



growing up in the west midlands

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Children, Young People and Governance in the West Midlands

A Report on the Findings of Research carried out by the Growing Up in the West Midlands Strategic Forum, June 2006

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G:up (Growing Up in the West Midlands) is an open regional network of voluntary and community organisations working with children, young people and families.

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I Children, Young People and Governance in the West Midlands

“Children are not only the future, but they are the citizens of today”¹

Context

The number of children and young people in the world today who are under the age of 18 is estimated to be 2.2 billion. Although very few are given an opportunity to participate in decisions which affect them, there is growing recognition that the active involvement of young people in decision-making within their communities can have significant and positive effects. Now, as never before, the climate is right for organisations to consider how they might benefit from a greater involvement of children and young people in shaping the direction of their work in the future.

In nineteenth century Britain the emergence of organisations and societies for the welfare of children became common during the industrial revolution. In line with the norms of the day they were run by adults for children and were generally paternalistic and disciplinarian. Children were excluded from decision-making processes then as they still are now in most parts of the world.

There were exceptions. Some organisations and movements were started by and for young people, the YMCA, founded in London in 1844, being perhaps one of the first and the most well-known. However, as the English YMCA Movement grew, so did the complexity and nature of its operations. One of the consequences of this is that today those with the decision-making power at senior levels in the organisation no longer reflect the age group of the membership or its service-users.

In recent years the role that children and young people have to play as citizens in their own right has been increasingly acknowledged. Although it was as early as 1919 that Eglantyne Jebb, the founder of Save the Children, first promoted the idea that children have rights, it was not until 1989, seventy years later, that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)² was adopted by the U.N. General Assembly. Enshrined in the Convention and clearly articulated in Article 12 is the principle of participation³ and the right of children to have a say in decisions which affect them. The Convention, signed by all except two countries in the world⁴, has played an important role in promoting the concept of children’s active participation in civil society. It has also been a contributory factor in the greater involvement of children and young people in organisational decision-making which is gradually gaining wider currency particularly in the voluntary and not for profit sector,

Children and young people can bring a different perspective to organisational decision-making and the need to explain to a new generation how and why decisions are made can foster healthy debate across the organisation as a whole.

At the same time young people can benefit from gaining a greater understanding about how organisations work and about their own social responsibilities and roles as actors in the wider community.

¹ Children’s Forum, UN Special Session, 2002

² <http://www.unicef.org.uk>

³ Article 12 sets out the right of children to say what they think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect them and to have their opinions taken into account.

⁴ The exceptions are the USA and Somalia



Youth who are involved early on may become part of the next generation of leadership which is particularly important in organisations that have experienced an ageing of Board Members and of staff in executive decision-making positions.

The UK Charity Commission figures clearly illustrate the lack of representation of young people on the boards of the 190,000 charities in England and Wales, where only 5000 (0.5%) out of one million people acting as trustees are under the age of 24.

Age Band	% of Trustees in Each Band	% of Population in Each Band
Over 60	42%	21%
45-59	34%	19%
25-44	23%	29%
24 & under	0.5%	31%*

* NB not all within this age-range could legally be a trustee

It is generally recognised that a charity or organisation with a diverse board of trustees is more likely to engage effectively with the community it serves, respond effectively and equitably to the needs of its users and increase accountability and public confidence in its work. This requires not only that there should be a range of representative individuals on the Board but also that democratic processes should exist to ensure that the views of those most affected by the Board's decisions are heard and taken into account.

The fact that at least 30% of charities in England and Wales find it difficult to attract young people to serve as trustees is deserving of attention and the ongoing research by the Growing up in the West Midlands Strategic Forum aims to help identify what organisations need to do in order to support and encourage their greater involvement in governance in the future.

Purpose of the Research

The Growing Up in the West Midlands Strategic Forum⁵, or G:up for short, exists to develop the West Midlands as a region that respects and acts upon the needs, interests and aspirations of children and young people and the voluntary and community organisations that work with them.

This piece of work, funded by Change Up Funding in the West Midlands⁶ is the first stage of a longer term project which aims to assist organisations in identifying approaches and introducing ways in which children and young people might more meaningfully engage in their governance.

