

CHILDREN

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A Newsletter from the Office of the Children's Commissioner





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Editorial



Dr John Angus, Children's Commissioner

Participation in decision-making by children and young people benefits us all. For children and young people it reinforces their sense of being valued and listened to. In decisions that are about children and young people as individuals it increases their sense of having some control over their lives. Their participation in deciding how the institutions that are important in their lives are run leads to a stronger sense of being part of the collective.

Involving children in decisions increases their sense of responsibility for and power over their lives, for children getting what psychologists call a sense of agency in their view of themselves and their lives. It is an important aspect of children developing the resiliency we all need to cope with what life throws at us.

We need to stop viewing children and young people as unfinished, irresponsible or lacking in rational judgement. Children as citizens in their own right have a right to be consulted and to have their views given weight. Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child sets this out:

State Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

For this purpose the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

Children's participation in decision-making is also good for adults. In some cases the opinions of children are an important element in what the decision is to be and how it is received by all of those affected. This is often the case in matters before the Family Court. In other situations children have information that is new and adds to the quality of the decisions. For example, children may be in the best position to give advice about services they use a lot, such as playground equipment or swimming pools. Sometimes children are in a better position than many adults to contribute to debates in a clear-sighted way, with less 'baggage' and self-interest.

Participation in decision-making for children and young people is society's succession planning in action. It equips children and young people with tangible skills they can use throughout their life for example leadership, teamwork, problem solving, planning, financial management, communication skills and time management. Youth participation means actively involving young people in all areas of our society – the family, school, workplace, place of worship, social group and wider community (Ministry of Youth Development, New Zealand, 2003, p.6).

It is in all of our interests to promote children's involvement in the decisions that affect their lives as individuals and as an important group of citizens in our society.

I have identified six priorities for my office in 2009–2010. This edition of *Children* focuses on priority six which aims to promote children's participation in decision-making and their access to review and grievance processes. The work my office is undertaking in this area includes involving children and young people in care in our work on the quality of the services they receive and reviewing the effectiveness for children and young people of the new complaints systems within Child, Youth and Family services.



Participating in formal decision-making

The Children's Commissioner encourages children and young people to participate in decision-making that affects them. Children and young people have a right to have their say and to be listened to. This can include participating in formal decision-making in schools, workplaces, local government and central government.

In schools students get a voice via representation on the Board of Trustees or a student council. In workplaces there are unions and/or processes in place to discuss issues with employers. At a local government level there are youth councils that feed into the decision making process, or people can write to the Mayor and/or councillors.

At a central government level members of the public can contact a Member of Parliament or sometimes be involved in making submissions on potential law changes. In New Zealand, members of central government are very accessible to the public. They are often out and about in their individual electorates and can be contacted at their electorate office.



Children and young people can also write to the Prime Minister to make their views known, or invite him to talk to them.



Artwork by Thor Mathieson

To contact a Member of Parliament or the Prime Minister you can find information at:

<http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/AboutParl/GetInvolved/Contact/2/9/d/00PlibHvYrSayContact1-Contact-an-MP.htm>

Members of Parliament can also be contacted through their individual websites.

Parliament's website also has information on making a submission, which is what you do if you have something to say about a bill or other item before a select committee. For more information go to:

<http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/AboutParl/GetInvolved/Submission/a/9/8/00CLOOCHvYrSaySubmission1-How-to-make-a-submission.htm>



Children in care

The Children's Commissioner has a statutory responsibility to monitor and assess functions in relation to the Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1989. Specifically, sections 13(1)(b) and (c) of the Children's Commissioner Act 2003, state that the Commissioner must monitor and assess the policies and practices of Child, Youth and Family and encourage the development of policies and services that are designed to promote the welfare of children and young persons.

As part of this monitoring function the Office is undertaking two projects focusing on children and young people who are in the custody and/or guardianship of the Chief Executive of Child, Youth and Family. These projects are Children in Care and the Child, Youth and Family Generic Complaints Process.

The Children's Commissioner aims to encourage and influence the development of policies and services that are designed to promote the welfare of children and young persons, within Child, Youth and Family.

These projects will develop information and provide children and young people with an opportunity to have a voice in decision-making.

The purpose of the Children in Care project is to focus on the quality of care being provided to children and young people in the custody and/or guardianship of the Chief Executive of Child, Youth and Family and to report, with recommendations, on areas where improvements could be made.

The Children in Care project includes children and young people for whom the Chief Executive is guardian or has custody who are living at home, with kin, with non-kin, or in residential placements, including young people who are in custody on remand or serving a youth justice sentence and have a care and protection history. This project excludes Youth Justice clients who do not have a care and protection history.

An advisory group will be established and will include a representative of the New Zealand Family and Foster Care Federation, an academic, a young person who has been in care, Maori and Pacific Island representatives and other community stakeholders.

