

# The Trumpet



NEWS ABOUT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLES INVOLVEMENT IN SERVICE DELIVERY

## CHILDREN ASK TOUGH QUESTIONS

Participation in staff interview process

**AT the Sunnycroft after-school play centre in Eastwood, the children themselves help to recruit staff.**

Here, a small panel of young people, with adults in attendance, interview candidates who are applying for jobs as play workers.

Based on this interview, the children put forward their recommendations as to who should get the job. All candidates are also interviewed separately by an adult panel.

Although the young people's and the adult interviewing panels may disagree over the choice of candidate, the participation of children in the selection process builds confidence in themselves and in their relationships with the adults.

And, for job candidates, the grilling by the children's panel is certainly not regarded as the easier of the interviews.

Questions can be tough and candidates may also be put through practical tests – as Sunnycroft play supervisor Jacky Woodason can attest:

“There were three children on my interview panel when I was interviewed for this job. The



questions the children asked included: ‘What differences could I provide them with?’, ‘What was I interested in?’, ‘Would that stop me doing what I was not interested in?’

“I also had to build something in scrap paper in a minute. I built a blow football. But it was very scary to be interviewed by kids, more so than by an adult panel, because they were

interviewing you as a person that they wanted. And that's different to being interviewed by a line manager. If you get it wrong with the kids, it's what they see first.”

The stories in “The Trumpet” have been supplied by children, young people and staff living and working in Nottinghamshire. The young people have all been involved in shaping the services they receive. If you would like to access additional resource materials about developing the involvement of children and young people in your services go to

[www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/cypparticipation](http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/cypparticipation)  
or email [get.involved@nottscc.gov.uk](mailto:get.involved@nottscc.gov.uk)



# Children decide where THE MONEY GOES

Participation within budget setting

**THE children who attend Devon Play Project after-school club in Newark have a bigger say than most in their activities – they actually control their play budget.**

Every three months, a group of eight five to 13-year-olds spends £200 on new toys and equipment. The decision-making behind the spending process helps build key skills the children will need in later life. And the fact that the children are buying equipment they want means they place a higher value on it. As one staff member said: "If they have a choice in what's going on, they're more likely to attend, achieve and be more rounded individuals."



It was the children's own idea that they should choose equipment for the play project. When a shopping trip proved

difficult to organise, the children made £200 worth of pretend money and studied the County Supplies book and the Argos catalogue.

Soon, they came back with a list of items reflecting the club in terms of all the children's gender, age and social background.

It was clear that the children had worked hard to select a range of equipment that would please everybody.

What's more, they had bought items that could be used on a group-basis: board games and a rugby ball, for example.

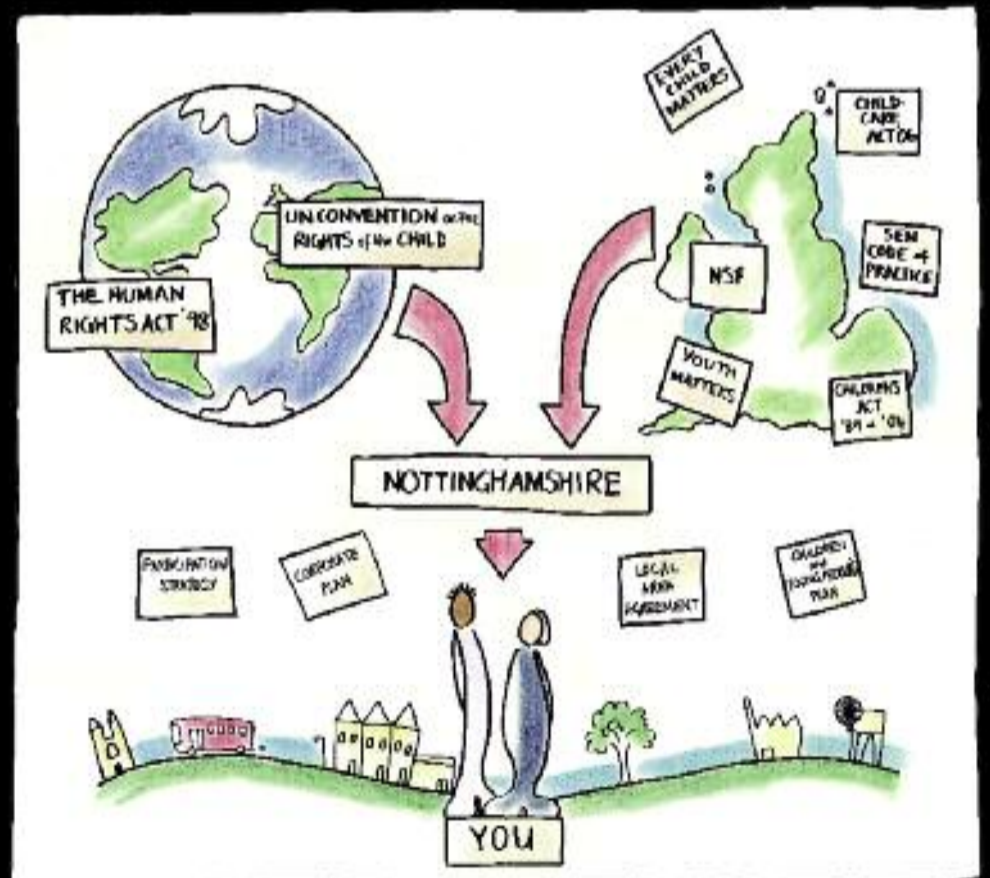
In reaching this decision they had debated, but rejected, the idea of splitting the £200 between boys and girls. They also discussed the disadvantages of choosing equipment that would break easily or was too expensive.