The research aimed to find out what governance means to children and young people in the West Midlands and to gain a better understanding of how they themselves would like to be involved.

⁵ <http://www.growingupinthewestmidlands.info/governance>

⁶ <http://www.changeahead.org>





Methodology

380 voluntary and community organisations working with and for children and young people in the West Midlands were contacted by letter explaining the purpose of the research and asking if they would be willing to participate.

The definition of governance used by the project was:

‘Committees/bodies that through a formal constitution and / or terms of reference, make a strategic decision arrived at through a democratic process’.

30 organisations (8% of those approached) responded and were sent a questionnaire asking them what their organisation understood by the term ‘governance’ and how they involved children and young people in the process. In addition to this a questionnaire and a ‘Blob Tree’^{7 8} was sent for children and young people in each organisation to complete.

Fifteen organisations completed the questionnaire (50% of the number that had originally responded). 235 children and young people from the responding organisations and through various other gatherings were given a questionnaire and a ‘Blob Tree’ to complete.

In order to phrase the question in more understandable terms for younger children, thirty-one 5-12 year old children were asked to indicate who they thought made decisions in their organisations by choosing one of four pictures representing parents, managers, children or staff.

⁷ The ‘Blob Tree’ shows ‘blob-like’ figure climbing a tree. Their location and positions on the tree indicate whether or not they are fully participating in the governance of their organization (top of the tree) or not participating at all (bottom of the tree). The expressions on their faces indicate whether or not they are happy, sad or indifferent to the position they are in.

⁸ Copyright for the Blob Tree – www.pipwilson.com



Results/ Findings

1. The Organisations' Responses

Profile of Organisations:

Number and Type of Organisation	
Service Provision e.g. housing provision	4
Local Government e.g. Borough Councils	2
Youth Organisation e.g. National Association of Young Farmers Clubs	6
Advocacy/campaigning e.g. British Youth Council	3

Definitions of Governance

Definitions of governance ranged from short definitions to longer descriptions of the governance and management processes. The majority made reference to the role of governance in decision-making and overall responsibility and accountability for the organisation. Several referred to the role of the Board or Trustees. Two described governance as being the management of the organisation and four referred to the role of governance in setting strategic direction. One referred to governance as meaning participation in the decision-making of the organisation.

In response to questions relating to children and young peoples' involvement in governance six organisations referred to their participation at Board meetings and/or as members of youth councils or youth parliament. The rest identified a range of ways in which children and young people were involved in decision-making processes at various level. All included children and young people at the local level in helping determine the direction of activities in which they were involved and a significant number had consultation processes designed to feed the views of young people into the higher level decision-making bodies. Young people in two





of the organisations were involved in recruitment processes and another used 'Young People Champions' to represent issues on behalf of the wider group.

A number of approaches were described to demonstrate how organisations encourage and support the involvement of children and young people to become involved. One organisation carried out in-dept training and induction for new trustees, matching the skill set of young trustees against the desired skill set for the Board. Another sourced external training to help member organisations develop skills in involving young people in decision-making. One organisation conducted training in public-speaking and presentation skills and another offered the opportunity to young people becoming involved in governance to 'shadow' directors in order to understand the role better.

All the organisations that responded were making efforts to engage children and young people at different levels of decision-making and project development whilst at the same time recognising the different interests and abilities of the individuals concerned.

Comment and Analysis

Response rates to the questionnaire were low (15 out of the original 380). It is only possible to speculate as to why, but it seems reasonable to assume that most organisations probably do not see the involvement of children and young people in governance as one of their highest priorities even though, as members of the G:up Forum, they have demonstrated some interest in the issue.

Progressing beyond the discussion stage to actually making changes which truly facilitate involvement of children and young people in governance is something that few organisations have so far attempted and which each has to approach in its own way. Many of the organisations contacted may simply not be ready to contemplate this or to take it on as yet.

The range of answers largely reflects the different roles functions and natures of the responding organisations. A number of those contacted represented local branches of national or regional organisations. Some were involved in overall (national or regional) governance whereas others focused more specifically on local operational and service delivery issues.

There was no consistent definition of governance. This reflected the probability that this is not a term generally used in communications within many organisations. It also indicated the difficulty individuals had in succinctly describing what it means. It reasonably follows that if the organisation or its representatives find it challenging themselves to express what governance means then they will have even more difficulty in trying to explain this to any children and young people who might wish to be involved.