The project will include an examination of policy, a review of the literature and an exploration of practice. This will include focus group interviews with caregivers, social workers, and children's lawyers, and analysis of Child, Youth and Family records and calls to the Office's Children's Rights Line.

The views of children and young people in care will be sought through their participation in focus groups, as well as via the young person on the advisory group. These views will provide crucial insight into the experiences and needs of a group of children and young people whose voice is often under represented. The Children's Commissioner strongly advocates for children and young people's views to be respected and incorporated into solutions.



Artwork by Lola Mathieson

Child, Youth and Family Generic Complaints Process

The objective of this project is to monitor and assess the Child, Youth and Family generic complaints policy and practices available to children and young people who have involvement with Child, Youth and Family. This project will include focus group interviews with children and young people who have contact with Child, Youth and Family.

The findings will be examined in the context of international findings and examples of effective complaints procedures for children and young people who come into contact with agencies equivalent to Child, Youth and Family.

Recommendations will then be made to Child, Youth and Family about any policy and practice changes that might be needed to ensure that New Zealand children and young people have access to rights information and accessible, effective, child-sensitive complaints processes.

A final report will be included in the Children in Care project final report.



Young people in decision-making – the Link effect

By William Leith and Rebecca Blaikie

“Youth are not just problems to be solved, they are problem solvers themselves.” – Rebecca Hart from Link.

“It is their lives, by taking over and doing everything for them, then they possibly are not going to take responsibility. If you let them do it themselves, they will have a bit of an understanding of what went into it and is needed to keep up with it. Learn by doing.” – Oliver Patterson from Link.



The Link crew

These quotes from members of the Wellington Boys' and Girls' Institute's (BGI) youth participatory group Link, offer two powerful reasons why young people need to be involved and valued in decision-making. Recently we talked to Daniel Friar, Robbie Nicol, Oliver Patterson, Marco Lararevic and Rebecca Hart from Link. This 20-strong group of young people meet regularly to tackle issues facing young people in the city. They initiate projects and host events to actively respond to these issues.

When it comes to including young people in decision-making of any sort, the response is too often a token effort, or no effort at all. This may be due to lots of things, but the challenge for young people lies in their ability to positively influence outcomes. Effective participation lies in how the sharing of decision-making power occurs throughout the process and is expressed by the extent to which young people are heard and their opinions valued in the decision making process.

In 2008, Link surveyed 700 Wellington youth to establish what their issues were, later publishing these findings in a report which attracted attention from Wellington City Council and other agencies. This survey has been the foundation for Link's many projects. The low profile of support services among youth was a theme that came across strongly, for example. Link developed a poster based on social-networking site Bebo to connect young people to these services. Its success, they say, is “because young people designed it, it was much more successful and young people have responded well”.

Link says one of its philosophies that separates it from other ways of involving young people in decision-making is it puts the 'art' back into 'participation'. Their diaries illustrate this; they're laden with pictures and felt-tip notes. “Just because we might be having a bit more fun, doesn't mean we're any less productive,” Rebecca Hart says. This extends into the projects Link undertakes, keeping both themselves and their target audience engaged and interested.

Their distinctive style is frustrating for some, according to the group, because of the fixed mindset about involving youth. They say the need to involve youth in a more authentic way is important to get the best of what they have to offer. Link does this by being active initiators, controlling the entire process of their projects and by being connected to adults who are comfortable with power sharing around decisions and process.

“When you think about it, politicians are adults but the population is not 100 percent adults. So we need to get our voice in there so we are fairly represented,” Robbie Nicol says.

Youth participation groups can have different roles and provide influence on different levels but the theme of advocacy runs through most groups involving children and young people.

Link members, alongside their coordinator, spoke about some of the skills needed to ensure young people really are involved and engaged in decision-making.

They said it was important that the person who worked with young people, actually had to like young people, have lots of passion and enthusiasm (as this rubs off on young people), be non-judgemental, know when to have fun, be comfortable sharing power, and possess a keen sense of humour. The group also identified that those working with young people had to have the ability to maintain good boundaries; they don't have to "be a young person" or be their best friend.

These skills sat alongside the obvious skills, such as being organised, facilitation, project planning and management, good networks in the community, problem solving and the ability to assist with sourcing funding.

Comments were made on the bigger picture around young people participating in decision-making. When working with young people it is important to incorporate and nurture the skills of the individuals and work from people's strengths. "When there are opportunities to contribute to people's long-term career paths, the process of decision-making is a great opportunity to connect young people with things that benefit their lives," Link Youth Worker Rod Baxter says.



