

TUSLA

Literature Review - Involvement of children and young people in commissioning

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1 Introduction

This paper was developed for TUSLA by the Institute of Public Care at Oxford Brookes University and focuses on examples of children and young people participating in the commissioning process (including procurement). The purpose of the literature review is to identify examples of how organisations can ensure appropriate engagement of children and young people at all stages of the commissioning cycle so that they get their voices heard in the commissioning process.

The findings of the literature review are intended to support the development of an additional toolkit to complement the existing TUSLA Child and Youth Participation Toolkit (2016).

This report summarises what is known so far from the UK and wider international research and existing practice relating to the involvement of children and young people in both decision making and in wider commissioning activity.

2 Methodology

IPC considered twenty five examples of practice guides and service evaluations. These included:

- Practice guides on commissioning services for young people
- Practice guides and toolkits on involving children and young people in commissioning
- Evaluations and research into the impact of children and young people's participation
- Evaluation of the achievements and implications of implementing a new commissioning model
- Fulfilled Lives, Supportive Communities Commissioning Framework Guidance and Good Practice (Welsh Government)

The literature review has primarily focused on examples of practice in involving children and young people in decision making and in service commissioning as there is limited research relating to the impact of the involvement of young people's involvement on service delivery and outcomes for children and young people. Where possible, references have been made to identified benefits and impact of initiatives at a local level.

The reported is divided into four sections as follows:

3 Participation

3.1 Principles

- 3.1.1 This review has identified that the identification of guiding principles is a key feature of the guides and toolkits for the involvement of children and young people in decision making and commissioning. The key principle being that

all activity should be based on a partnership between commissioners, providers and children/young people.

Examples of guiding principles include:

- Young people are co-designers of services to meet their needs and co-producers of services designed to achieve better outcomes¹.
- Participation priorities are set at strategic and operational level to ensure participation within the commissioning cycle².
- Involvement is key to achieving change, improving policy and services, to ensuring best outcomes for children and young people³.
- It requires listening culture among staff, clarity, flexibility, adequate resources and skills development for staff⁴.
- Principles of participation⁵ such as:
 - understand and believe in the importance of giving children a say in decisions that affect them; and make it clear that you appreciate their individual views;
 - only ask children about issues that are meaningful to them;
 - have the attitude “I can learn from children”
- In Lancashire the Children and Young People’s Charter includes thirteen principles for consulting with children and young people as set out below^{6,7}:
 - Children and young people should have the right to be continuously involved in consultation and development of the work from start to finish.
 - A sufficient amount of money should be put aside specifically for consultation and involvement of children and young people, whilst also ensuring that there is enough money available for other services.
 - Adults should take into account what children and young people want, not just ask us and then ignore our ideas. Explain what's possible and what isn't, right from the start.

¹ National Youth Agency and Local Government Association ‘A practical guide to commissioning services for young people - Part 10: Involving young people in commissioning’
<https://www.cardiff.gov.uk/ENG/resident/Schools-and-learning/Services-for-young-people/Commissioning-Youth-Service/Documents/10.%20Involving%20Young%20People%20in%20Commissioning.pdf>

² National Youth Agency and Local Government Association ‘A practical guide to commissioning services for young people - Part 10: Involving young people in commissioning’

³ Lancashire Children and Young People’s Trust ‘How to effectively involve Children and Young People in Commissioning’ www.lancashirechildrenstrust.org.uk/web/viewdoc.aspx?id=113678

⁴ Commissioner for Children, Tasmania ‘Involving children in decision making – quick practical guide’
<https://www.childcomm.tas.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Guide-to-making-decisions-booklet.pdf>

⁵ Ministry of Social Development, New Zealand ‘Involving Children - A guide to engaging children in decision-making’ <https://www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/archive/2003-involving-children.pdf>

