



growing up in the west midlands

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Youth Governance Toolkit

Self Assessment toolkit and grading tool, and pilot report

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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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Part 1 the self-assessment tool

So, what is the purpose of Self- Assessment?

Through the sub – group of Governance, UK Youth Parliament (UKYP) has developed this tool to introduce ways in which to begin developing the quality assurance processes and accountability within your organisation.

Whilst there are resources available for both small and larger organisations in the voluntary and community sector regarding areas of governance and organisational structures, these can be at times difficult to access. This tool aims to bring together examples and best practise from a variety of organisations, in one location - in short, a one stop shop to enable an organisation to undergo a “health check”, to offer support in actively involving young people in governance and to enable self – assessment of the levels and impact of Governance; it is about adding value, embedding quality and building capacity, by assessing effectiveness through a set of standards and principles.

Whilst Trustees take ultimate responsibility for governance of their organisations, governance is not a role for Trustees alone. It is the way that Trustees work with chief executives, staff, volunteers, service users, members and other stakeholders, to ensure that their organisation is effectively and properly run and meets the needs for which the organisation was set up. It is also therefore about how Trustees do not make decisions in isolation but how through negotiation and communication, policies and practices are put in place.

Therefore, behind good governance must lie principles including accountability, inclusivity, and openness.

The aim of this piece of work is to produce a self-assessment tool as a new model of good practice and to implement this tool as a pilot locally or regionally.

Whilst governance will be interpreted in different ways depending on the size and nature of the organisation and their particular needs and circumstances, the purpose of this pilot will focus fundamentally on clarity and communication, managing relationships and accountability and on listening, hearing and acting upon the views of stakeholders.

If you have any questions, please contact Anna Sterckx directly on: 07956 681150



Getting help with Governance:

“Governance is at the heart of our sector. Our sector's health, vitality and probity depend on it. Now, the Home Office, through its ChangeUp programme, is investing in it” (Governance Hub).

A Code of Governance for the Voluntary and Community Sector was launched in July 2005. The Code is available for free downloading from the Hub website and is available in a short and full version format.

The National Governance Hub for England can be found at www.governancehub.org.uk and is made up of a group of voluntary and community sector support organisations, working to improve the governance of voluntary and community organisations in England. The Hub stands as a gateway to enable access to comprehensive materials and guidance on governance for the voluntary and community sector.

The core group is made up of ACEVO (Association of chief executives of vol orgs), Black Training and Enterprise Group, Charity Trustee Networks, Volunteering England, National Council for Voluntary Organisations, British Association of Settlements and Social Action Centres and The National Association of Councils for Voluntary Service.

“In recent years there has been a clear demand from voluntary and community organisations to set out the main principles of governance, clarify roles and responsibilities and provide guidance in ensuring effective decision-making and accountability. In response, a group of voluntary and community sector infrastructure associations and the Charity Commission began work in 2004 on a Code of Governance for the sector.

The new Code is designed for all those involved in the governance of voluntary and community sector organisations, and particularly for trustees, and chief executives. It will also help staff, volunteers, members and service users to understand what they can expect from a well-governed organisation” (Governance Hub).



Checklist:

Please tick the box that applies to your organisation. Please note that “stakeholders” refers to young people who use your service/organisation.

		Yes	No
Governing document	Is your Governing Document “jargon busted” so that stakeholders can “access” it?		
Roles and Responsibilities	Are Trustees’ roles clearly drawn up in Terms of Reference which are clearly displayed for all stakeholders?		
Board Assessment	Does your board hold an annual review and evaluation?		
Board Relationships	Does your board have a good relationship with staff members and stakeholders?		
Young People’s Committees	Are your stakeholders involved in committees?		
Governance structure	Do you have a structure in place to include stakeholders as members of committees, which feed into the Board?		
Training	Do you have training in place for new Trustees?		
Training	Do you have a system for on going training of Trustees?		
Resources	Is your organisation aware of the Charity Commission’s publication “Hallmarks of an Effective Charity”?		
Resources	Does your organisation have a staff “handbook” or similar?		
Policy	Do you have an equal opportunities policy in place for the recruitment of Trustees?		
Policy	Do you have a clear grievance and disciplinary policy?		
Information	Are agendas and minutes for board meetings easily accessible for all stakeholders?		
Information	Are board meetings generally open to all stakeholders?		

Proforma:

Lead contact worker name:

Name of organisation:

Address of organisation:

Contact telephone number:

Email/website address:

Brief overview of work:

Please detail why this pilot interests you.