All respondents demonstrated considerable commitment to the participation of children and young people within projects and several had developed comprehensive structures for their participation in the decision-making of the organisation as a whole.

Essentially the role and purpose of the organisation, its membership and the interests and abilities of the children and young people involved will largely determine the level and type of involvement they will have within the organisation. More critically, however, the organisation itself needs to determine to what degree it really wants to involve children and young people in its strategic decision-making and to develop participatory processes that facilitate this within its own unique structures.



Recommendations

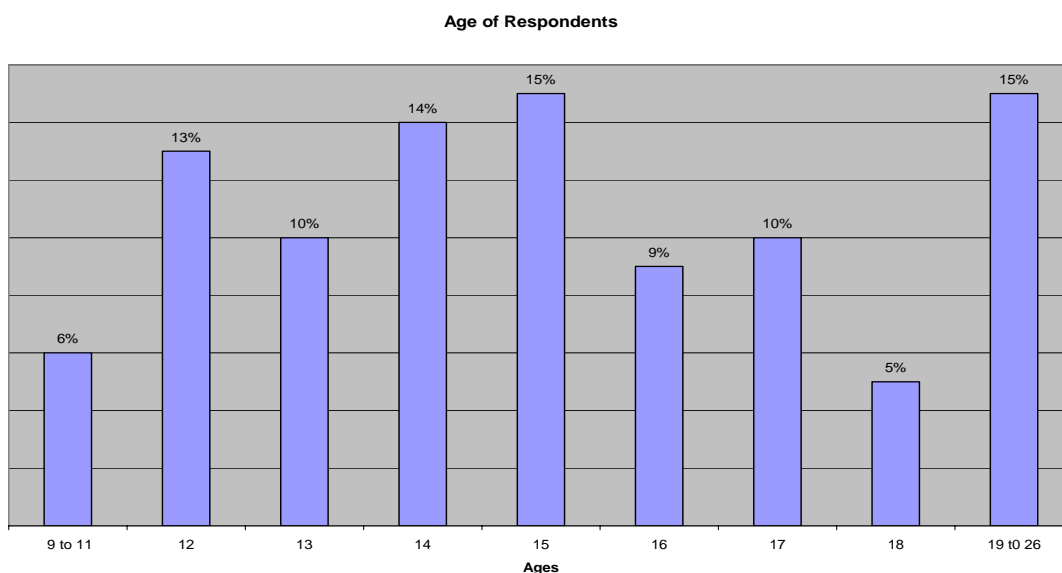
- If an organisation makes a strategic decision to include children and young people in its governance processes this should be clearly articulated in its corporate strategy as an objective with specific and measurable outcomes.
- The organisation needs to have its own clear definition of the term ‘governance’ and agreed processes by which children and young people can be involved if they so choose
- The commitment of the organisation to involve children and young people in its governance processes needs to be clearly and widely communicated; actively supported by senior management and thoroughly understood by staff and volunteers who will be required to encourage and support this approach
- Structures need to be in place within the organisation which make sure that if children and young people are asked for and give their views, these are heard, responded to and where appropriate acted upon
- Staff and volunteers need support and training so that they can facilitate relevant discussions and processes

2. Responses of Children and Young People

Profile of Respondents

235 children and young people from 18 organisations responded to the questionnaire of whom 49% were girls and 51% were boys. Six respondents described themselves as having a disability.

Age Profile of respondents:



Gender and Ethnicity of Respondents

Total Number of Respondents	235	
Gender		%
Male	114	49%
Female	121	51%
Ethnicity		
Bangladeshi	1	0%
Black Caribbean	4	2%
Black Other	1	0%
White British	199	85%
Canadian	1	1%
Chinese	1	1%
Indian	6	3%
Mixed race	11	5%
Pakistani	1	1%
White European	5	5%
No answer	5	2%

The sample of children and young people broadly reflects the overall ethnic make-up of the West Midlands⁹.