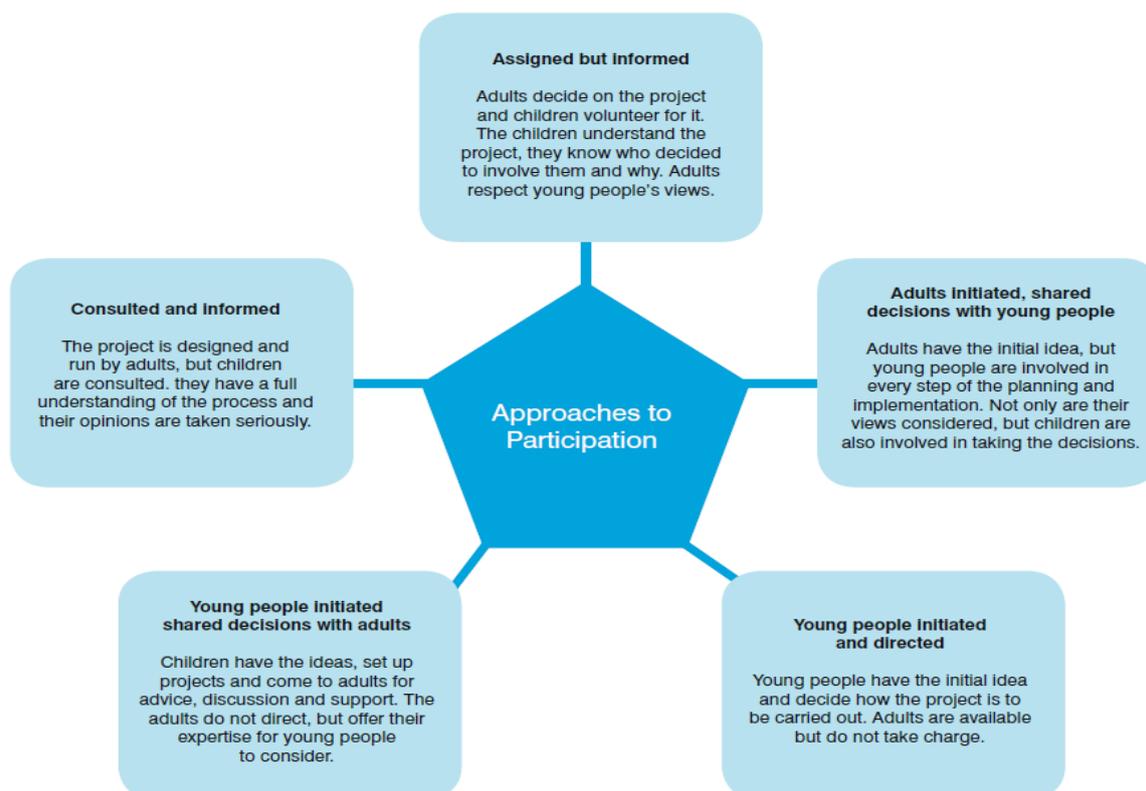
⁶ Lancashire Children and Young People’s Trust ‘How to effectively involve Children and Young People in Commissioning’

⁷ Lancashire Children’s Trust: Children and Young People’s Charter
www.lancashirechildrenstrust.org.uk/web/viewdoc.aspx?id=95564

- Tell us what's going on - children and young people should have feedback on what they have said and what is going to be done next.
- Have a variety of ways to involve children and young people, such as questionnaires, discussions, websites, arts activities or texting.
- Children and young people need to be consulted about subjects and issues which they are experienced and interested in.
- Consultation work should be straightforward and explained clearly to the children and young people involved.
- Children and young people should be treated equally with respect, whatever their race, gender, disability, sexuality, age or life experience.
- Adults should not make biased judgements about young people, or our attitudes, based on our appearance.
- Adults should be approachable and should use their body language in a friendly and positive way.
- When you are talking to us, make sure we understand - don't shout and don't patronise us.
- Confidentiality needs to be maintained when consulting children and young people on sensitive issues.
- There should be an independent person for children and young people to complain to in case the service doesn't listen to us.

3.1.2 The Lancashire guide on effectively involving children and young people in commissioning⁸ draws on the model of participation developed by Treseder (1997) who has adapted the Harts Ladder of Participation, as illustrated in the diagram below. Their aspiration is to avoid tokenism, decoration and manipulation of children and young people. The guide states that “It is vital that you consider the diagram before involving children and young people in any commissioning process. Different stages of the commissioning cycle may see you adopting different approaches which, in most cases, is perfectly reasonable as long as we avoid tokenism and manipulation. The key is to be open and honest with children and young people about what they can influence, what they can share decisions about and what they can direct”.