Brief description of any identified challenges or milestones connected with governance.





Direct involvement of Stakeholders:

“Hear by Right” is a set of standards for the active involvement of young people in democracy. It has been developed by the National Youth Agency and is based on a self – assessment model. “Hear by Right” offers “tried and tested standards for organisations across the statutory and voluntary sector to assess and improve practice and policy”. “The Hear by Right standards framework is based on the 7 S model of organisational change: Shared values, Strategies, Structures, Systems, Staff, Skills and Knowledge and Style of Leadership. It relies on self – assessment across three levels: emerging, established and advanced. Each level builds on the last. This ensures that children and young people’s involvement is built in and not just bolted on”. Taken from “hear by right” revised edition (2005) Bil Badham and Harry Wade. More information can be found at: www.nya.org.uk/hearbyright

Some of the principles from “Hear by Right” have been included in the assessment tool for the young people that you work with.

The tool comes with explanatory notes and suggestions.

By directly involving young people in the management of your organisation, your organisation will greatly benefit. Young people will also recognise how they can share their views and opinions, they will recognise that their voice is not only listened to but also heard and they will understand how they can gain a greater involvement whether now or in the future.

By undertaking this exercise you are demonstrating to the young people who benefit from your service that you are committed to them and that their opinions count.

Stakeholders will understand exactly what your organisation’s aims are and the intended benefits, a greater understanding will be gained and in short a new culture will be either fostered or developed upon.

The “Hear by Right” publication document detailing the 7 standards and useful resources can be purchased at £10.00 ISBN: 0 86155 320 9.



Key recommendations:

These recommendations have been written with reference to material from the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (<http://www.ncvo>) and with reference to the UKYP structure.

- To avoid tokenism it is recommended that boards are made up with a percentage of young people:

UK Youth Parliament operates with a greater number of young people serving as Trustees on the board than adults. There are 12 young democratically elected Trustees, representing every area in the UK (9 regions and 3 nations), 2 young “continuing” Trustees (to instill continuity) aged under 25 and 7 adult Trustees. Young Trustees are democratically elected by their peers – serving Members of Youth Parliament across the UK vote every 2 years for their regional Trustee. Candidate places are “open” to all young people 18 – 25 years.

NACB Youth Clubs of the United Kingdom specify that one third of its 15 board members must be under the age of 25. These board members are elected by the national group of under 15 year olds to ensure that they are in touch with the youth membership of the organisation. This grass roots approach therefore encourages broad participation from a wider group of young people in the governance process and discourages tokenism.

Motives for engagement:

What can your organisation offer a young Trustee?

To ensure successful recruitment and retaining of positions it is essential to offer the young people “something in return”, this typically involves the provision of training and experience in the group governance process. Training offered could include leadership skills, time management, strategic development and chairing meetings for example. It is important to share the wider implications for active involvement such as active citizenship, community involvement, responsibility and solid experience for CVs. With solid training the position can therefore develop a young person’s personal and social skills and significantly increase their career potential.

Young Trustees can really “make their mark” within an organisation and play a vital role in making important decisions. Organisations which draw Trustees from service recipients (young people in care or young people in temporary accommodation for example) can emphasise the importance and value of involvement through making improvements and developments to the system and service provision.

Additional roles and responsibilities:

Young Trustees can increase their involvement and skills by participating in co-chairing roles, media spokespeople and financial management for example. It is advantageous to take an audit of the existing skills base coupled with Trustees’ interests and aspirations.

Induction

A sound board induction programme ensures that new and “inexperienced” members can be brought up to speed efficiently and effectively. Trustee Peer Mentoring or “buddying up” with older, more experienced Trustees is a valuable method for expediency.

Chair person

The Chair will play an important role in ensuring that all members are treated equally and are enabled to access the same levels of involvement – ensuring “board diversity”. As it is vital for young and adult Trustees to be treated alike, adopting a principal of jargon busting and using simple, clear language in meetings, agendas and minutes will travel some distance in meeting this. This should also enable new and young Trustees to feel included and to gain understanding and ownership.





Keeping hold of your young Trustee!

Young people often lead “transient lives” in which their circumstances can change – by instilling the recommendations above, young Trustees will feel a valued member of the board, in addition formal terms of office, systems to enable replacement members to be elected and “sound” de-briefings will ensure that the experience will remain a positive one. They may well also remain as “unofficial” media spokespeople in their new occupations/ventures.