Artwork by Louie B



Artwork by Lola Mathieson

Improving the community has benefits for Link's members too. Their individual talents are fostered, whether it's design, writing or talking, and their weaknesses are supported. The group suggested expressing ideas, time management, public speaking, problem solving and reflection are skills they've learnt. In addition, the experience gained as part of decision-making is useful and relevant in their school, home lives and employment.

Link has met the challenge of youth participation in decision-making with youth-initiated action. An approach which fosters the unique skills and thinking of young people has seen the group thrive. Link is an example of old mindsets broken down to get the best out of youth and through their work, its members have helped improve their community, as well as themselves.

A good example of youth led research can be found at www.bgi.org.nz

There are also tips, tools, research and books at the back of this newsletter to assist in creating space for young people to participate in decision-making.



New Zealand's youth; the leaders of today

By Rebecca Hart from Link

I have always been interested in making a contribution to my community. Through my early teen years I was frustrated that I had so many opinions, but nowhere to express them. I was under the misconception, as many young people are, that only adults can be the change makers in society; that you have to be at least 30 to have anyone take your ideas seriously. I believed that one day in the future I would get my time to speak up and be heard, but right now I was meant to be a moody and rebellious 15 year old.

The most common image of young people aged 14–25 portrayed in the media is not a positive one. Media focuses mostly on drug and alcohol abuse, teen pregnancy, youth gangs and increasing school dropout rates. It's no wonder that so many young people aren't aware that they have a voice when it is rarely mentioned that they are anything more than problems to be solved.

Occasionally I hear older people talking about how today's youth are the leaders of tomorrow. The truth is that quite a hefty chunk of young people are already leaders within their schools, communities and among their peers. Young people are making a difference, tutoring younger children, protecting their environment, standing up for animal rights, starting their own businesses, and helping out in a multitude of other areas. Young people who actively participate in projects big or small develop skills, acquire more positive attitudes, and gain confidence in themselves and their abilities.

About two years ago I joined a youth participation group in Wellington called Link. When I first joined I was incredibly shy, I had hardly any self-confidence and public speaking was my number one fear. Through being involved in Link, I have really come out of my shell. Getting to express my views, plan events and feel that I have made a real contribution to my community has built me up into a confident young leader. A real example of the difference that youth participation has made to my life is the two workshops I held along with three other New Zealanders in Melbourne last month. I was up in front of a large group of young people and youth workers talking about my experiences with youth participation. That is something I would have had nightmares about a couple of years ago.



Artwork by Louie B

If you bring up the subject of youth participation with a group of young people most of them will have no idea what you are on about. I have a hard time trying to explain to my own friends and family what youth participation is. Many young people don't realise that it is their right to have a say in things that concern them. There are so many benefits to youth participation, that it seems crazy that more young people are not involved.

This has to change. Young people need to know that they mean something to society and that they can play an active role. There needs to be more information readily available to young people about where and how they can contribute. Also their needs to be more publicity about the amazing things young New Zealanders are accomplishing. The government needs to supply funding and support to enable organisations to make this happen. Young people have a valuable contribution to make to society, they just need the means to do so.



Youth Councils – a member's perspective

By Young People's Reference Group and Central Hawke's Bay youth council member Ben Carpenter

A youth council is a venue for the young people of a certain area to contribute, discuss, debate and participate in decisions that affect them. For example, some adults think they know what young people are thinking and what they want, for example, a skate bowl. Some councils spend money on things that they as adults think that young people would like, when in fact, it is not what young people need or want. A youth council can be the vital link between the youth in the community and the council.

Youth councils are important because they give young people a real voice – a chance for them to put across their views and ideas about the young people in the community. Equally important is for youth to have a council that listens to them and that is open to their suggestions.

The purpose of the youth council is to encourage young people to speak up, contribute and participate in decision-making on issues that will affect them and their friends at local government level. It also provides young people with an opportunity to develop leadership skills and learn more about their community, their town and local government. Being on a youth council teaches youth to be proactive, leadership skills, team building and an understanding and appreciation of their own community. Most importantly, it teaches them how to care about other people.

In Central Hawke's Bay, anyone aged between 12–24 years of age can apply. After advertisements from the council at schools, in the newspapers and on the local radio station asking for new youth group members, you can apply. Within your application you have to say why you want to be in the council, what you can bring/add to the community, etc. All the applicants are invited to a meeting with the youth council coordinator. This is an opportunity to introduce and speak about yourself, give reasons why you want to be on the youth council and talk about the qualities and strengths that you would bring. After that meeting the group is given time to reflect on what they have heard and then the group is asked to vote for their top 15 executive. Meetings are held once a month, or more regularly if needed to organise events.