⁸ Lancashire Children and Young People’s Trust ‘How to effectively involve Children and Young People in Commissioning’



3.1.3 The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH)⁹ has developed a guide on involving children and young people in specialised commissioning that adopts the 'Degrees of Participation' model that has been developed by the Office of Children's Commissioner based on the degrees of participation presented by Treseder (1997). It has three levels: Inform, Consult and Involve. RCPCH have included an additional level of Represent "to highlight the aspiration to have children and young people themselves representing the needs, wishes and views of their peers at strategic forums". The guide is focused on designing and anchoring participatory approaches within children and young people's day to day lived experiences, working in partnership with local projects, hospitals, parents and carers.

3.2 Engaging children and young people

3.2.1 The National Youth Agency (NYA) and the British Youth Council (BYC)¹⁰ surveyed statutory and voluntary sector organisations in England between November 2003 and January 2004, in order to establish a systematic picture of the levels and ways in which they involve children and young people up to 19 in public decision-making. In assessing the promotion of participation it was identified that organisations in which children and young people believed to exercise a great deal of influence on decision making consistently more

⁹ RCPCH 'Involving children and young people in specialised commissioning guidance' (2017) <https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/resources/involving-children-young-people-specialised-commissioning>

¹⁰ Department for Education and Skills 'Mapping Children and Young People's Participation in England' (2004) <https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/5226/1/RR584.pdf>

likely to report existence of range of support mechanisms such as: written policies or strategies; monitoring or formal evaluation; identification of senior responsible individual; training and support for children and young people; incentives and/or recognition for children and young people involved in decision making.

3.2.2 The Lancashire guide on effectively involving children and young people in commissioning¹¹ identifies the following reasons for involving children and young people in the commissioning process:

- To uphold children's rights
- To fulfil legal responsibilities
- To improve services
- To promote children's protection
- To enhance democratic processes
- To empower and enhance self esteem
- To enhance children's skills
- To improve decision making¹²

3.2.3 Before commencing activity associated with the commissioning cycle it is important to be clear about the purpose, and implications of, involving children and young people in commissioning as it may not always be appropriate depending on the issues and child/young person's maturity. A resource developed in New Zealand to support the engagement of children in decision making identifies some key questions to ask (and answer) to help determine whether it is appropriate to involve children.¹³

- Why do you want children to participate?
- What will they gain from it?
- What will the policy or service gain?
- What will the organisation gain?
- Is the organisation committed to effective participation?
- Where in decision making will children be involved?
- Are there enough time and resources to do the participation exercise properly?
- Can the organisation provide an appropriate facilitator, support for and feedback to young people?
- Does the facilitator have the right level of skills?
- How will the effectiveness of the participation process be measured?

¹¹ Lancashire Children and Young People's Trust 'How to effectively involve Children and Young People in Commissioning'

¹² Lancashire Children and Young People's Trust 'How to effectively involve Children and Young People in Commissioning'

¹³ Ministry of Social Development, New Zealand 'Involving Children - A guide to engaging children in decision-making'

- 3.2.4 It is important to involve children and young people from a variety of backgrounds and diverse groups including approaches to engage 'hard to reach' groups. Linking with existing child and young people forums, voluntary and community groups should be considered as they are in a good position to support children and young people to have a voice and participate in the commissioning process as they will have established relationships and trust with the young people and are likely to have the expertise required to support participation¹⁴. Groups of young people most commonly mentioned as being less likely to access participation activities: communication difficulties; disabilities; not currently in school or education; behavioural problems; traveller communities; primary school age; young carers; LAC; lower income family backgrounds; rural areas; young parents¹⁵.
- 3.2.5 Engaging in an environment children and young people are used to being in with people they feel comfortable being around and using activities that are grounded in their day-to-day lived experience are helpful approaches¹⁶.
- 3.2.6 A study the Institute of Public Policy Research (Up For It: Getting Young People Involved in Local Government) that explored the challenges that local authorities may face when seeking to involve young people in local governance and potential solutions¹⁷ identified four stages of involving children and young people, the challenges and possible solutions as set out below:

¹⁴ Participation Works 'How to involve children and young people in commissioning' <https://search3.openobjects.com/mediamanager/manchester/fsd/files/commissioningypguide.pdf>

¹⁵ Young Minds 'Your Voices Amplified' (2018) <https://youngminds.org.uk/media/2152/amplified-insights-survey-2018.pdf>

¹⁶ RCPCH 'Involving children and young people in specialised commissioning guidance' (2017) <https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/resources/involving-children-young-people-specialised-commissioning>