2.1 Definitions

Three questions were asked of the children and young people in order to get a clearer picture about their knowledge of how voluntary organisations are run and their understanding of the terms ‘governance’ and ‘trustee’.

a) In response to the question ‘how are voluntary organisations managed?’ key words can be identified as follows:

⁹ UK census 2004 www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk





How are Voluntary Organisations Managed?

Key Words	No. of answers	%
Trustees	8	3%
Boards	12	5%
Manager	3	1%
Chief Executives	1	0%
Volunteers	16	7%
Staff	4	2%
Old people	4	2%
Adults	3	1%
Committees	13	6%
Self regulated	1	0%
Fine	13	6%
OK	1	0%
Non profit organisations	1	0%
Group of organisations	1	0%
Government	7	3%
Donations	15	6%
Don't know	44	19%
No answer	81	34%
Total	235	

The 5-12 year old respondents who identified pictures to indicate who they thought made decisions in their organisation did so as follows:

Who makes the decisions	No of responses
Parents	3
Manager	5
Staff	9
Children	14

b) To the question 'What does Governance mean?' 153 responded out of a possible 235. A range of responses can be reasonably categorised as follows:



What does Governance mean?		
Key words and phrases in the responses	No of responses	% (nearest)
Someone/people in charge; taking control; decision-making; organising/leading; people who tell us what to do; rules	37	16%
Something to do with government (national/local); 'good countries'	22	9%
People helping other people; having rights and responsibilities; empowerment; involvement	14	6%
Young people having a voice and participating; young people setting the agenda	4	2%
People making money; taking money from us	3	1%
Adults making choices; being controlled and influenced;	7	3%
'Young mums aren't welcome'	1	0.5%
No response	78	32%
Don't know; nothing; not sure; don't understand the Meaning; incomplete answers	65	27%

b) To the question what is a Charity Trustee? 156 out of a possible 231 answered the question (67.5%).

42 (27%) of those who answered said that they didn't know. The vast majority of the rest of the respondents made reference variously to a trustee as someone with authority and decision-making power and with responsibility for running or managing an organisation. Several emphasised their responsibility for the funding and the finances of the organisation. Three identified a trustee as being 'voluntary' or non-executive. One respondent specifically identified a trustee as 'an older person (not a youth)' and another as 'not a young person'.



Comment and Analysis

Responses from the children and young people generally demonstrated very little understanding of how voluntary organisations are run and a limited understanding of what governance means or what a trustee is. Although a large percentage did not respond to the questions or said that they didn't know the answer, most of those who did demonstrated a broad if somewhat vague, understanding of the meaning of governance and the roles and responsibilities of trustees.

Given the fact that management and governance of organisations is not a topic of general interest or discussion and that terms may be new to some respondents the level of knowledge and understanding was not surprising. A questionnaire alone may not necessarily be the best way in which to elicit responses which demonstrate a true understanding and interpretation of definitions.

Recommendation

- Information about the organisation, its purpose, values and principles and the way it works should be made available for all children. This should be shared in a range of ways including 'child-friendly' literature, discussion, games etc. so that they understand the nature of the organisation of which they are a part and are able to make informed decisions with regard to whether and how they would like to become involved.

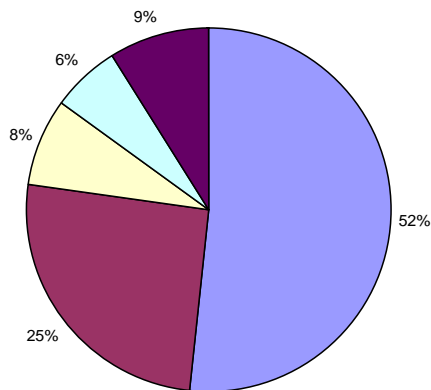
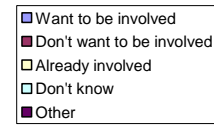
2.2 Involvement

a). Would you like to be involved? Why?

Of the 156 respondents, 81 (52%) said that they would like to be involved whereas 40 (26%) said that they would not. 9 (6%) didn't know and 12 (9%) said that they were already involved. Of the remaining 14 respondents most expressed an interest in getting involved but were either too busy with school work or were uncertain about doing so because they were not sure what it would involve or if they would be able to do what was required of them. Several stated that they would only want to be involved if they felt that they would be listened to and would have their opinions respected.



