

# How to involve children and young people in commissioning

This How To guide provides an introduction to commissioning and ways to involve children and young people in the process.

## What is commissioning?

Commissioning is about delivering outcomes for children, young people and their families. The Commissioning Support Programme has defined commissioning as “the process for deciding how to use the total resource available for children, young people and their parents and carers in order to improve outcomes in the most efficient, effective, equitable and sustainable way.”

Central to commissioning is the active involvement of children and young people in the discussion of these outcomes and in the decisions that commissioners make to achieve them. Underpinning this approach is Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the ‘Duty to Involve’ local people in decisions. The 2010 NHS White Paper summarised this as the principle of ‘no decision about me, without me’. National guidance such as the National Outcomes Framework will guide local commissioners on key outcomes. This guide describes the different parts of the commissioning process and ways that the voluntary and community sector can support children and young people to participate.

Commissioning covers many areas including children’s services, youth services, leisure services, education, health services and social care. By separating the roles of those who commission services from those who deliver them, a purchaser and provider split is created.

This separation allows commissioners to work with local people about what they want and need before getting in to the details of who will actually run a service and how.

[www.participationworks.org.uk](http://www.participationworks.org.uk)



Image by kind permission of Devon Youth.

Commissioning needs to consider the needs of the entire local population and the diverse range of groups within it.

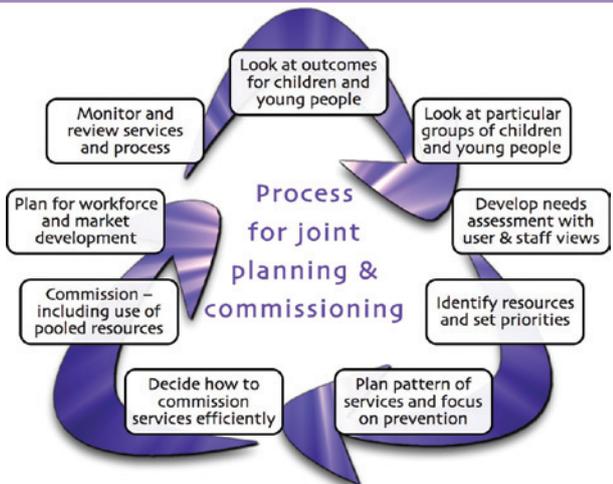
Commissioning is not called purchasing because that is only one small part of the whole - the bit where the contract is signed and the money is handed over to the provider.

It is a structured process which means it is methodical and works through a number of different stages. These stages are described as the commissioning cycle and will be covered in more detail on pages 9 and 10. Like any cycle, the process is continuous and each stage feeds into the next.

There are several different versions of the commissioning cycle. But all share the same core stages: identifying needs; planning; tendering and procuring services to meet those needs from different organisations; monitoring the delivery of those services; and then evaluating the effectiveness of the overall service. This evaluation and learning then directly influences the thinking about needs again. There are opportunities for children and young people to be involved in each stage.

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The diagram below is one example of the commissioning cycle commonly used for children and young people's services and is taken from the 2006 Joint Planning and Commissioning Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services.



Taken from the 2006 Joint Planning and Commissioning Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services.

It is important to be clear about your purpose for involving children and young people in commissioning. There are four distinct reasons why young people may wish to participate and each reason may need a different approach. The four reasons are:

1. Young people may be interested to work directly with commissioners across the commissioning cycle and want to be involved in the different decisions and activities of commissioning organisations
2. They may want to participate in the commissioning process from the perspective of the provider organisation to help the organisation successfully achieve funding for local services and activities
3. Children and young people may simply want their voices to be heard by commissioners and providers by getting involved in high quality consultations and participation events.
4. Some young people may be interested in the wider democratic accountability of commissioning and may be interested in how commissioners are held to account by elected representatives, Overview and Scrutiny committees and other forms of monitoring and scrutiny.

Most of the tools in this How To Guide can be adapted to each of the above purposes.

## 10 ways children and young people's organisations can work with commissioners

1. Find out who your local commissioners are and build relationships with them and with local Healthwatch. Offer opportunities for them to meet and engage with children and young people
2. Send them your research and participatory data - demonstrate what you can contribute to the cycle
3. Ask for invitations to commissioning events, workshops and roundtables
4. Structure your participation data around the stages of the commissioning cycle and outcomes. You do not need to reinvent the wheel – you may well have existing projects, networks and fora that you can use for this purpose
5. Research the big picture - understand local trends, demographics and commissioning priorities in your community
6. Look for partnerships with other children and young people's organisations - joined-up services and collaboration add value
7. Promote services that deliver outcomes for diverse and marginalised groups
8. Be entrepreneurial and promote the value of your participation work
9. Align your activities to the local commissioning timetable – find out when commissioners will put certain topics or issues on the agenda
10. Evidence the impact of the children and young people's involvement in the commissioning process – this will help to inform new ways in which they may support the process in the future.