¹⁷ JRF Findings 'Involving young people in local authority decision-making' <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/involving-young-people-local-authority-decision-making>

Stage	Challenges	Possible solutions
Creating the right environment (The right structures, systems and research in place in the early stages)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Making young people central ■ Getting resources in place ■ Developing officers' and members' skills in working with young people ■ Working in partnership for young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Identify leading members and officers across the Council to be champions ■ Involve young people as equal partners in existing activities e.g strategic partnerships
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Being flexible to young people's needs and agendas ■ Choosing the right issue ■ Choosing the right method ■ Reaching a wide range of young people ■ Developing young people's skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Youth forums and councils ■ Focus groups ■ Conferences ■ Peer based research
Doing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Motivating young people to get involved ■ Valuing young people's involvement ■ Being clear about how young people will benefit from participating in initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Accreditation
Follow-up (Important to follow through on a commitment to young people by ensuring the involvement exercises have an impact on services and practice)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Making sure there is an impact on decisions ■ Giving feedback to young people ■ Learning from successes and mistakes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Evaluation planned from the start and findings used to improve future practice ■ Long term projects that have ongoing feedback mechanisms to enable young people who are involved to get a sense of progress and their contribution

3.2.7 Acknowledging the barriers to children's participation and identified actions to overcome these is an important first step when planning engagement and participation activities. The New Zealand Ministry of Social Development guide to engaging children in decision making¹⁸ identifies the following barriers to children and young people's involvement:

- thinking that children lack the experience to participate;
- not valuing children's views;
- a lack of resources and time;
- thinking that it's not appropriate to involve children in decision-making;
- not knowing how to contact children;
- concerns about safety and ethics;
- thinking that children don't want to participate;
- language and cultural barriers;
- not knowing how to involve children and how to discuss issues with them;
- thinking that the processes are too complex and time-consuming; and
- financial constraints.

3.2.8 The Participation Works guide on how to involve children and young people in commissioning¹⁹ provides the following checklist for overcoming barriers for adults in promoting participation in commissioning:

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

3.2.9 The Care Inspectorate Scotland practice guide on involving children and young people in improving children's services²⁰ includes observations from young people about the barriers to their becoming involved. These are captured below.

¹⁸ Ministry of Social Development, New Zealand 'Involving Children - A guide to engaging children in decision-making'

¹⁹ Participation Works 'How to involve children and young people in commissioning'

²⁰ Care inspectorate Scotland 'Practice Guide Involving children and young people in improving children's services' (2012) <http://hub.careinspectorate.com/media/274540/practiceguideinvolvingchildrenandyp.pdf>

The Care Inspectorate Scotland practice guide on involving children and young people in improving children's services

- Don't talk at young people; trust them and give them space to explore the issues as they see them.
- If an approach is working don't just keep it to yourself; share and celebrate the good work.
- Don't assume that you are reaching the right people by involving those that are readily accessible. Make sure you involve the most relevant children and young people, including the most vulnerable and or the most challenging.
- Don't oversell what you are doing; challenge yourself, and allow others to challenge you to do more.
- Be clear what young people can expect from you and what you expect from them.
- Don't start the process without being able to fully support young people's involvement; commit to making it effective and real.
- Don't begin without seeking the young people's views about what they want to achieve, and without identifying your aspirations about the work; hold to the vision and values that inspired the work.
- Don't continue if you have to compromise core principles; make sure these are shared and articulated from the start.
- Don't overlook the need to feedback to young people; they have a right to know what you have done with the information they have given you and whether it has made a difference.

3.2.10 The National Youth Agency and Local Government Association have developed an initiative called 'Hear by Right'²¹ to help guide organisations in how they engage young people in participation activities. The guide enables common language to be shared for participation and provides a common framework for mapping and planning young people's involvement across services. "Hear by Right is a tried and tested participation standards framework for organisations to assess and improve participation policy and practice and includes a nationally accredited award scheme". The guide provides a framework for mapping and planning young people's involvement in commissioning young people's services in that it helps local authorities to decide how best to set participation priorities at strategic and operational level to ensure young people's participation within the commissioning cycle.