Artwork by Alysha Dougherty

It is for youth who would like to be involved in their communities positively so that they can make a difference and help to make decisions that affect youth. The youth council acts as an advocate for young people aged between 12 and 24. It can also promote ideas and events simply to make life easier and more fun for young people in the community, for example, a fun day which is hosted by a youth council at a local sports ground for all to enjoy with bouncy castles, fire engines, pony rides, tug-o-war, egg and spoon races – good old fashioned games that don't cost a lot of money.

The wider community benefits from youth councils because they get to hear what youth are saying about their community. They get the benefit of a proactive group that is working and advocating for other young people, so youth are seen in a positive light. From my perspective, we are responsible for youth and we want to take care of our community. We are not only in the youth council for youth, but also for the elderly and families; together we can make a difference and make changes! Our council seeks the views of children and young people by holding surveys, talking to young people



on the streets and at events, talking to children at their schools, by text, social networking eg. Facebook, and forums.



Artwork by Pheobe Gibbie

By setting good examples, we hope to encourage others to make positive changes and get actively involved in events within the community so that they are not involved in drugs and gangs, etc. The wider community benefits from having busy young people who will be encouraging others so the "negative" things such as graffiti, alcohol abuse, and the like should lessen, because hopefully the young people will have places to go to and new events to participate in.

I could see the youth council influence when we were invited to a half-day hui on Central Hawke's Bay Youth, where many adults from many agencies got together to talk about youth issues in our district. We can have our say and we can plan and organise events for families and children, for example, we have planned a major fun day for the community in December which should have some impact because we are having what has been suggested by youth in the community. I am also hoping that as the chair of this youth council that I will be able to attend some of the Central Hawke's Bay District Council meetings so that I can report directly to the councillors, rather than have this information come through our adult coordinator.

There can be barriers to the effectiveness of youth councils if the adults running the council and influencing decisions don't listen to the youth voice. Adult councils thinking "oh, it's just those youth.....what do they really know? What experience have they had?" and just paying lip service to the youth council don't really understand the wider or underlying issues of youth. Sometimes older people in authority are set in their ways and think youth should be seen and not heard.

Another barrier is that some strong youth councillors will leave after a short term and go to university elsewhere and then the youth council has to build up the knowledge and confidence again. Also some youth may not be so committed to the youth council after being voted on.

Youth council members should be good role models – not all the high achievers – just good people who care about their community and who would like to help build a better community for everyone.



Rise E Tu: A case of youth participation in public policy development

By Kirsten Smith, Co-facilitator, Rise E Tu

In a public policy context, considerable energy is directed towards children and young people, yet they are seldom involved in policy development. They tend to be seen either as vulnerable, trouble, or in clichéd terms as the future of society.

A youth participation approach to public policy views young people as competent contributors and active participants in the policy process.

The experience of Rise E Tu, a youth advisory group to the Ministry of Health, shows us that young people can be active participants in public policy development with great success on a number of levels; promoting positive youth development, enhancing resiliency, creating active citizens, improving policy relevance, and improving youth/adult relationships and public perceptions of government.

In October 2006 the Ministry of Health contracted New Zealand Aotearoa Adolescent Health and Development (NZAAHD) to establish and facilitate a youth advisory group that would provide the Ministry of Health with youth input on a range of Healthy Eating Healthy Action (HEHA) initiatives for young people.

Initially contracted for three meetings over an eight-month period, Rise E Tu was extended to a total of 10 meetings over three years. A manager from the Ministry of Health explained:

"Once we'd done [the first meetings] we realised how useful it was, and decided that it was really important that we involved them in all the next stages of the roll-out of the plan... when we saw the merits of doing it, we decided that it was something we needed to build into business as usual."

The success of Rise E Tu

Benefits of youth participation are becoming better known, especially with regard to the individual development of young people involved in projects. For Rise E Tu members the individual development has been huge – from healthier lifestyles and developing strong friendships to increasing confidence, acquiring knowledge and skills, building networks, and influencing study choices and career paths.



The Rise E Tu team – a youth advisory group to the Ministry of Health

However Rise E Tu has also been a success beyond the individual development of young people in the group. Some of these successes include:

Improving relevance – better outcomes for the Ministry

Rise E Tu helped shape policy around HEHA initiatives including the Food and Beverage Classification System and the Food and Nutrition Guidelines for Schools. They provided advice on terminology, promotion, issues to be aware of, and creating supportive environments. Given a policy 'problem', they defined the issues from their perspectives, identified and analysed options, and made recommendations.

The involvement of Rise E Tu provided the Ministry's HEHA team with greater certainty of the relevance of their work to the young people it was aimed at. It brought different and often highly creative perspectives. It also enabled the Ministry of Health to take action on, and give effect to the *Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa*. The strategy provides a policy platform for public sector agencies when developing policy advice and initiatives relating to young people. Rise E Tu is one of the first examples of its use for public policy development at a national level.

