Orientation		<b>X</b>

Is there evidence of disadvantage or associated problems?

1) The Participation Structure encompasses the principles of diversity and equality. It is a statutory responsibility that the Authority ensures that the views of all young people across the Borough have an opportunity to be heard, and that young people can influence and shape services that affect them. The proposed structure would enable young people to engage at all levels. It will offer ease of access to be part of the decision making process, not just physically, but also that young people who are socially excluded are afforded access. The structure offers clear routes to involvement for vulnerable young people.

How was the information collected and/or who have you consulted with?

2) The structure has been developed over a number of years. CYPS has worked with a wide range of partners, including Environmental Services, Wigan Leisure and Cultural Services, PCT and the Voluntary Sector. All partners are represented on the Participation Strategy Group, which has agreed this new structure. Young people have been consulted with and directly shaped the new structure. This engagement with the process has involved the Young Persons' Panel, a Youth Cabinet Event held during Local Democracy Week and UK Youth Parliament members.

Action Plan – *What specific actions are planned to tackle any disadvantage identified?*

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Is the policy in line with current equality legislation and relevant codes of practice?

Yes

Timescale	March 2010
Responsibility	CYPS
Comments	

**Are the actions specified included in any other documents/plans?**

Departmental Service Plan	Children and Young People's Plan Priority Objective 7: Improve the range and accessibility of positive activities for all.
Section/Team Plan	
Other (Specify)	Participation Strategy.

Date for further review

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# 10 Participation Structure – appendix 1