Further thought

A programme of work supported by Lloyds/ TSB Foundation has brought together representatives from the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), the Carnegie Young People Initiative (CYPI), National Youth Agency (NYA), National Council Voluntary for Youth Services (NCVYS) and the British Youth Council (BYC) to further develop ideas on young people and governance. For more information please contact Jules Mason at BYC.

The Charity Commission can be contacted directly for further details on its direct input to the legal and good practice aspects of involving young people.

Matching agencies:

There are services available to you from organisations acting as brokers between the people who want to become trustees and organisations who are looking for them. For more information please contact your local Volunteer Bureau, your local Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) or contact the National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) Trustee Bank.



Self-assessment grading tool

The following table has been designed for you to “rate” yourselves. In line with the standards in “Hear by Right” (National Youth Agency), a grading has been adopted whereby you are asked to indicate on a scale of 1 – 4 “where your organisation is at”. This will enable your organisation to clearly assess areas which need developing and enable you to champion yourselves on best practice.

The “Hear by Right” framework has been simplified for the purpose of creating this tool, therefore the three levels of emerging, established and advanced have been omitted.

The answers (the grading) will not be published in any format; neither will you be asked to return it. This tool is for the sole use of your organisation and to enable you to identify key areas.

This tool is also intended to enable your organisation to plan priority developments – please view it as a means to gaining an MOT!

Research from the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (website: ncvo-vol.org.uk) has been instrumental in creating this resource.



Grading system for the table below

1: In place and effective **2:** In place, but needs improving **3:** Currently being established **4:** Not in place

Grading and mapping levels of Governance	1	2	3	4	Please detail evidence of meeting the indicator	What do young people say about how this indicator is being met?
1.1 Clear terms of reference and job descriptions are in place for all volunteers, staff members and management. Stakeholders are aware of these						
1.2 Management celebrates the active involvement of young people in all levels of governance						
1.3 Leadership of specific projects and appropriate services involves both young people (stakeholders and volunteers) and adults						
1.4 Trustee and management meetings are held at times which young people can access. Meetings are usually “open” to all and stakeholders are made aware that they are happening						
1.5 Agendas and Minutes from management meetings are communicated and circulated to stakeholders in an accessible way – for example “jargon free”						
1.6 A monitoring and review process is in place for all Trustees at least on an annual basis						
1.7 All new Trustees undergo a thorough induction process						
1.8 Young people are at the heart of what we do. We have a fixed percentage of young Trustees on our board.						
1.9 Young Trustees are democratically elected by young stakeholders/membership committees (or similar)						
2.0 All stakeholders are aware that young Trustees sit on the board and all are aware of how and when new Trustees are elected/recruited						
2.1 Young Trustees are elected through an “open” process and the positions are open to all young people aged 18+						
2.2 Stakeholders actively play a vital role in governance – we have management committees or similar in place and a clear structure to enable information to be fed up to Trustees and back to Stakeholders						
2.3 Our organisation has a clear policy on grievance procedures and all including stakeholders are aware of this policy						
2.4 Our organisation has conflict resolution systems in place						

and are aware of the correct protocol should the need arise					
2.5 The board holds a self – assessment each year to evaluate strengths and weaknesses					
2.6 Our board has a good relationship with the Chief Executive and other staff members (management and delivery levels)					
2.7 Our organisation keeps a record of “case studies” – comments from young Trustees about why they wanted to become involved					
2.7 Our organisation keeps a record of past young Trustees with a detailed evaluation of their experience and information on the skills they have developed					
2.8 Our Young Trustees see themselves as positive role models. They integrate themselves on all levels of the operation of our organisation.					
2.9 Our organisation has a clear system and procedure in place for young people’s development and involvement in governance – from member and interest group committees and forums, through to volunteering and young Trustee appointments					
3.0 Many young people who are service-users understand what “governance” is and how it affects the service that they receive					
3.1 Our board has clarity of vision around responsibilities for board members, managers and staff on all decision making responsibilities from media contact, to staff dismissal. This ensures simplicity, flexibility and transparency.					
3.2 Our organisation actively involves young people from a variety of backgrounds in governance – which includes young people from ethnic minorities and young people with disabilities					
3.3 Our board carries out an annual evaluation of the work of the Chief Executive					
3.4 A policy is in place to enable self – evaluation of all board members					
3.5 There is sufficient opportunity for the board to hear about minority opinions before recommendations are presented to committees or the board as a whole for consideration					
3.6 Our stakeholders are encouraged to share their opinions on the board; its actions, decisions and policies					
3.7 All board members are aware of the organisation’s fundraising strategy					
3.8 The board currently contains a sufficient range of expertise and skills base to make it an effective governing body					
3.9 The board focuses its attention on long-term significant policy matters as opposed to short-term administrative matters					
4.0 All board members are knowledgeable about every area of the organisation's current activities and services					