Creating active citizens

Through their involvement in HEHA policy development, this group of young people's political efficacy has grown. They have confidence in their own ability to understand



and participate in politics. They have learned that politics can be interesting and that they can have influence. They have had the opportunity to view adults in government as friends, allies and mentors, and the opportunity to view the 'system' as something they can be part of.

A literature review on political participation suggests that early experiences form a strong starting point for adult interaction with politics. Young people who experience being citizens of the community are more likely to continue to be active citizens in their adulthood (Catt, 2005).

Enhancing youth/adult relationships

Rise E Tu has also been a powerful learning experience for the adults exposed to the group. Adults have been able to experience young people as competent, creative and useful contributors to policy decisions. Youth workers know this, but the reality for many other adults is quite different. Their views of young people are strongly influenced by deficit-based research or sensational news media portrayals of young people "in crisis".

Supporting youth-led community development and health promotion

Rise E Tu was brought together to provide advice to the Ministry of Health at a national level, however we quickly realised that these young people also had a passion for community development at a local level. Each group member took information and motivation from the meetings back to their communities. They spoke to their families and friends, gave community presentations, developed Health Councils, ran events, undertook research, and led major school/community development projects.



Artwork by Lola Mathieson

Why it worked

Rise E Tu members are proud to be part of what they see as a highly successful group. When asked what made it a success they said; diverse members, good facilitators, fun and creative activities, positive atmosphere, good communication, feeling valued and respected, well organised meetings, celebrating our achievements, having a chance to show our skills, and real opportunities to put their learning into practice. From an adult facilitator's perspective, a number of other factors contributed to success.

Staff from the Ministry of Health recognised the need for youth participation expertise, so developed a partnership with NZAAHD and NZAAHD's sub-contractors. A core group of six adults worked with the group – two Ministry staff, two NZAAHD staff and two external facilitators. Each respected the others' contributions.

These adults built relationships with the group members, mostly during meetings, and one person had a specific role around supporting the group between meetings. The young people knew we cared about them and that we were interested in them beyond what they could offer to HEHA. They grew to trust and respect us, as we trusted and respected them.

The recruitment process for group members was designed to contribute to the success of the group. Four carefully worded questions were aimed at selecting young people who had an interest in youth health and who had some form of community support. A thorough selection process ensured a good mix of age, gender, and ethnicity, socio-cultural and geographical factors.

Meetings were held every three or four months, always over a two-day period. Two days allowed time for five key parts to each meeting; reconnecting, 'working' for the Ministry, learning new skills, having fun and ending. Prior to each meeting the six adults met a number of times for planning, and again to debrief after each meeting. Facilitators discussed the work plan of the group, as well as the needs of individual group members.

During meetings, efforts were made to ensure group members understood the policy environment. Rise E Tu's 'funnel model' of policy development was devised to explain consultation processes as they relate to decision-making. This involved a graphic representation of policy

development that involved pouring lots of different kinds of 'gloop' through a funnel to show the many aspects of the process. The group also met with the Minister of Health.



Artwork by Lola Mathieson

A commitment to professional development was made to group members through the Terms of Reference. A NZAAHD staff member actively managed their development. They had the opportunity to attend conferences and workshops, and learn skills they later used to facilitate workshops. They were also matched with mentors in their communities who provided further opportunities for development.

Efforts were made to ensure group members understood meaningful participation. They learnt about youth participation models and were encouraged to speak up if they thought participation standards were slipping. The group was built upon a clear and formal commitment to good participation through its Terms of Reference and the allocation of resources.

Group members were also 'protected' to some degree by the adults involved. From the start it was clear that this group's role was HEHA advice and that this was their area of interest. Offers of other work for the group were screened to maintain the integrity of the group. Adults who were involved in one-off consultation sessions were given a crash course in youth participation before meeting with the group.

Rise E Tu enabled government to move beyond a consumerist approach that focuses on the needs of policy-makers (Gray, 2002). They were able to move beyond simply asking what young people thought of policy, to a view of young people as competent citizens, able to contribute meaningfully to issues that affect their lives.

References

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Artwork by Lola Mathieson



What's Up believes children's views relevant, insightful and powerful

0800WHATSUP is a free, telephone professional counselling service for anyone in Aotearoa New Zealand aged between five and 18 years. It offers a national toll-free line, from midday to midnight, seven days a week.

The primary focus for What's Up is on seven to 12 year olds who are under-served by mental health services and whose concerns are not addressed by other professional telephone counselling services.



What's Up emphasises that callers can ring in with any issue, however small. The service focuses on early intervention and prevention. Callers can phone up without having to feel that their reason for calling isn't "serious enough".

Equally important to callers is the fact that What's Up is anonymous and confidential.