Wish to be involved in Governance



Most of those who did not want to be involved did not give a reason as to why they would not. Those that did said that it was because they didn't like speaking in front of people; that they were shy; that they didn't understand what was required of them or that they didn't feel that they were listened to.

A significant amount of interest was expressed in becoming more involved in organisational decision-making and indeed some indicated that they already were. The respondents very clearly felt that they would like to contribute positively within the organisation and the community and that they believed that, given the opportunity, they had a great deal to offer.

b) What would an organisation need to do to make you interested in being part of its decision-making body?

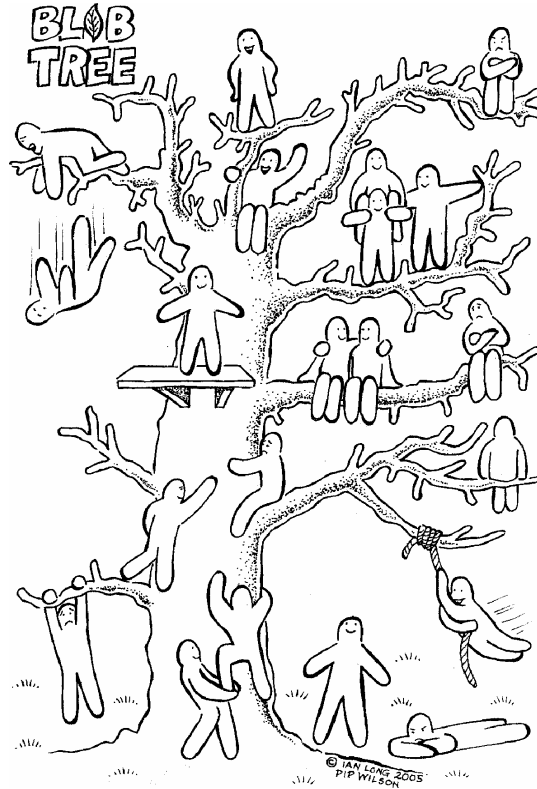
Of the 138 who answered this question, 23 said that they didn't know. The rest answered in some detail. The categories below indicate the issues most often referred to in the answers:



What would an organisation need to do to make you interested in being part of its decision-making body?

<p>Listen; share information; respect ideas</p>	<p>Many asked for communication which was genuinely a 'two way process'. Respondents wanted to know more about the organisation – what it did and how it operated, and wanted to be convinced that it was achieving its stated aims. The importance of being listened to and having views respected was high on the agenda.</p>
<p>Make it fun!</p>	<p>A significant number of respondents emphasised the need for activities to be more fun and interesting and better designed to appeal to younger members. They felt they would be more productive if they were enjoying themselves</p>
<p>Make it accessible and rewarding</p>	<p>Accessibility issues and rewards were important including: Appropriate timing of meetings Ensuring transport was available The opportunity to learn and develop skills which were relevant to what was required Provision of snacks / payment Giving children and young people the power to make decisions</p>
<p>Prove the worth of the organisation</p>	<p>Children and young people wanted to be involved in an organisation that reflected their interests and values.</p> <p>It was important that the organisations themselves were able to demonstrate that they were good at what they set out to do and that the decision the organisation made really helped and made a difference to peoples' live.</p>

The 'Blob Tree'



"This image has been used with the kind permission of Pip Wilson and Ian Long. It must not be re-produced without the permission of Pip Wilson and Ian Long." See www.pipwilson.com

The Blob Tree generated 262* responses as follows:

Position on Tree	No of responses	% of responses (nearest)
At or near the top of the tree – i.e. 'involved'	76	29%
Near the top of the tree but disgruntled	5	2%
Slipping or falling down the tree	7	3%
Mid-way up the tree and happy with the position	87	33%
Mid-way up the tree but disgruntled	16	6%
Trying to get up the tree	28	11%
Not on the tree or 'swinging' on the bottom branches – i.e. not involved – and happy with it	21	8%
Hanging on but not sure where they are going	5	2%
Not on the tree at all and unhappy with the situation / feeling excluded	17	6%



* Although the total sample was 235 children, the 5-12 year old children asked to complete the pictorial questionnaire (see above) also completed the Blob Tree, hence the higher number of total respondents

Comment and Analysis

Responses were more forthcoming and in many cases very enthusiastic when children and young people were asked to give their opinion regarding their own involvement in their organisation and to suggest what the organisation should do to facilitate this. Suggestions, as indicated above, were clearly expressed and practical. To a significant degree they have determined the overall conclusions and recommendations of the research.