3.2.11 The Commissioner for Children and the Tasmanian Early Years Foundation have collaborated to produce the participation toolkit for children under the age of 12 years to ensure that best practices are in place when children are involved in decision making²². The objectives of the participation guidelines are to provide resources for organisations, both government and non-government, to ensure that there is:

²¹ National Youth Agency and Local Government Association 'A practical guide to commissioning services for young people - Part 10: Involving young people in commissioning'

²² Commissioner for Children, Tasmania 'Involving children in decision making – quick practical guide'

- support for children’s participation in the planning and development of their communities;
- support for children’s participation in decision making that may impact them;
- encouraging organisations to seek participation of children and young people; and
- provide organisations with a toolkit of best practice models.

The guidelines are based on four key actions with associated activities that actively engage children and young people. The detail of the activities and associated materials can be found by accessing the source materials referenced below.

Action	Steps to be taken	Activities
1. Consider whether to involve children in the work of the organisation	This stage is concerned with identifying what children’s participation would contribute to the organisation; the extent of their involvement and planning for their involvement	Decision making process
2. Plan how participation is to happen	This stage is concerned with getting prepared and identifying who needs to be involved	Activity 1: Butcher paper pictures Activity 2: Word Tree Activity 3: Balloon (Action Planning)
3. Making it happen	This stage is concerned with establishing child friendly practice and ensuring good communication	Activity 1: The Run Around Game Activity 2: The Decision Tree Activity 3: Diamond Ranking
4. Evaluating the process	This stage is concerned with identifying the benefits of evaluation, developing evaluation approaches that involve children, approaches to feedback and making sure outcomes and expectations are delivered.	Activity 1: Evaluation Targets Activity 2: Space and Simple Ranking Activity 3: Jars of Importance Activity 4: Stones in the Pond

3.2.12 Keeping children involved throughout the commissioning process is also important and the Ministry of Social Development, New Zealand²³ has identified a number of ways in which children can be encouraged and supported to continue involvement:

- let them know they are making a real and positive difference;
- emphasise the benefits they are going through the experience;
- maintain momentum;
- work out in advance what you will do if participants decide to pull out during the participation process.

3.2.13 Other initiatives that can support continued improvement: sending regular updates about what's happening; sending personalised "thank you" letters at key stages of the process; getting their feedback on how they think the process is going and whether (and how) it can be improved.

3.2.14 An evaluation of the scale and effectiveness of participation activities in the 'Young Minds Your Voices' programme (an NHS England funded programme to support and build participation in every part of children and young people's mental health services) in February 2018²⁴ identified the following features in respect of the participation and involvement of children and young people in the programme:

- Of all the participation opportunities commonly offered by mental health services 'taking part in evaluating the service' was the activity in which the largest number of young people said they had taken part.
- Other participation activities young people most reported taking part in:
 - Helping design how a service is designed and decorated
 - Helping develop leaflets, websites or communications about mental health aimed at young people
 - Helping to deliver mental health staff training
- Fewer respondents had participated in other types of opportunities including:
 - Meeting with senior leaders of the service to share their views directly
 - Delivering staff training
 - Helping to write a policy for the service

²³ Ministry of Social Development, New Zealand 'Involving Children - A guide to engaging children in decision-making'

²⁴ Young Minds 'Your Voices Amplified' (2018)

Practice Resource - The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH): Guide on involving children and young people in specialised commissioning²⁵

The guide identifies the key ingredients for successful participation that have been identified by young people themselves:

- “We want more choice and flexibility” – a range of options to participate that young people can choose from according to their level of wellness (for example online forums and feedback that they can do in their own time such as occasions when they are not well enough to go out or get out of bed; attending events and meeting people face-to-face when they are feeling well).
- “We want to meet, talk and share experiences with other children and young people” such as peer support and social activities that provide opportunities to meet with other young people of the same age/condition. The benefits associated with these approaches include: exploring experiences in a safe environment, with others who can relate to what the young person is going through, before sharing with decision makers; a chance to develop confidence - as well as understanding experiences of others; feeling less alone and being more supported e.g a chance to make friends and share things can't share with others; helping bring young people together for a purpose.
- “We want to feel like we are making a difference and be involved not just consulted” – this requires involvement in activities where young people feel they can help others who may be having similar experiences. It also involves a two way dialogue about ideas and not just receiving feedback on what has happened “move from consultation to models of co-production and active collaboration”.
- “Come and talk to us on wards, in waiting rooms and at groups we already attend” – examples provided include: peer to peer consultation on wards; linking with play specialists and activity workers, participation officers, public and patient involvement leads, volunteers in hospitals
- “Working with parents and carers” – whilst young children tend to be more keen initially to have their parents/cares involved in helping to communicate experiences, older young people prefer to speak on their own behalf