## Case Study:

### Involving Young People in Health Commissioning

Young people from schools across the London Borough of Bexley have been working with GPs and staff from the NHS Bexley Clinical Commissioning Committee to find ways to get involved in health commissioning. Through a series of workshops, conferences and small group projects over 60 young people have been supported to have a voice in health commissioning and work with local commissioners to address the health issues that concern young people.

Following a one-day conference on health commissioning, young people worked in small groups with commissioners to develop and present ideas for health projects to members of the Clinical Commissioning Committee. Using a 'dragon's den' style format, young people were able to discuss their experience, research and proposals for health activities that would be young person designed and led.

The programme has included:

- Explaining the new Health and Social Care Bill and listening to young people's views of how they think the changes will affect them
- Using photographs, graphics and group sculpting exercises to map the decision making structures in the NHS and the Department of Health. Young people have been able to explore different levels of commissioning responsibility in the NHS from the national to the local level.
- Working with public health experts to understand the distribution of health conditions in South East London and the inequalities faced by different groups
- Exploring the health commissioning budgets available to local health commissioners and the different choices for how the money can be spent
- Building relationships between young people and local GPs, local councillors and health commissioners to find out more about their roles and how they work
- Integrating young people into the wider patient and public involvement work of the local NHS

A key element of the success of the programme has been the partnership between a wider range of agencies and organisations to bring a multi-disciplinary approach to working with young people as partners in commissioning. All have recognised the importance of involving young people in their commissioning processes and the benefits of joining together the different engagement efforts.

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## Comparing commissioning to grant making

Until recently many children and young people's organisations were more familiar with receiving grants for their services than being commissioned. It is helpful to compare the broad differences of the two approaches so that participation workers feel able to explain commissioning effectively.

Commissioning	Grant Making
Commissioners identify outcomes and design the service specifications that are needed to meet local need	Organisations propose services to the funder to meet broad priorities
Commissioners invite organisations to tender for specific contracts based on the service specifications	Organisations apply for funding for their projects and programmes
Provider organisations need to be pre-qualified and commission ready	Many different organisations may be able to apply
Contracts are detailed and specify key performance indicators and targets	Grant agreements are often broader
Performance and quality is monitored and reported on a frequent basis	Progress is reported at key milestones and at the end
Commissioners work directly with service users and local people	Organisations involve their service users in their funding bids
Commissioning is an ongoing process	Grants are made for a specific times

*'It is fun being involved in commissioning – you feel part of some important decisions'* – Young Person, London

## Young people ask powerful questions about commissioning

What are the needs and views of different groups of children and young people (and how do we find out)?

Which needs are the most important for children and young people – what are the highest priorities?

What outcomes do we want to see - what needs to change?

What is working well for children and young people?

Which service option is the best - in terms of value and effectiveness?

Are the services delivering - how do we measure this?

Did the provider organisation deliver everything?

What did we learn? And how does this change our views of our needs?

## The Policy Context of Commissioning.

Whilst the basis for commissioning has been in place since 1990 it has been gathering pace over the last few years. Recently there have been a range of new changes to the commissioning environment and it is important that organisations are able to support children and young people to understand them and take up opportunities to participate.

The Health and Social Care Act 2012 proposes a range of changes to the way children and young people's health and social care services are commissioned. Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) led by Local GPs will be responsible for commissioning many of these services. There are opportunities for children and young people to interact with their local GPs to talk about commissioning decisions and to get involved in the activities of the CCGs. At the same time, many current public health services that are currently used by young people including healthy eating, smoking cessation and sexual health advice services will shift to the Local Authority.

A new local body will be set up in each locality called the Health and Wellbeing Board where local elected councillors, GPs, NHS managers and social care managers will meet and work together to agree a local Health and Wellbeing strategy for the local population. To support local people including children and young people to have an organised voice about health and social care issues there will be a new local organisation called Healthwatch which will have a formal seat on the Health and Wellbeing Board and will be a consumer champion for everyone who uses these services. The Government's response to the NHS Future Forum has also reiterated the rights of patients and their families under the NHS Constitution and the importance of involving them in decision making.