## EVERYBODY HAS A RIGHT TO HAVE THEIR SAY

Young Disabled People Gain Confidence through Participation

**KEIRAN'S** helping to improve access for other disabled people: **Kirsty** is excited about politics; **Sian** is passionate about giving everybody a voice. And all three young people feel more confidence in themselves through membership of the Nottinghamshire Pioneers youth forum for disabled people. The group meets monthly in Mansfield and attracts up to 20 young people, aged 14-25, from across Nottinghamshire. It includes young disabled people with autism, physical impairments and learning difficulties. Member Keiran Stobbs, 22, from Warsop, said: "Taking part in the

group has increased our confidence by giving us a voice. It also makes it easier to find work if we want a job because it shows we can commit and have experience." Keiran has been involved in disability audits of buildings and facilities, including the Connexions Nottinghamshire bus. The Pioneers have also enjoyed a day in London where they visited the House of Commons and spoke to MPs. The experiences caused some Pioneers members, such as 20-year-old Kirsty Fisher, to become more engaged in the politic process.



"I would vote now, where I wouldn't have voted before the trip to London," said Kirsty, from Bingham. Like Kirsty, another Pioneers member, Sian Davies, 22, is studying at college and now possesses secretarial skills. Sian said her confidence has been

significantly enhanced by joining the Pioneers. Sian added: "I'm more confident now because I'm getting my voice heard. Also, some people here can't speak and I can speak for them. Everybody has a right to have their say. Everybody."



# SCHOOL COUNCILS MAKE MUMS PROUD

Participation through school councils

**SCHOOL councils are an effective, efficient and fun method of encouraging children to have a greater say in the way their schools are run.**

But at Greasley-Beauvale DH Lawrence Infant School, in Eastwood, the ten pupil-strong council is not only influencing school life, it is also making its mark on the local community.

The children have even visited County Hall where a representative of the dairy and the Assistant Director attempted to justify why the school milk

cartons can't be recycled as yet!

In other achievements, the council has drawn up design plans for a park in Eastwood. They have attended Town Council Meetings and sought funding from the Parish Council to improve the school's environmental area. And closer to home, the children aim to improve the school toilets.

When asked for their views on the school council, it is clear that the pupils feel a genuine sense of satisfaction in doing work which helps fellow school mates.

In explaining why they want to be on the school council, pupils give responses such as, "Because I wanted to help people" and "Because it is an

important job and my mum will be proud."

Questionnaires have also been devised which allow council members to express ideas on how the council could improve in the future.

Filling in the questionnaires has itself promoted co-operation and literacy between pupils as the Year Two pupils have helped the reception year children to write their responses.

It is also clear that involvement in the school council has given the pupils an additional depth of fulfilment in attending school.

Hopefully, the children will continue to value their sense of 'ownership' over issues through participation as they get older.

# Students say what makes a good lesson

Student Voice at Carlton-le-Willows School and Technology College

**ONE of the three curriculum aims of the new National Curriculum is to help our students develop as responsible citizens who are able to make a positive contribution in society.** Student Voice can be an important means of supporting them in developing these skills. In our school we have gradually developed this strand of our work trying to encourage a spirit of cooperation and shared purpose with our students.

We have an active School Council as the cornerstone of all this work. Councillors are elected by their forms and then attend training to learn what they can and can't hope to do during their term in office. They also learn necessary skills such as how to run a meeting effectively. Each Year Council agrees three objectives for their first term and must then decide how best to achieve their aims. We encourage students to act responsibly and to take responsibility for the projects they begin. Examples of their work this term would include raising funds to support charities of their choice; carrying out research into ways of improving our school toilets, organising assemblies to inform their year group about key projects and liaising with senior staff about possible option choices. We expect a high standard from our councillors and their work adds greatly to school life.



Other pupils have been involved in research projects to examine aspects of school life such as 'What problems do pupils face?' and 'What makes a good lesson?' The groups involved have learnt how to plan and manage research and how to present their findings. The school has used the results of both these projects in planning for the future; for example, we are developing a peer coaching project in response to a request from some pupils for peer support with some aspects of their work.

Some of our pupils work in a peer listening scheme called medi8. They are appointed by their peers after a rigorous interview process and are then offered training. Once their

training is complete they are able to start and offer listening support to peers who are struggling with a range of problems. The mediators also work with Year 6 pupils to support their introduction to secondary school and have produced their own resources to help.