The guide includes the following resources:

- Young people informed overview of methods for engagement – pros and cons
- Ideas for starting discussions with service users – activities

Ideas for setting the agenda and sharing knowledge with children and young people – includes resources and case studies

3.3 Rewards and incentives

- 3.3.1 A commitment to ensuring rewards and incentives to children and young people involved in decision making and commissioning processes is identified in almost all practice guides and toolkits, with the reimbursement of out of pocket expenses (e.g. travel and refreshments) being a minimum reimbursement. Written guides and policies have been developed in some organisations such as the Lancashire Children and Young People's Trust who have produced 'How to effectively involve children and young people in

²⁵ RCPCH ' Involving children and young people in specialised commissioning guidance' (2017)

commissioning: guide to ensure consistent, thoughtful, legal and ethical approach to recognising the contribution children and young people make²⁶.

3.3.2 Examples of wider rewards and incentives include:

- Certificates to acknowledge contribution
- Individual records of achievement maintained by the provider of the involvement of young people²⁷
- Financial rewards

3.3.3 In Buckinghamshire²⁸ children and young people are given one of the following options (travel expenses, refreshments etc paid in addition):

- Using time they have volunteered to contribute towards a voluntary award;
- Reward of £25 for a half day/ £50 for full day (including payment for preparation time)
- If young people are in receipt of benefits then a voucher to the equivalent value

²⁶ Lancashire Children and Young People's Trust 'How to effectively involve Children and Young People in Commissioning'

²⁷ Bath and North East Somerset Council 'A Framework for involving service users/ young people in commissioning arrangements 2015/16)

http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/commissing_framework_2015_-2016.pdf

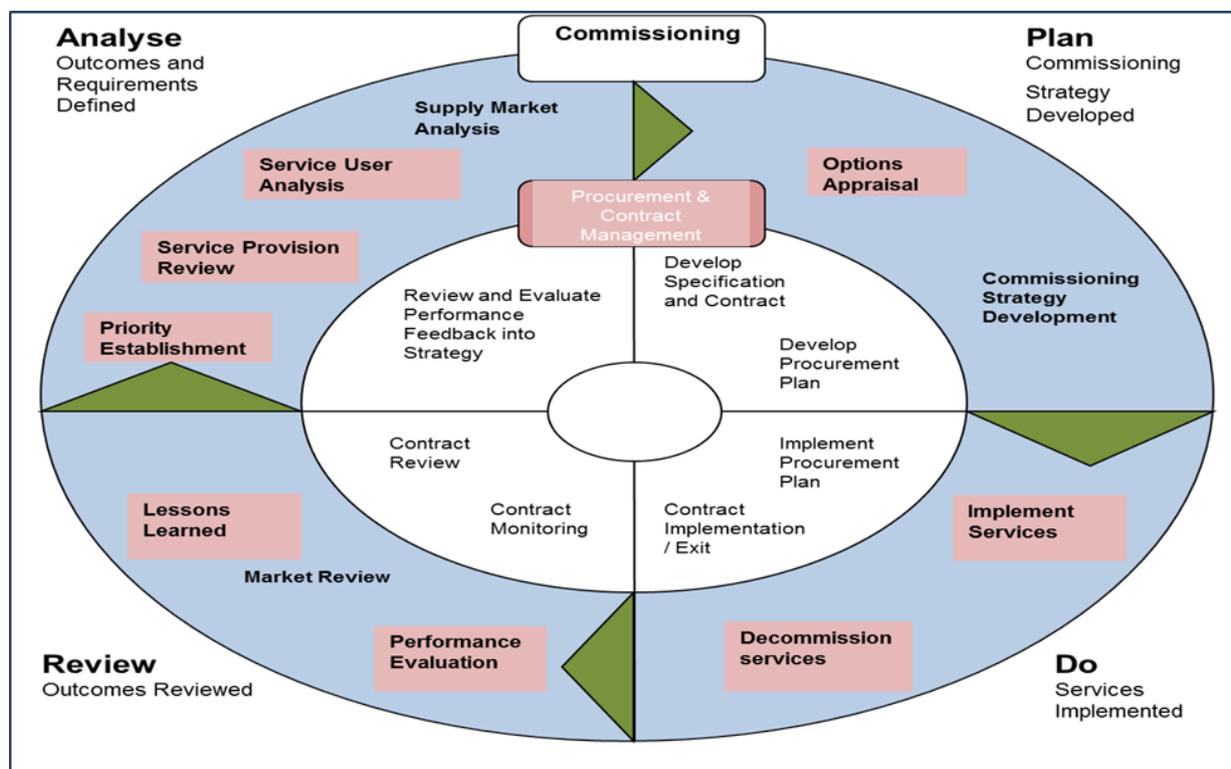
²⁸ Buckinghamshire Children and Young People's Trust 'Involving Children and Young People In Commissioning Guidance' (2009)