At the same time the Localism Act 2011, the Equalities Act 2010 and the Modernising Commissioning Green Paper 2010 highlight some important changes to commissioning in other sectors of children and young people's services. At the heart of all these policy changes are some central principles. Services should be commissioned through a process of co-production with local people.

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This means children and young people should work alongside commissioners to design the types of services that will best meet local needs. Services should also be integrated between health, social care and education to ensure children and young people have a seamless experience and do not get lost in a complex system. This is especially important during times of transition between different services designed for different age groups.

Separating who commissions services from who delivers them means many more organisations can compete to deliver services. This competition has the potential to offer greater choice of services and alternative ways to deliver them. For example, voluntary sector organisations, social enterprises and private companies can all propose delivery models based on their local strengths and ways of working. Young people may enjoy debating the respective merits and limits of competition.

Commissioning has emerged in parallel in children's services **and** health and social care with slightly different systems and terminology. But effective commissioning is about partnership between commissioners, providers and children and young people.

## The benefits of involving children and young people in commissioning

Children and young people offer much to commissioning, not least a sense of dynamism and creativity for what may be in danger of being a bureaucratic process. The benefits of children and young people's participation in commissioning include:

- Better services - driven by feedback from people who know and use them
- Not wasting money on services that do not work - children and young people know what works and what doesn't

- Making the process and services child and young person friendly and accessible
- Gaining expertise from children or young people and learning from the local knowledge they may have about diverse needs and the barriers faced by marginalised and vulnerable groups.
- Improved accountability to children and young people as stakeholders and citizens
- Direct benefits to children and young people themselves – including increased knowledge of services, confidence, skills and networks as they work with commissioners

### Checklist: Overcoming common barriers for adults in promoting participation in commissioning

It is important to address common barriers in an open way as these may prevent commissioning organisations working successfully with young people. Barriers may include:

- Negative attitudes about young people
- Scale and complexity of the commissioning agenda
- Timescales – for pieces of commissioning work that need completing quickly and for seeing an outcome that may take far longer
- Lack of participation know-how and training for providers and young people
- Lack of relationships and networks with young people
- Jargon and terminology
- Low priority - accountability and scrutiny
- Fear of working with young people

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## Children and young people as commissioners

The participation of children and young people needs to reflect the ongoing process of the commissioning cycle. Involvement should not be seen as an add-on but an integral part of the different stages. It is important to develop a participation policy for commissioning and involve children and young people in designing it. Two key issues at this point are drawing on any existing involvement work and avoiding tokenism as the local approach is developed. For example, some areas have developed their own compacts between commissioners and young people to agree principles and standards of best practice and young people friendly approaches.

Commissioning organisations can be supported to develop the way they involve children and young people in their commissioning activities by using the model of change described by Building a Culture of Participation (Kirby, 2003). Participation Works have developed a specific course to apply this model to commissioning organisations. The four stages of the model are supporting commissioners to unfreeze attitudes around young people's participation in commissioning. To then identify champions for change within commissioning teams (both at a strategic and operational level) and link these champions to young people and specialist participation workers. To internalise systems within the commissioning process to ensure that children and young people can participate at each stage using the right support and tools. Finally, as commissioning organisations build their experience of participation they can aspire to institutionalise a culture of participation at all levels and stages of the commissioning process. Good evaluation is important to assess the quality and impact of participation approaches and should be identified at the start.

Involving children and young people from a variety of backgrounds and diverse groups is essential. Commissioners will need to provide extra support and input to make sure disadvantaged groups are able to participate. The How To guide on involving 'hard to reach' children and young people should give additional ideas. Create a clear plan to overcome barriers and ensure access for all including those with English as a second language or a learning disability. This is important so commissioning can involve children and young people with different learning styles, interests and abilities.

Sometimes the biggest challenge for commissioners is knowing how to find children and young people to engage and involve. They may not have direct relationships with them. The services they commission may have limited contact with users, such as anonymous phone lines, walk-in services or prison visiting projects. Voluntary and community organisations are well placed to support children and young people to have a voice in commissioning as they have good relationships, trust and expertise with the very people commissioners are seeking to engage.

Outreach is an important part of commissioning. It is not a task that should be confined to the office. Commissioners will need to go to where people are and work with them in their spaces. For example, in schools, youth clubs, community centres and cafes. Again voluntary sector networks and projects such as Youth Forums, Youth Councils and Young Inspectors can facilitate and support this.