Phase 2: self-assessment pilots

It will not be the purpose of this report to analyse the findings of either pilot with reference to the “effectiveness” of levels of governance or stakeholders’ direct involvement. This report stands to share background information on the two very different organisations involved in undertaking pilots along with any comments collected. A full explanation will also be given detailing the process for engagement in this phase of the Governance project.

The two organisations involved in undertaking the pilot were, Festival Housing and UK Youth Parliament.

Background

The objectives as laid out in Governance work plan were, ‘to enhance quality through developing the capacity of organisations to engage key stakeholders (children and young people) in governance’.

The piloting phase became more problematical than initially expected; agencies who had indicated that they were willing to run pilots either proved not to be available or were very slow to respond. In addition, organisations were not initially fully aware of the necessary processes of engagement and the outcomes of the project – the expectations of the levels of engagement.

Festival Housing became involved from the outset and initial telephone conversations were followed up with a face to face meeting at Festival Housing in Malvern Link. The ethos behind both Growing Up in the West Midlands and the Governance pilot was shared along with the proposed process for engagement.

Unfortunately the second organisation which had agreed to run a pilot (NCVYS – National Council for Voluntary Youth Services) had to “pull out” of the process as the organisation had not yet reached the stage whereby a pilot could be carried out effectively. However, it has been agreed that once the necessary infrastructures are in place (proposed for 2007) our contact at NCVYS will approach young stakeholders to work on the available self – assessment tool kit.

As a result of this, the opportunity to run a pilot was again opened up to organisations and UK Youth Parliament expressed a keen interest to engage.

Discussions were mainly held with UK Youth Parliament via telephone and email “meetings”, followed by face to face meetings with both the Co - Chair of the Board of Trustees (a young person) and the Chief Executive.

Organisational Details



Festival Housing

www.festivalhousing.org

Our contact at Festival Housing is Jonathan Greenwood.

Jonathan Greenwood can be contacted at: JGreenwood@festivalhousing.org





History

Elgar Housing Association and Spa Housing Association were formed in the mid 1990's following the transfer of the local authority housing stock from Malvern Hills District Council and Wychavon District Council respectively.

Festival Housing Group was established on 31st March 2002 following the merger of the two well established Worcestershire based organisations; Partnership Housing Group and Spa Housing Group. Partnership Housing Group was based in Malvern and included Elgar Housing Association as the significant part of the Group. Spa Housing Group was based in Droitwich and had developed out of Spa Housing Association. Festival Housing is based in Malvern Link and is a voluntary organisation.

Aims

To provide high quality, low cost affordable housing and housing related services.

Activities

Festival Housing Group includes as members Elgar Housing Association, Spa Housing Association, Partnership Care Services, Property Care and Spa Homes. Festival owns and manages 8,000 homes in Worcestershire, Herefordshire and the West Midlands. It provides affordable housing, market rent housing, student accommodation, residential care, care for the elderly and a property maintenance service.

The Festival Group:

The new Festival Housing Group is a significant housing organisation in the West Midlands. Festival owns and manages 8,000 properties and provides a wide range of other housing, property and care services.

Festival has been established as a group structure with the specific purpose of being able to provide efficient and cost effective services to a range of member organisations.

At the present time, the following organisations are part of Festival Housing Group:

- Festival Housing
- Elgar Housing Association
- Spa Housing Association
- Spa Homes
- Partnership Care Services
- Property Care Partnership





UK Youth Parliament

www.ukyp.org.uk

Our contacts at UK Youth Parliament are Chris Bennetts and Andy Hamflett. Andy Hamflett can be contacted at: andy.hamflett@ukyouthparliament.org.uk Chris Bennetts can be contacted at: chris.bennetts@ukyouthparliament.org.uk

History

The idea for a UK Youth Parliament (UKYP) came from young people themselves. At a young people's conference, "Heirs to the Millennium" in Coventry in 1996, young people from youth councils were invited to share and bring forward issues to form a manifesto to share with the Government, with a view to opening up dialogue and bringing about change and action. The young people at the conference shared that as there was "no way to hold the Government to account" they would be sharing the same issues in 10 years time. All young people present called for a UK Youth Parliament to address this.