www.buckinghamshirepartnership.gov.uk/media/1027049/yp_inter_guide.pdf

4 Commissioning Cycle

4.1 The cycle as a whole

4.1.1 The TUSLA Commissioning Cycle (shown below) describes a range of activities and illustrates the relationship between them.



Six out of the nine commissioning guides and toolkits that were reviewed have adopted the ‘Understand/Analyse – Plan – Do (Deliver) – Review’ model²⁹³⁰³¹³²³³³⁴. One local authority has adopted a modified model which involves the following stages ‘Understand – Plan – Secure – Deliver and Review’³⁵. Two further organisations had adopted a more detailed model that comprises the following stages ‘Assessing Needs – Identifying Resources

²⁹ National Youth Agency and Local Government Association ‘A practical guide to commissioning services for young people - Part 10: Involving young people in commissioning’

³⁰ National Youth Agency and Local Government Association ‘A practical guide to commissioning services for young people - Part 10: Involving young people in commissioning’

³¹ Lancashire Children and Young People’s Trust ‘How to effectively involve Children and Young People in Commissioning’

³² Cambridgeshire County Council ‘A Guide to Involving Children and Young People in Commissioning and Purchasing Services’

³³ Cornwall Council Commissioning Toolkit <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/childrens-services/cornwall-childrens-trust/working-together/commissioning-toolkit/key-documents/>

³⁴ Gloucestershire Standards Framework and Commissioning Toolkit

³⁵ Bath and North East Somerset Council ‘A Framework for involving service users/ young people in commissioning arrangements 2015/16’

and Setting Priorities – Planning – Procuring – Monitoring – Evaluation and Learning’.³⁶³⁷

- 4.1.2 Within each of the stages a number of key activities are identified within the commissioning guides and toolkits and these are summarised in the table below.

Stage	Activities
Analyse	Clarifying local outcomes, assessing needs, identifying resources and priorities, looking at gaps in service, understanding barriers, considering how different groups of young people access services, prioritising which needs to be addressed first, consultation, resource mapping, review of policy guidance and research
Plan	Considering different ways in which the desired outcomes can be achieved effectively, efficiently, equitably and in a sustained way, evaluating different service models, developing a service specification, involving stakeholders in considering options, opportunities to participate in design and co-production of new service pathways
Deliver	Implementing the plan using the resources available, tendering and procuring
Review	Monitoring delivery and its impact against expected outcomes

- 4.1.3 There is an acknowledgement that the involvement at all stages should be encouraged where it is appropriate. It is also important to work with children and young people to identify at which stage they want to have a voice and where they might have most impact.
- 4.1.4 In Lancashire a participation checklist is completed which informs a plan at the beginning of the process as to how this can be achieved at each stage of the commissioning cycle and to ensure budget is factored into the overall resource³⁸.
- 4.1.5 In Devon a self-assessment toolkit has been developed. It is a tool to be completed by staff responsible for commissioning young people’s services, ideally with young people involved in developing the local youth offer. The purpose is to establish whether local participation processes for involving young people in commissioning are sufficiently rigorous and to ensure good quality services; based on the stages of commissioning cycle (South West Regional Partnership)³⁹.