Children and young people will benefit from support to develop knowledge, skills and confidence to be involved. In the same way that commissioners are given training to fulfil their role, children and young people may appreciate training opportunities. This can

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address children and young people's expectations of the commissioning process and ensure realism. Boundaries or limitations in the process must also be shared openly. Training can cover commissioning scenarios, role plays, confidence building, decision making and negotiation skills.

## Checklist: Key things to have in place

- Create a clear way to explain commissioning
- Identify which part of commissioning cycle to work with (and why)
- Train and support the young people
- Give examples of the difference young people can make - golden threads
- Clarify good participation practice with commissioners - expectations and ground rules

- Facilitate long-term relationships
- Make it fun and use creative approaches
- Identify limits of participation
- Think in terms of outcomes
- Have clear feedback mechanisms - complete the loop
- Reward and recognise
- Focus on diversity and overcoming inequality
- Support the wider process
- Opportunities for young people and commissioners to be in the same room
- Share expertise and resource across sectors
- Partnerships with diverse groups

## Case Study: Young Devon Accredited commissioning pack and training

As part of the national Participation in Action (PIA) pilot project, Young Devon have created an accredited training programme to enable young people to participate meaningfully in the commissioning of services.

The programme follows the same style as other PIA modules such as Passport to Participation, Young Assessor and Young Interview Panellist. It gives young people the knowledge and understanding of all the necessary elements of commissioning, whilst gaining new experiences and having fun.

The Young Commissioners module is currently being trialled in several areas around the UK, in particular with Devon County Council's Children and Young People's Joint Commissioning Team. Devon County Council has been keen to include young people in the commissioning of services and is working closely with Young Devon to train a group of 5-8 young people.

The work, although not complete, already demonstrates good practice and showcases the successes of working in partnership between voluntary and statutory services.

Find out more about Young Devon's PIA work at [www.youngdevon.org](http://www.youngdevon.org)

## Case Study:

### Somerset Children's Fund The list of children and young people's priorities

Somerset Children's Fund worked with local children and young people to capture their priorities for commissioning services that meet their needs. They agreed the following eight areas:

1. Prevent bullying and feel empowered to do so
2. Promote enjoyment of learning in schools
3. Promote access to healthy schools and healthy lifestyles.
4. Promote work to empower young people to protect the environment
5. Promote work that supports children who have been abused plus prevention
6. Promote work that supports children who have witnessed abuse inc. domestic
7. Promote free play and wild play outdoors
8. Promote positive family experiences

## Exploring the Commissioning Cycle

The commissioning cycle has a series of clear stages. When focusing efforts to participate in commissioning it is useful to identify at which stage children and young people want to have a voice and where they may have most impact.

### Stage One: Assessing Needs

The first stage of the commissioning process is to identify needs. Tasks include looking at gaps in service, understanding barriers, considering how different groups of young people access services. Identified needs are then used to develop clear outcomes.

Young people can participate by: sharing life stories and experiences of using services; mapping formal and informal networks; taking part in workshops, fora, video-making and research; as well as working with commissioners to make sense of data and trends.

### Stage Two: Identifying Resources and Setting Priorities

Once the local needs are understood better it is important to prioritise which ones to address first. Children and young people can participate in this through activities such as workshops, ranking exercises, focus group discussions, debates and panels. At the same time it is essential to look at where resources will come from including from joint commissioning and using existing community assets.

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## Stage Three: Planning

Making sense of all the information involves evaluating different service models, developing a service specification and involving stakeholders in considering options. Sometimes this is through formal consultations when major changes to services are considered. At other times the process is less formal. There are opportunities to participate in the design and co-production of new services and pathways. Children and young people can work closely with commissioners on specific projects exploring the design of services through techniques such as 3D models, drawing, collage and computer design. Their creative and artistic skills can support commissioners to visualise new types of service and ways to make existing services more accessible and appealing to young people. Addressing issues such as safeguarding are very important during planning too. The process of participation also needs to be planned – identifying groups of young people, timescales and best practice.

## Stage Four: Tendering and Procuring

Procurement is the process of actually purchasing the services. It is likely there will be a number of potential suppliers so it is important to choose the most effective and efficient.

Involving children and young people in this process can be a challenge because procedural aspects of tendering, procurement and contracting can be complicated and detailed with a clear legal steps. Young people will need support to understand issues of competition and confidentiality of commercial information. But using participatory tools such as ranking exercises, scoring activities, reference groups or Dragon's Den type activities can be effective to enable children and young people to assess and score different proposals. Often potential suppliers will have to make presentations. This provides an opportunity for children and young people to ask questions and explore different options. As with all parts of commissioning, there needs to be clear expectations of and criteria for the decision-making process.