A report was launched in the House of Commons in early 1997.

The NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) sponsored the development of the proposal and a steering group committee, which was led by Andrew Rowe MP and chaired by James Moody, a young person. This steering committee operated between October 1998 and December 2000, to oversee the establishment of the organisation and its first "Sitting".

The UKYP was launched at the House of Commons in July 1999, and held its first Sitting in February 2001 in London.

There are currently over 500 elected Members of Youth Parliament (MYPs) and Deputy MYPs who represent both young men and women, including young people from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, and with physical and learning disabilities.

Aims:

The UK Youth Parliament aims to give the young people of the UK between the ages of 11 and 18 a voice, which will be heard and listened to by local and national government, providers of services for young people and other agencies who have an interest in the views and needs of young people.

Each Local Education Authority (LEA) represents a UKYP constituency and 90% of the LEAs across England are currently represented on the UKYP (representing approximately 90% of young people in England). In Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland the UKYP works in partnership with the respective national youth agencies to ensure that the young people of those nations are represented on UKYP – the Scottish Youth Parliament, Funky Dragon – Wales and the Northern Ireland Youth Forum.



UKYP is all about change. Once elected, MYPs work to establish the burning local, regional and national issues, and then tackle them through targeted campaigns. Recent campaigns have led to the establishment of a youth board to monitor the media's portrayal of young people (in partnership with Ofcom and the Press Complaints Commission) and working with the Metropolitan

Police Service to alter their Standard Operating Procedure on Stop and Search to ensure young people are treated with respect on the streets.

Information on national campaigns can be found on the UKYP website.





Regionally

The West Midlands Youth Parliament (which consists of all 14 LEA) meets approximately every six weeks and has recently held their first Sitting following local elections.



They have identified seven key priorities and one campaign to take forward this year. These issues have been identified following consultation with young people in their constituencies.

Regionally this year election figures increased by 5 548 votes;

the total number of voters region wide was 39 138.

Nationally, it is anticipated that over 750 young people will stand for election in 2007 and over 250,000 young people will cast their vote (figures currently being compiled).

Feedback from the organisations

Festival Housing

Jonathan from Festival Housing shared that “there are several areas where the organisation has not even started to look at. I also feel that we are at a bit of a disadvantage because we are part of a much larger organisation and the governance is for the whole organisation rather than at the detailed level”.

He personally shared at the first face to face meeting that he welcomed the ethos of the document and of the Governance work as a whole and that in the future; Festival Housing would like to use this document again as a “health progress check”. Jonathan also shared that it has been an “interesting exercise”.

Assurances have been given that the purpose of the pilot is to ascertain whether this stands as a useful exercise and whether it is something which is navigable. Jonathan has confirmed this in both his statement and in the evidence which has been submitted.

UK Youth Parliament

Chris shared that “having completed the papers for UKYP, I can vouch for the efficacy of the toolkit in relation to evaluating policies around governance. This is particularly important for an organisation like UK Youth Parliament, as we seek to ensure that our projects and policies are led and owned by young people; to this end, the self-assessment toolkit was very welcome indeed”.

Chris added “on behalf of the trustees, all of whom have responded very positively to the frameworks set out in the toolkit, I would like to thank you for your hard work in producing this document – it is certainly one which we shall consider adopting as a Board for evaluation of our governance structures”.

Personal correspondence since the statement was submitted has confirmed that the content of the self – assessment is being discussed as part of the Governance review process and explicit reference will be made to it as a formal agenda item at the next Board of Trustees meeting.



Recommendations and suggestions

Following research and evaluations with both organisations, unless young people are already directly involved in leading on policy, this document could stand as a barrier to engagement; it could be “off putting”. To counter this on a “base level” it is suggested that additional briefing notes are published. To ensure maximum benefit, it is suggested that organisations who are representative in best practise are recognised and championed. Discussion is welcomed around the creation of a recognisable “standards badge”; Investment in Children and Young People” for example. This would not only champion good practise, but would also encourage organisations to adopt transparent standards of improvement.

It is also suggested that organisations from the voluntary sector are invited to a celebration conference, to encourage and promote best practise, to share possible milestones and solutions and to offer master classes to offer guidance and advice.