What's Up is staffed by professional, paid counsellors. It has a philosophy of "child-centred practice". This includes:

- Listening to and respecting what children have to say
- Focusing on their needs
- Seeing the world from the caller's perspective
- Knowing that the child is the primary client
- Seeing the child as an individual, as well as a member of a class, family or other group
- Respecting the child.

Empowering the child is central to the What's Up counselling practice. This involves developing the child's personal competence and resilience, enabling him/her to think through options available and influence his/her world in a positive manner.

What's Up believes children have relevant, insightful and powerful opinions. Children's participation in decision making, with the help of advocacy by What's Up staff, is one of the service's important roles. On average, 1422 calls are made to 0800WHATSUP each day. The average age of callers is 13 years and 40 percent are 12 years or younger. Boys and girls call at similar rates.

What's Up collates caller information in an anonymous and respectful way. This allows children to convey what they see as priorities in their lives. In 2008 statistics

from What's Up callers showed that children's priorities in order of importance were: peers, bullying, partners, family, pregnancy, development, grief, physical health, mental health, and sexual activity.

If provided with the opportunity, children and young people will contribute thoughtful views on issues, especially on issues that affect them. Pre and post the child discipline referendum, What's Up carried out another key piece of listening and promoting the voices and opinions of children. A total of 6378 votes were captured by the phone survey. The average age of those who responded to the call was 12.05 years old. More males than females took part in the survey. Callers were asked, "So you think that adults who are taken to court for hitting a child should be let off if they say there were disciplining the child?" Of those who participated in the survey, 50.94 responded, "I don't think they should be let off", 39.35 percent responded, "I think they should be let off" and, 9.71 percent were unsure. The margin of error was one percent.

Once callers had completed the call they were invited to share any further thoughts. The seven most common points recorded were: parents should not be allowed to hit children (52 percent), parents should be allowed to hit children (38.2 percent), depends on the degree of hitting (29.1 percent), alternatives to hitting should be used (20.0 percent), depends of the degree of misbehaviour (14.5 percent), discipline may not be the real motive for hitting (14.5 percent), hitting is necessary for learning (14.5 percent). Some callers made more than one response and therefore, percentages may add up to more than 100 percent.

Those in position of decision-making need to incorporate the views of all those they represent, not just those who have the ability to vote. It is clear from the information collected by organisations such as What's Up that children's voices should be included and given due weight regarding planning or legislation that affects their lives. They have valid and considered opinions to contribute.

Statistics and information in this article were sourced from G. Taylor's [The 2009 Child Discipline Referendum – What Children and Young people think about parent's right to hit children: Concluding analysis of completed survey data](#), 2009. The Kids Help Foundation Trust.



Children's Day turns 10

Children's Day turns 10 in 2010 and the Children's Commissioner hopes as many people as possible will attend a Children's Day event, or plan a special birthday celebration event in their areas.

Children's Day has evolved and grown over the past 10 years and is now an integral part of our communities in Aotearoa New Zealand.

New Zealand's first Children's Commissioner Dr Ian Hassall came up with the concept in 1991, with the vision that children must be celebrated, nurtured and treasured by all. He joined forces with the Rotary Club of Wellington that still remains involved in Children's Day with a representative on the National Steering Group.

New Zealand's second Children's Commissioner Laurie O'Reilly nurtured the idea of Children's Day, with Roger McClay, the Children's Commissioner at the time, being present at its birth on Sunday 29 October 2000, the first Children's Day national celebration.

At age seven, Children's Day's date of celebration was changed to the first Sunday in March. This was to make

use of New Zealand's warmer summer weather. The change was successful and Children's Day continues to be held on this day each year.

The National Steering Group, made up of government and non-government organisations, decides which of the four key messages it will adopt as a theme each year. In 2010 it is "praise and encouragement". What better way is there to help children grow and develop than by giving encouragement to them to explore and experience new ideas and activities and praise their achievements no matter how small?



Join the Children's Day children Ben, Kate, Rua, Jess and Patch the dog and celebrate the 10th anniversary of children's day on 7 March 2010.

For more information visit www.childrencyday.org.nz

Reports, conferences, workshops, resources and funding

Books

Lansdown, G. (1995). *Taking part: Children's participation in decision making*. London, Institute of Public Policy Research.

Ungar, M. (2009). *We Generation: Raising Socially Responsible Kids*. Toronto, ON: McClelland and Stewart.

Ungar, M. (2007). *Too safe for their own good*. Toronto, ON: McClelland and Stewart.

Ungar, M. (2007). *Playing at being Bad: The hidden resilience of troubled teens* Toronto, ON: McClelland and Stewart.

Hart, R. (1992). *Children's participation: From tokenism to citizenship*. Innocenti Essays no. 4. Florence: Italy: UNICEF International Child Development Centre.