### Case Study Four:

## NCH and Gloucestershire County Council

### Procurement Panel

### Getting involved in assessing tenders

NCH Participation Project organised a children and young people's assessment panel in partnership with Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) Children and Young People's Directorate. This assessed the applications for three different tenders. A previous group of children and young people had worked with GCC commissioning team to put together a section of the application forms that was young person friendly. Projects were invited to submit evidence supporting their application such as photos, DVDs and presentations.

Each panel consisted of between six and eight children and young people from around Gloucestershire who had relevant experience and knowledge appropriate to the tenders. They also received training to build relevant skills.

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The panel put together assessment scoring sheets which were consistent with questions asked in the children and young people's section of the application form and what other young people had said were important to them. For each tender there were eight questions with standardised scoring of 0-5 (with clear reasons for each score).

Weighting was agreed with the lead agency so that the children and young people's panel had a clear influence on the tender process. For these tenders, 15% of the overall assessment was set. This was justified as the panel did not look through the same sections as the adult panel (such as finance, accounts, business plans, and policies).

After the children and young people's panel and adult panel assessed the applications, they both met to have a two-way discussion about each application and to add up the scores from each panel.

There was a significant contribution from the children and young people's panel when their scores meant three projects which were not going to be commissioned by the adult panel were then upgraded in ranking and did receive funding.

## Key learning points:

1. Children and young people to meet with those responsible for applications to ensure there is a 'child-friendly' section designed
2. To pre-agree a significant weighting or section the children and young people will be responsible for
3. To ensure applications and supporting evidence is given to the children and young people's panel in advance
4. To ensure enough time is allocated as they may take a little longer to make assessments
5. To pre-arrange a meeting with the adult panel for a two-way discussion
6. To write to the children and young people's panel to thank them and inform them of any final decisions

*"It was very valuable – the young people came up with questions and observations that were thought provoking, and very relevant. I enjoyed their input in a long and bureaucratic process."* – Adult on Procurement Panel

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## Stage Five: Monitoring

Contract monitoring and performance management are about making sure that commissioned services are being delivered in the way that the contract specified and that they are of good quality and deliver outcomes.

Children and young people can be involved through activities such as mystery shopper exercises, project advisory groups, inspections and monitoring visits, service user assessments, online forums, blogs and by collecting feedback from other children and young people.

*'I think that the young people quite enjoyed the fact that presenters did not know that they would be present, as it gave them the upper hand.'* – Adult reflecting on working with young people

## Stage Six: Evaluation and learning

Though the final part of the cycle, evaluation is essential to understand the impact of the services and to feed the learning in to the next round of commissioning as part of the new needs analysis. Outcomes must be measured and information and good practice shared with commissioners, providers and the local community. Children and young people can be involved using similar tools to the monitoring stage. For example, you could publish stories, case studies, photos and information leaflets. It is also important to remember to evaluate young people's experience of being part of the commissioning process. Using participatory techniques, story telling and creative workshops are a good way of learning about their experiences.

## Best Practice in Involving Children and Young People in Commissioning

Voluntary and community organisations are well placed to advocate for best practice based on their own knowledge of working with children and young people. Key issues include:

1. Real involvement takes time and resources - make sure this is built in to the commissioning strategy
2. Give feedback about the full commissioning process and the effects of children and young people's contributions at each stage. Identify ways to measure and explain the difference that young people's involvement made.
3. Be children and young people friendly - be flexible and avoid jargon. Provide a glossary of key terms
4. Build the capacity of commissioners themselves to work in participatory ways - they may not already have this skill set
5. Plan involvement around children and young people's availability and time commitments
6. Avoid bureaucratic meetings. Be flexible by using activities such as ice breakers, participation games, visual tools and ranking exercises to promote discussion
7. Build on current participation and relationships - use what already exists
8. Involve adults from across the organisation - from senior executives, councillors and board members down. This is not just the business of specialist participation workers!
9. Involve groups of children and young people rather than isolated individuals - this gives them a stronger voice
10. Make it fun. Make it accessible to different groups with activities appropriate to different ages, learning styles and needs.

## Case Study:

### Involving Young People in Local Authority Commissioning

Participation Works has developed a consultancy model to support local young people to participate in Local Authority commissioning processes. They have worked with a number of councils to develop a structured process that would build on local participation work and relationships and which could be embedded in commissioning plans.