The 'Blob Tree' indicated a relatively high level of satisfaction by children and young people with the roles they currently play, with 29% feeling fully and actively engaged in decision-making. Many children and young people are happy to be involved at a mid-way level or indeed are happy not to be involved at all. This serves as a reminder that the right not to participate in decision-making is equally important, and that children and young people should not be discriminated against if they do not want to take on this responsibility.

A number of the responses reinforce the fact that full participation in the life of an organisation requires that those who are being consulted are in possession of the right information on which to base decisions. Focus on local projects and initiatives may mean that children and young people and volunteers and staff, have little understanding of the wider aims and objectives of the organisation to which they belong. Whilst many may not feel the need to know more it is still important that each has the relevant information on which to base decisions that they are being asked to make, otherwise consultation processes can become meaningless and tokenistic.

Some scepticism about the use of questionnaires as a means of involving children was evident in the answers and supported by the fact that it was the 'Blob Tree' that attracted by far the highest number of responses.

Staff need to know how the outcome of consultations will be used and if and how children and young people's views will be fed into higher decision-making processes. This questionnaire is an example – do all respondents know how the information is going to be used or what sort of feedback they can expect from their input?

Recommendations

- Access to information should be increased on all issues and especially on policies and process which affect the children and young people and in which they could participate
- Information should be clear, honest and creatively presented in child and reader-friendly ways
- Use should be made of a range of creative participatory methodologies to facilitate discussion and help all children express themselves in creative and memorable ways and to make activities fun!
- Give feedback to children and young people on anything to which they have been asked to contribute or give their opinion whether this be their
- input to research or their views on the best times for meetings to be held. They should be informed about processes and outcomes and understand how their views have contributed to or been taken into account in decisions which are subsequently made
- If children and young people are being asked to do something more than their usual activities or to take on extra responsibility, consider constructive incentives such as offering opportunities for skills-training or for representing the organisation at different functions etc
- Invest in support and training in communication skills for both young people and adults within the organisation, with an emphasis on intergenerational communication and training



Conclusions and Summary of Recommendations

The G:up research has demonstrated the very real interest of children and young people in the West Midlands in being more actively engaged in decision-making within the organisations to which they belong. It reinforces the findings of other similar studies¹⁰ and leaves us in no doubt that children and young people feel they have a lot to offer and are keen to be involved.

Although the involvement of children and young people in decision making within organisations relies on their willingness to engage, it just as critically it relies on the will of the organisation, represented by its Trustees and senior executive staff, to put processes, procedures and training in place that will make this happen.

The level of participation in decision-making depends heavily on the nature of the organisation concerned. Those whose role it is to advocate for children and young peoples' issues are designed from the start to involve them in ways that organisations which have a service-delivery remit or a more general youth focus are not. There is no 'blueprint' which decrees what will work across the board – no 'one size fits all'.

The involvement of children and young people in the governance of organisations does not mean the exclusion of adults in this process. It does, however, mean that all stakeholders need to develop new ways of working, including the introduction and facilitation of constructive discussion and mutual respect across a diverse group of people and across the generations.

For the purposes of this research, governance is defined as '*Committees/bodies that through a formal constitution and / or terms of reference, make a strategic decision arrived at through a democratic process*'. The means by which organisations make decisions is often *not* democratic, and developing participatory approaches whereby children and young people can express their views is not, in itself, enough. Participation is in danger of being tokenistic if its purpose is not clear and if opinions which are sought do not meaningfully feed into decision making processes within the organisation.

There is equal danger of tokenism where individual young people sit on a board of trustees and are assumed to represent the views of all others within their particular age range. They can only be truly representative if they have access to the opinions of their peers within the membership or from amongst the population that the organisation serves.

Different organisations use various definitions of governance and each needs to develop the one that it finds most appropriate. The British Youth Council definition was the most succinct amongst the organisations that contributed to this research and would serve well as a basis on which to carry this work into its next stages:

'The process and procedures followed to make strategic organisational decisions'.