Hart, R. (1997). *Children's Participation: The theory and practice of involving Young Citizens In Community Development And Environmental Care* for UNICEF. London, Earthscan/Unicef.

Martin, L. (2002). *The invisible table: Perspectives on youth and youth work in New Zealand*. Palmerston North: Dunmore Press.

Golombek, S. (Ed) (2002). *What works in youth participation: Case studies from around the world*. Baltimore, International Youth Foundation (IYF). Available from: http://www.iyfnet.org/uploads/what_works_in_youth_par.pdf

Ridge, T. (2002). *Childhood Poverty and Social Exclusion: From a Child's Perspective. Studies in Poverty, Inequality and Social Exclusion*. Great Britain, The Policy Press.



Journal articles

Checkoway, B (2005, Fall). Youth participation as social justice. *Community Youth Development Journal*. 15-17.

Checkoway, B, Allison, T, & Montoya, C (2005). Youth participation in public policy at the municipal level. *Children and Youth Services Review* 2, 1149-1162.

Checkoway, B, Richards-Schuster, K, Abdullah, S, Aragon, M, Facio, E, Figueroa, L, Reddy, E, Welsh, M, & White, A (2003). Young people as competent citizens. *Community Development Journal*, 38(4), 298-309.

Stafford, A, Laybourne, A, Hill, M (2003). 'Having a Say': Children and young people talk about consultation. *Children and Society*. 17, 361-373.

Baxter, R, & Haxton, E (2007). "Powerful participation". In A. Wierenga. (Ed.). Are we there yet? *National Youth Affairs Conference Proceedings: Peer reviewed papers*. Melbourne: Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YaCvic). Available from <http://www.yacvic.org.au/policy/items/2009/01/259389-upload-00001.pdf>.

Resources

For more information, books and research visit http://www.unicef.org/adolescence/cypguide/index_child_adult.html

Aotearoa Youth Voices toolkit

The Aotearoa Youth Voices (AYV) toolkit is a practical guide filled with ideas for creating positive change for young people.

The toolkit can help you:

- get your voice to decision-makers
- work with others
- get your opinion out there
- organise a group
- understand how Parliament and Government works.

The toolkit is made up of different parts: making it happen, influencing decision-makers, and working with the media.

The toolkit is designed so that you can use the information that applies to you and to help you identify what you want to achieve. You can dip in and out of it, depending on where you are at with your project.

For more information and to access the toolkits visit <http://www.myd.govt.nz/Publications/ministryofyouthdevelopmentcommunications/ministryofyouthdevelopmentcommunic.aspx> Or email info@myd.govt.nz phone 04 916 3300.

Youth council/committee evaluation template

This is a two-page template for an evaluation form to use with your youth council or committee. Adult committees could use it too, to find out how the group is going and how well the meetings are functioning.

Feel free to modify it to suit your group. <http://www.yapa.org.au/youth/facts/committeetemplate.pdf>

Source: YAPA Youth Action Policy Association, Sydney, Australia www.yapa.org.au

Whole Child Approach

The whole child approach is designed to ensure that the development of policy and services takes account of the needs and rights of children. This is achieved by requiring, where possible, that the views of children are incorporated into policy-making and service development and that policies and services contribute to the healthy development and wellbeing of all children.

The guide has three main parts:

Part one provides practical information on how to apply the whole child approach.

Part two provides a rationale for the whole child approach by summarising and discussing the concepts that underpin it.

Part three provides examples of how the whole child approach is being applied both nationally and internationally.

<http://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/planning-strategy/agenda-children-whole-child/>



Circle of Courage

This site is for those interested in essential strength-based strategies for working with youth in family, school, residential programmes or community.

<http://www.circleofcouragenz.org/>

Keepin' It Real

A guide to developing youth participation in policy development, services, and programmes. This is revised edition of the 2003 version. *Keepin' It Real* describes how adults can contribute to the positive development of young people by creating opportunities for them to influence, inform, shape, design and contribute to an activity or project.

For a print copy of *Keepin' it Real* email

mydinfo@myd.govt.nz

For more information email info@myd.govt.nz
phone 04 916 3300

Children in Care and their Rights – Children and Young People's Charters

For information on a charter for children and young people in care visit <http://www.cyf.govt.nz/info-for-kids/index.html>

- A full copy of the Charter for Children under 12s can be found at <http://www.cyf.govt.nz/documents/about-us/publications/charter-for-children-and-young-people-under-12.pdf>
- A full copy of the Charter for Young People for young people over 12 can be found at <http://www.cyf.govt.nz/documents/about-us/publications/charter-for-children-and-young-people-over-12.pdf>

Marking the 20th anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Third Committee welcomed by consensus the Guidelines on the Alternative Care of Children.