A package has been developed with the young people to support them to develop their knowledge and skills of commissioning through a series of workshops and role plays. Young people are able to explore a series of commissioning scenarios from the perspective of commissioners, provider organisations and young people who would use the services. This is then followed by a whole-system event where the young people work with adults from across the Local Authority commissioning system.

In one instance this whole-system event brought together over 40 young people and adult commissioners. Using a large open space, the commissioning cycle was created on the floor and 8 different stages of the cycle identified. Small mixed groups of young people and adults worked their way around the cycle, stopping at each stage to explore ways that young people could be involved in activities of the stage. These ideas and proposals were then collected and developed to enable the council to promote participation.

Young people were able to present their views of commissioning priorities and ask questions of the commissioners. They were also able to work in small groups with adult officers from different parts of the commissioning cycle to agree ways for young people to get involved. For example, young people were able to work with procurement specialists to consider ways for young people to be involved in procurement activities.

The approach is underpinned by five factors:

- Offering a series of ways for young people to get involved in commissioning and providing a range of activities rather than a one-off piece of work
- Building on existing local relationships between young people and participation workers
- Supporting young people to learn about commissioning and develop skills to work with commissioners as part of a wider programme of participation. A young person's version of the Participation Works course How To Involve Children and Young People in Commissioning was developed.
- Providing opportunities for young people to work alongside a range of adults from different parts of the local authority including those involved in contracting, finance and procurement as well as senior executives and elected members.
- Identifying champions for young people's participation within the Local Authority who could support the process

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## Examples of Participation Tools and Approaches for Commissioning

<b>Life stories</b>	<b>Collage</b>
<b>Video making</b>	<b>Ranking exercises</b>
<b>Workshops</b>	<b>Scoring charts</b>
<b>Fora</b>	<b>Dragon's Den</b>
<b>Action research</b>	<b>Mystery shopper</b>
<b>Mapping</b>	<b>Mock visits</b>
<b>Knowledge trees</b>	<b>Role play</b>
<b>Focus groups</b>	<b>Audits</b>
<b>Design - art and 3D models</b>	<b>Online tools, blogs and social media</b>
<b>Computer models</b>	<b>Photos and the Mosaic approach</b>
<b>Participation games</b>	<b>Case studies</b>
<b>Interviews</b>	<b>Young people as researchers</b>

## The Money Dimension of Commissioning

It is not all about money, but finance is an important part of effective commissioning. Money can only be spent once so it needs to be invested wisely. Key questions that young people often ask is if the process open and transparent? Is it clear how much money the commissioner has? Has does this compare to what commissioners spend on other services such as for adults? Is there value for money?

Money can make discussions about commissioning feel real and concrete. Finding creative ways to introduce the money dimension of commissioning is often one of the most fun parts of participation. Children and young people can understand large budgets through finance games and simulations - for example, role-playing a budget allocation meeting. Using imitation money (either chocolate coins or specially

designed notes) can be a good way of making numbers on a balance sheet feel real. This is important when considering large budgets of several £million which may be difficult to relate to. Giving examples of what different services cost and how much a local authority spends on essential services is another good way of making sense of the money. Activities can highlight the opportunity cost of spending money in one area at the expense of another. This allows children and young people to test out different spending scenarios to consider the impact. Additional support can be sought from specialists in participatory budgeting approaches.

Children and young people themselves may need practical support to participate in commissioning. They may have expenses and travel costs. It is important to have a clear payment and reimbursement policy. Check out the How To guide on remuneration and payments. The Department of Health offers

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some clear guidelines which are referenced at the back of this guide. Organisations will need to consider if they should pay for children and young people's time - either in cash or through other rewards such as vouchers or equipment. Certificates and written records of involvement are often highly valued but it is important to have a conversation about this with young people before making a decision. Organisations that support young people may also need funding support to help with the costs of participation.

## Value for money services – the 4 E's

If services are each of the following, they will be giving value for money:

**Effective** – delivering evidenced outcomes

**Efficient** – converting resources into outcomes

**Economic** – ensuring cost and value for money of inputs

**Equitable** – fairly distributed and accessible to diverse groups

## Participation with Provider Organisations

Commissioning is a three-way relationship. It involves commissioners, the local community and the organisations that are commissioned to deliver the services. Children and young people have a stake in all three groups. Many of their organisations will be trying to convince commissioners to invest in their services. It is therefore essential that children and young people also participate from this perspective. A separate Participation Works How To guide has been developed to provide

more detail on how children and young people can be involved in applying for funding including identifying and prioritising needs; developing bids; and producing proposals and tendering documents. Any knowledge or expertise that children and young people develop when working in partnership with commissioners can be applied to their own organisations. Being able to look at a proposal with a commissioner's perspective is a powerful way of creating attractive and effective tender bids for providers. Some provider organisations have involved young people in the presentation of their bids to commissioners.