It is the process and procedures of the organisations which need further examination in the next stages of this research as well as the attitudes and practices of Board and senior staff with decision-making responsibility.

¹⁰ E.g. British Youth Council – 'Youth at the Table' – <http://byc.org.uk>



Summary of Recommendations
1. Boards, Trustees & Senior Executive Staff
The strategic decision to include children and young people in its governance processes should be clearly articulated in the organisation's corporate strategy as an objective with specific and measurable outcomes.
The organisation needs to have its own clear definition of the term 'governance' and agreed processes by which children and young people can be involved if they so choose
Structures need to be in place within the organisation which make sure that if children and young people are asked for and give their views, these are heard, responded to and where appropriate acted upon
2. Information and Communication
Information about the organisation, its purpose, values and principles and the way it works should be made available for all children. This should be shared in a range of ways including 'child-friendly' literature, discussion, games etc. so that they understand the nature of the organisation of which they are a part and are able to make informed decisions with regard to whether and how they would like to become involved.
Access to information should be increased on all issues and especially on policies and process which affect the children and young people and the ways in which they could participate
Information should be clear, honest and creatively presented in child and reader-friendly ways
Give feedback to children and young people on anything to which they have been asked to contribute and inform them about processes and outcomes so that they can understand how their views have contributed to or been taken into account in decisions which are subsequently made.
3. Participatory Approaches
Use a range of creative participatory methodologies to facilitate discussion and help all children express themselves in creative and memorable ways and to make activities fun!
If children and young people are being asked to do something more than their usual activities or to take on extra responsibility, consider constructive incentives such as offering opportunities for skills-training or for representing the organisation at different functions etc
4. Skills Training
Invest in support and training in communication skills for both young people and adults within the organisation, with an emphasis on intergenerational communication and training.
Staff and volunteers need support and training so that they can facilitate relevant discussions and processes



II. Next Steps for the Project

This is the first stage in an on-going project which aims to 'enhance quality through developing the capacity of organisations to engage children and young people in governance'.

If the research is to go beyond the general to the specific, the question which organisations need to answer is:

'How can children and young people contribute to shaping the overall (strategic) direction of the organisation?'

The range of community and voluntary organisations working with children and young people in the West Midlands, many of which are members of 'G:Up', offer fertile ground for taking the work further. Some more successfully engage young people in their governance structures than others and can offer valuable lessons to those who as yet do not.

More detailed research could be carried out by selecting one or two interested organisations from each of the representative sectors – service delivery; youth; government and advocacy in order to identify:

Identify Organisational Perspectives

- What is the knowledge and attitude of the most senior managers and trustees within the organisation to the involvement of children in the strategic decision-making of the organisation?
- What is the level of commitment of the organisation to involving children and young people in strategic decision-making?

Assess Role and complement of the Board

- Who is currently on the Board? (age, gender, ethnicity)
- What skills and competencies do they bring?
- Where there are no young people – what are the barriers to entry?
-

Review Decision-making processes

- What are the decision-making processes within the organisation at the moment?
- How do the participatory approaches further down the organisation contribute to strategic decision-making?
-

Suggest Changes

Further research with children and young people, staff, volunteers and Trustees and senior managers of specific agencies to determine:

- How the organisation might have to change to more meaningfully involve children and young people in strategic decision-making
- What the implications are of such changes
- Who needs to be on board and what needs to happen?

Make Recommendations:

- Specific recommendations to the participating organisations to help them take the work forward
- General recommendations which would be of help to others wanting to embark on this process in the future.



Methodology

The research would require a full-time individual to lead on the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the work.

Methods should be designed to involve young people in the research and assessment and give them the opportunity to undertake joint training with adults in the organisation. This should be carried out with a view to build key skills of both young people and Board and staff members.

The research could lead to a further piece of work with organisations that wanted to take the process forward and that were willing to share the lessons with others.