For more information visit

<http://www.crin.org/bcn/>

Tools, tips, training

Keepin' it real workshop

The Keepin' it Real workshop delivers a one-day, introductory practical training on youth participation.

The workshop is useful for a range of individuals who work with young people, including local government policy developers, funders, clinicians, service managers, youth and community development workers.

The workshops provide interactive training that uses a variety of different activities to focus on:

- what youth participation is
- the benefits of effective youth participation
- blocks and barriers to youth participation, and identifying solutions for overcoming these
- examining some successful examples of youth participation
- outlining key ethical, safety and quality issues for effective youth participation.

Participants develop an action plan for applying youth participation to their own work throughout the course of the training workshop.

<http://www.myd.govt.nz/Youthparticipation/keepinitrealworkshop.asp>

For more information email info@myd.govt.nz
phone 04 916 3300

Practical Youth Participation. Involving young people in alcohol related initiatives

ALAC is offering one-day 'Practical Youth Participation' workshops in 2010. These workshops aim to provide those working to reduce alcohol-related harm with some ideas and skills to effectively engage with young people.

These are interactive workshops requiring a high level of participation from those attending. The workshops are valuable to anyone working to reduce youth alcohol-related harm and may include the likes of health promoters, safer community councils, police, Maori service providers, youth workers, road safety coordinators etc.

The workshops provide a solid grounding in the theory and skills required to effectively engage young people when planning projects.

The workshop will answer several questions:

- "What is Youth Participation?" – theories and models
- "Why involve young people in alcohol related initiatives?"



- "How can young people be involved?" – levels of involvement
- "What can I do when I get back to work?" – practical planning.

ALAC will be providing a limited number of these workshops around New Zealand. If you think you might be interested, please contact:

Rod Baxter, rod@bgi.org.nz 04 385 9549

Participation Works

Participation Works is a consortium of six national children and young people's agencies that enables organisations to effectively involve children and young people in the development, delivery and evaluation of services that affect their lives.

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

Funding

Working Together More Fund – He Pūtea Mahi Tahī

Representatives of funders Wayne Francis Charitable Trust, J R McKenzie Trust, Todd Foundation and The Tindall Foundation came together in 2009 to discuss how they could best help non-government organisations to manage through the recession and into the years ahead. They heard community sector leaders say that working together more was one way to prepare for, and continue to be effective through, the economic downturn.

The four funders commissioned research and consultation around collaboration, and found that:

- community groups work together a lot already
- successful collaboration takes time, and is not always easy
- it is unlikely to work if forced
- it can add significant value to groups' effectiveness and efficiency.

In October 2009, the Working Together More Fund - He Pūtea Mahi Tahī was launched. The goal of the fund is to assist community groups interested in working together more closely to do so, in order to make a greater difference for the people and communities they serve. The fund can provide seeding money and expertise.

Conferences

Mind the Gap: Sixth International Conference on Youth Work and Youth Studies, UK, September 2010

Mind the Gap: The Sixth International Conference on Youth Work and Youth Studies is being hosted by the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, Scotland, from 7 to 9 September 2010. The conference offers the opportunity to participate in conversations on youth work and youth studies that contribute to research, theory and practice on work with young people. The conference title, Mind the Gap, relates to many aspects of the theme connecting research, theory and practice. Anyone who has used the rail network in the UK will be familiar with the computerised voice that warns travellers to be mindful of the hazards associated with stepping out on the journey ahead. The title therefore, is also suggested as a metaphor for the journeys of us all in seeking to improve our understanding of young people and to articulate and share practices in working with them. For further information, contact Karen McDairmant, Professional Development Unit, University of Strathclyde, email: karen.mcdairmant@strath.ac.uk; website: <http://www.strath.ac.uk/pdu/mg2010>

Building Bridges National Community Mental Health and Addictions Conference, 14 –16 April 2010, Wellington

'Evolving Communities Beyond Services'
Website: www.buildingbridges.co.nz

Professional Supervision Conference 30 April – 1 May 2010

Pre-conference workshops 29 April 2010, Mangere, Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand Supervision Conference 2010 – "Core Threads, Different Patterns". This conference builds on the successful 2004 "Weaving together the strands of supervision" Conference and will be of value to professionals from many disciplines.

Website: www.conference.education.auckland.ac.nz

International Sociological Association (ISA) World Congress of Sociology (Includes sociology of youth stream), Sweden, 11–17 July 2010.

Priority would be given to Sociology of Youth RC34 members. Therefore, if you want to represent or attend, please join the International Sociological Association and the sociology of youth section as full member as soon as possible.

<http://www.rc34youth.org/>

<http://www.isa-sociology.org/congress2010/>



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