At times our different student groups work together to help each other on joint projects, for example, medi8ors and School Council members have formed a group to re write the anti bullying policy.

These and other Student Voice activities support an inclusive school ethos and help pupils realise that a better school is something we all need to work towards together.

# MANTON ESTATE LISTENS

Young People making a Difference on Their Local Estate

**WHEN young people living in Worksop's Manton estate were asked what improvements they wanted to see in their area, they replied: safe places to play, organised activities and somebody to talk to.**

Today, all these aims are being advanced thanks to the efforts of the Improving Manton for All People group (IMPs), set up to give young people a voice on life in the large estate.

The group meets monthly and is supported by the Under 14s team of Nottinghamshire County Council. For most taking part in IMPs is a chance to have their opinions heard and to improve their daily lives in Manton.

One visible sign of IMPs' participation is already in place – the Listening Bus, which gives all of Manton's young people the chance to talk confidentially with County youth professionals and counsellors.

However, IMPs members have an ultimate aim of making the listening service permanent.

Gemma, 13, said: "If we had our own building we could meet in rooms that would be private." Meanwhile, work in other areas of concern identified by IMPs is forging ahead.

Manton has no play area, for example, and so IMPs is drawing up plans for a new Play Park.



# UNDER 5'S in the frame

Encouraging participation and ownership among under-5s

**ENCOURAGING a greater sense of 'ownership' of services among children is fine in concept – but how do you achieve this with mainly non-verbal infants?**

At Eastwood Children's Centre, staff have hit on an effective method of support with their under-5s: photography.

Centre workers regularly take photographs of the infants as they play and relax at the centre. The images quickly allow staff to learn what the children like doing, and what equipment they like.

"Very young children are unable to express their views verbally so one method of involvement is to take photographs of the children in their setting," says one worker.

"This has led us to find the two main areas they enjoy – playing outside and being in the creative area. It helps us understand when they're involved."

For this and other forms of engagement, the Eastwood Children's Centre has received an 'outstanding' commendation in the E.C.M category of the OFSTED inspection.

Another method of participation is allowing the children to decide how they want to play and what toys or materials they want to use. In return, they are asked to tidy up after themselves.

Staff admit that this method is more "challenging" for them, but say that the "free choice" approach encourages children's learning and allows them to develop at their own speed.

The "free choice" approach extends to babies, who are given treasure baskets full of sponges, fabric and wooden spoons.

"We want to let the children discover rather than lead them and show them how to do it," a centre worker adds.

# CHILDREN PLAY DETECTIVES



Evaluating Domestic Violence Support through Participation

**GAMES, music and fun: this is how children have been encouraged to express their views on Nottinghamshire County Council's domestic violence outreach work.**

Through creative activities at a two-day evaluation event, workers and young people acted together, allowing young people to freely give their opinions on the value of their support.

On the first day, three children - dubbed 'Detectives' - helped organise the event. Then, on the

second day, 13 other children, all of whom receive domestic violence outreach support, arrived to take part. Games were held to help the children express their views on outreach work. These included Yes/No/Maybe games, where children were divided into groups, led by a 'Detective'. In one game, the children were given postcards bearing a description of what outreach work was about. They were then asked to post their cards through 'traffic light' boxes – red for no, orange for may be and green for yes. In another game, the 'Detectives' held up cards with statements about outreach work. The children decided which statement most accurately described their kind of support. Music was played and when it stopped the children ran to 'their' corner and were asked to describe why they had chosen that statement. "We felt that the young people were partners in the activity and I think they picked up on that," said the council's former Children's Fund Evaluation Officer. "The young people's level of ownership of the whole event throughout was of a high level."

# Lincoln inspires young people

Multiple heritage young people influence schoolwork

**IN July 2006 teams from Nottingham City Council and Notts County Council hosted a conference for young people from mixed backgrounds, organised by the Multiple Heritage Project founded by Bradley Lincoln.**

Evaluations from young people were overwhelmingly positive, and building on this success, the EMTSS (Ethnic Minority and Traveller Support Service) within the County Council decided to run a second event exclusively for county pupils in the spring of 2007.

As with the previous event, young people were involved in every aspect of the programme. Participants came

from five schools in the Gedling and Rushcliffe districts of the authority. Staff who accompanied the young people received training around the issues facing mixed race young people in schools today. Workshops were facilitated by trained youth facilitators and enabled young people to talk about issues from their perspective. Participants produced school action plans and some have become members of a newly established young people's steering group. Inspired to attend the event by founder of the Multiple Heritage Project, Bradley Lincoln, the participants contributed to his national research through video diary opportunities and evaluations on the day. This will be followed up in the near future with face to face interviews and on-going support offered by EMTSS and the youth facilitators, some of whom will contribute to Bradley's National Conference being held in Manchester in July 2008. Staff involved commented "It was an absolute pleasure to work with such talent and individuals who were so committed and passionate about the issues".