## The information challenge

Good information and data is essential for effective commissioning - especially when considering large populations. To get the best services commissioners need a clear and detailed picture of current and future needs. They must also understand trends and patterns. For example, considering how the age range of the local population may change over the next five years. Will there be more teenagers than there are now? How many new babies will be born? How many young carers are their likely to be in an area and how can services reach them? The challenge is to understand without getting lost in the data.

Like many technical activities, the information aspects commissioning has its own jargon and terminology. Children and young people can help commissioners make leaflets and other material clear, friendly and attractive. For example, as part of the NCB Patient Advice and Liaison (PALS) Project, children and young people from across England have supported health commissioners to create a series of young people friendly leaflets, business cards and web pages to promote the work

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of commissioners and engage with diverse groups of young people including those with long-term health conditions and from different ethnic groups.

Each local authority collects this data through several mechanisms including the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) which is the key document for understanding local needs to inform commissioning. Both the local authority commissioners and the NHS publish their commissioning plans and these can be useful sources of information.

You can support children and young people to engage with information creatively through workshops, exercises, mapping, interviewing and research activities. Simply looking at thick reports will not make the process meaningful or enjoyable. Some authorities have a red card system to help engage all participants at meetings. Children and young people can raise a red card during a meeting if an adult is using too much jargon or too many acronyms. They then have to stop and explain the terms. Elsewhere young people have been involved in helping commissioners present their information using visual infographics and using online services such as Google Maps.

Capturing new data and information is essential. Creating a mix of formal numbers-based data with qualitative data and more informal knowledge offers a richer picture. Many children and young people's organisations are already doing consultations and have participation work that can be used to support this element of their work. Presenting this information to informing the commissioning process is a good way of using material that is already young people led and available.

## The governance of commissioning

Children and young people are active citizens as well as users of services. Recent policy changes have started to think about service users as consumers. It is important to balance this perspective with the children's rights perspective. Therefore, children and young people should have opportunities to be part of bigger picture of governing commissioning.

The purpose of governance is to scrutinise, question and hold to account. Who sets the budgets that commissioners have? How well do local commissioning arrangements adhere to national standards and policies? How effective, fair and transparent is the commissioning process?

*'Working directly with young people in commissioning is essential – it makes the process real'*

– Local Authority Councillor

Children and young people can participate in governance of commissioning by working with councillors or boards in the NHS. They can be part of advisory groups to give evidence to non-executives. Existing networks like the Youth Parliament, rights organisations and school councils can present views to councils and their overview and scrutiny committees. Participatory approaches can ensure that children and young people from a wide variety of groups including disabled young people and those you are at risk of offending can have their voice heard by commissioners.

# How to involve children and young people in commissioning

## New Opportunities for Participation – Healthwatch

Healthwatch is the new consumer champion for users of health and social care services. It will start in April 2013 and will replace and continue the work of Local Involvement Networks (LINKs). Because it will have statutory functions and be part of the Health and Wellbeing Boards it will be an important part of the wider commissioning system. It is important that children and young people's views and needs are recognised by Healthwatch to ensure it does not focus only on adults.

At the moment Healthwatch is being designed and Local Authorities are working with local people and stakeholders to identify what type of local organisation they need to commission to deliver Healthwatch. There are opportunities for children and young people to participate in this co-production process and they will need to advise Local Authorities on the best way to ensure Healthwatch is young people friendly. Healthwatch will also provide an information and signposting function which may be useful for young people wanting to get access to accurate information about services. Many Local Authorities are keen to engage young people at this early stage to learn lessons from LINKs and design an effective body. NCB has developed a training package to support young people and LINKs to work together to promote this work.

Where young people have already been involved in LINKs and the development of Healthwatch there have been some positive outcomes. They have been able to work closely with Local Authority commissioners and have often been welcomed by adult members of LINKs who have appreciated the energy and creativity that they have introduced. Healthwatch provides a good opportunity for young people to explore inter-generational

learning with adults and to consider the links between the commissioning of children and young people's services and adult services. For example, young people have been able to engage in the Big Care Debate and consider the design of a new pensions system and how this might affect them in the longer term.