Case Studies

Funky Dragon

The Children and Young People's Assembly for Wales – is a peer-led organisation whose aim is to give 0-25 year olds the opportunity to get their voices heard on issues that affect them. The Management Committee is made up of

- 4 Young People under 18 years
- 4 Young People over 18 years and
- 4 Adult Representatives

Funky Dragon tries to represent as wide a range of children and young people as possible and work with decision-makers to achieve change

<http://www.funkydragon.org>

YMCA Scotland Full Board

Promotes the involvement of young people in the management of local YMCAs. To support this, training is provided at four weekend residentials throughout the year for groups of 6-12 young people. The training is designed to prepare young people to be able to take part in decision-making and on completion of the course participants are encouraged to participate in future Full Board training courses as trainers, to attend the General Assembly and to join one of the YMCA Scotland national committees or working groups

<http://www.ymcascotland.org>

YMCA England (Midlands) Youth Governance

One of the key objectives of the YMCA Midlands regional strategy is 'effective governance and leadership with an emphasis on youth. Two youth work placement students at YMCAs in the region developed a plan and recruited young people from across the 16 YMCAs. A youth Governance Group is now formed of approximately 6 young people aged 18 – 26 and meets regularly. Their most recent achievement was to help plan and deliver the Regional YMCA Annual event. They will present to Regional Chairs and CEOs Conference and some will present to more than 400 people at the National Conference.

<http://www.ymca.org.uk>

Case Studies from the Honduras

'**Y Care**' is the International funded Civic Empowerment Project of the Honduran YMCA, designed to help young people develop the understanding and skills necessary for full participation in policy making, governance and community development in Honduras. The programme helps educate and motivate young people, giving them the skills to play a full part in their country's democratic processes and help strengthen local communities. They have helped establish a National Youth Forum, involving 2000 young people, and helped to form a national youth policy which has now been passed as law due to the efforts of these young people.

<http://www.ymca.int>



YMCA Liberia

The YMCA in Liberia identifies talented/potential young people and entrusts them with leadership roles and responsibilities over programmes and projects and in representational roles on Local and National Boards. Their Youth Council is a democratic body guided by its own constitution.

School going and out of school interns are recruited to serve as interns throughout the YMCA and are assigned to various offices and departments where they learn and participate in the implementation of programmes. During holidays students participate in training and are assigned to various offices within the YMCA and at government ministries and agencies as well as private and public institutions. They also represent the organisation at national and international meetings and conferences.

<http://www.ymca.int>



Useful References

At The Table

Proposes 14 points to consider when designing programmes to promote and support youth involvement in the governance process.

<http://www.atthetable.org/resources.asp>

Charity Commission

Information regarding the responsibilities of Boards and Trustees. General information and statistics.

<http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk>

Growing up in the West Midlands

Information about the G:up Forum and access to reports. Note the report on the Growing up in the West Midlands event, Spring 2005 which also includes a section on resources and further information regarding children's and young people's policy and strategy.

<http://www.growingupinthewestmidlands.info>

Governance Hub

A range of useful information, including 'Good Governance', A Code for the Voluntary and Community Sector (June 2005). 'Let Loose in the Boardroom' summarises the experiences of four young people (under 18) who participated in the Board of the National Children's Bureau

<http://www.governancehub.org.uk>

<http://www.governancehub.org.uk/6.1-letlooseintheboardroom.asp>

National Council for Voluntary & Community Organisations

For information on Board self-assessment and recruitment of Trustees

<http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk>

National Association of Local Councils

Advice for Local Councils on creating a Youth Council <http://www.nalc.gov.uk/creatayouthcouncil/index.html>

Participation Works

A consortium project funded by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). Website has a range of information regarding youth participation in governance and includes information on The Youth Council's programme on young people and governance, 'Youth at the Table'. <http://www.participationworks.org.uk>

Members of the consortium are:

British Youth Council <http://www.byc.org.uk/yatt.html>

Children's Rights Alliance for England (CRAE), <http://www.crae.org.uk>

Carnegie Young People Initiative, <http://www.carnegie-youth.org.uk>

National Children's Bureau (NCB), <http://www.ncb.or.uk>

National Youth Agency (NYA), <http://www.nya.org.uk>

Save the Children, <http://savethechildren.org.uk>

World Alliance of YMCAs

The YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) is a world-wide Christian ecumenical, voluntary Movement for women and men with special emphasis on, and the genuine involvement of, young people.

<http://www.ymca.int>

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

<http://www.unicef.org>