## The Future of Participation and Commissioning

Most existing participation tools and activities can be readily adapted to involve children and young people in commissioning. Establishing good partnerships between participation workers and commissioners can help both groups. Participation workers and their organisations can learn about the commissioning process and then support commissioners to consider practical ways that children and young people can get involved. Having champions at a senior level in commissioning organisations can ensure there is strategic support for these partnerships. Starting the process with some quick wins such as a joint workshop is a good way to bring these groups together and build confidence. However, it is important to ensure that all parties are clear about the types of commissioning decision that young people are being invited to participate in. Building on first engagements, it is then important to design a wider process for more sustained and deeper participation across the system.

The principles of good commissioning are already built on involving local people in the cycle and it is important that diverse groups of children and young people are included in this. As local needs get more complex and resources get tighter, it is essential that the voice and expertise of children and young people are central to all decisions about what services to design and fund.

## Find Out More

This list of references, resources and organisations will help you find more detailed information and follow up areas of interest (details correct - March 2012):

### References

Cabinet Office (2010) Modernising Commissioning Green Paper

<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/resource-library/modernising-commissioning-green-paper>

Department of Communities and Local Government (2011) Localism Act

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/localgovernment/decentralisation/localismbill/>

Department for Education and Skills/ Department of Health (2006) *Joint Planning and Commissioning Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services*.

Children Act 2004. Guidance can be accessed at <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100418065544/dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/about/guidance/dutytooperate/>

Department of Health (2010) NHS Constitution

[http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH\\_113613](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_113613)

Department of Health (2006) *Reward and Recognition: the principles and practice of service user payment and reimbursement in health and social care*

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Department of Health (2007) You're Welcome Quality Criteria: Making Health Services Young People Friendly

[http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH\\_073586](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_073586)

UK Parliament 2010 – 2012 Health and Social Care Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2010-11/healthandsocialcare.html>

Department of Health (2007) Commissioning framework for health and well-being. Download at [http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyandGuidance/DH\\_072604](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyandGuidance/DH_072604)

Kirby, P., Lanyon, C., Cronin, K. and Sinclair, R. (2003) Building a Culture of Participation - Involving children and young people in policy, service planning, delivery and evaluation.

<http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/DfES-0827-2003.pdf.pdf>

# How to involve children and young people in commissioning

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## Resources:

Child and Maternal Health Observatory Participation Exercises and Resources  
<http://www.chimat.org.uk/camhs/participation/commission>

Clarke, A. and Moss, P. (2011) Listening to Young Children: The Mosaic Approach  
<http://bit.ly/Alz922>

The Commissioning Support Programme  
<http://www.commissioningsupport.org.uk/>

Visit the Participatory Budgeting Unit website at <http://www.participatorybudgeting.org.uk/> for information on participatory budgeting.

NCB (2011) Healthy Lives, Healthy People: Young people's views on being well and the future of public health  
[http://www.ncb.org.uk/media/37997/vss\\_publichealth\\_report.pdf](http://www.ncb.org.uk/media/37997/vss_publichealth_report.pdf)

NCB (2010) NHS White Paper: Young People Consultation Report  
[http://www.ncb.org.uk/media/40338/vss\\_nhswhitepaper\\_consultation\\_report.pdf](http://www.ncb.org.uk/media/40338/vss_nhswhitepaper_consultation_report.pdf)

NCB LINKs and Healthwatch resources:  
<http://www.ncb.org.uk/vss/links-and-healthwatch>

NCB (2010) PALS – Getting it Right for Children and Young People: Case Studies  
[http://www.ncb.org.uk/media/145978/pals\\_case\\_studies.pdf](http://www.ncb.org.uk/media/145978/pals_case_studies.pdf)

NHS Commissioning Board (2011) Commissioning Outcomes Framework  
<http://www.commissioningboard.nhs.uk/2011/11/29/cof/>

Positive for Youth – Outcomes for Young People  
<http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/youngpeople/Positive%20for%20Youth>

# How to involve children and young people in commissioning

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### Case Studies:

London Borough of Bromley

Young Devon

Somerset Children’s Fund

NCH and Gloucestershire County Council

Participation Works

Published as part of the British Youth Council’s Youth Voice programme working with the Department for Education (DfE) to provide a support service for youth participation. The Youth voice programme aims to support young people’s voice and involvement in decision making at a local and national level



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