³⁶ Buckinghamshire Children and Young People’s Trust ‘Involving Children and Young People In Commissioning Guidance’ (2009)

³⁷ Participation Works ‘How to involve children and young people in commissioning’

³⁸ Lancashire Children and Young People’s Trust ‘How to effectively involve Children and Young People in Commissioning’

³⁹ National Youth Agency and Local Government Association ‘A practical guide to commissioning services for young people - Part 10: Involving young people in commissioning’

Case Study: Cornwall Council Commissioning Toolkit (Guidance Booklet)

The Commissioning Toolkit is designed to support:

- Moving away from silos and towards whole system thinking
- Moving away from competition and towards collaboration
- Place based approaches
- Co-design and co-production
- Including service users and lived experience in design and delivery
- Including small and local organisations
- Appropriate use of grants or contracts
- Moving away from measurement and toward reflection and learning
- Away from medicalisation and towards socialisation

The toolkit is based on the following principles:

- Putting children and people at the heart of commissioning
- Co-producing our approach with children, adults, providers and partners
- Creating ambitious and transformation solutions
- Providing choice and opportunities for local children and adults in every aspect of their lives
- Making sure any changes are evidence-based
- Making the best use of our collective resources
- Being open and transparent
- Being flexible and responsive

The toolkit includes a series of bitesize guides on co-production that is based on six principles of co-production (based on the NEF principles):

- Recognising people, places and community as assets: transforming the perception of people from passive recipients into equal partners in designing and delivering services.
- Building on people's existing capabilities: moving from a 'can't do attitude' approach to one that recognises people's capabilities.
- Mutual respect: offering a range of incentives to encourage equal relationships with professionals and each other creating mutual responsibilities, outcomes and expectations.
- Peer support networks: creating networks with professionals to build knowledge and support change.
- Blurring roles: dissolving barriers between professionals, producers and consumers of services, changing the way services are developed and delivered.
- Facilitating change: helping everyone to have a fair role, not trying to do it all.

- 4.1.6 The Participation Works guide on how to involve children and young people in commissioning⁴⁰ includes the following helpful checklist of key things to have in place:

Checklist: Key things to have in place

- Create a clear way to explain commissioning
- Identify which part of commissioning cycle to work with (and why)
- Train and support the young people
- Give examples of the difference young people can make - golden threads
- Clarify good participation practice with commissioners - expectations and ground rules
- Facilitate long-term relationships
- Make it fun and use creative approaches
- Identify limits of participation
- Think in terms of outcomes
- Have clear feedback mechanisms - complete the loop
- Reward and recognise
- Focus on diversity and overcoming inequality
- Support the wider process
- Opportunities for young people and commissioners to be in the same room
- Share expertise and resource across sectors
- Partnerships with diverse groups

- 4.1.7 Kirby (2003) talks about the importance of developing cultures of participation and sets out a process of change that involves a number of manageable steps. Participation Works have taken the model further to identify how it can be applied to the commissioning organisations. The table below sets out the model of change described by Kirby (2003) and how it can be applied to commissioning organisations as identified by Participation Works^{41,42}.

⁴⁰ Participation Works 'How to involve children and young people in commissioning'

⁴¹ National Children's Bureau 'Building a culture of participation: handbook for involving children and young people in policy, service planning, delivery and evaluation (2003)
https://www.unicef.org/adolescence/cypguide/files/Building_a_culture_of_participation.pdf

⁴² Participation Works 'How to involve children and young people in commissioning'

Stage of Change Model	Application to commissioning organisations
How to unfreeze existing attitudes and practice	Supporting commissioners to unfreeze attitudes around young people's participation in commissioning
How to establish catalysts for change	Identify champions for change within commissioning teams (strategic and operational level) and link these champions to young people and specialist participation workers
How to internalise new ways of working	Internalise systems within the commissioning process and ensure children and young people can participate at each stage using the right support and tools
How to institutionalise participation	Aspire to institutionalise a culture of participation at all levels and stages of the commissioning process

4.2 Analyse

4.2.1 The analysis stage “involves drawing together and analysing intelligence, identifying resources and setting priorities and ensuring that they are shared with all stakeholders, including commissioning partners, service users and carers and service providers”⁴³.

4.2.2 The literature considered in this review identify a range of activities that have been used to support the involvement of children and young people in this stage of the commissioning cycle. These include:

- Sharing life stories and experiences of using services
- Workshops and conferences
- Ranking/voting sessions
- Using photos and pictures
- Peer researchers
- Surveys
- Video making
- Debates and panels
- Focus groups
- Mapping formal and informal networks
- Research (for example working with commissioners to make sense of data and trends)

⁴³ Welsh Government ‘Fulfilled Lives, Supportive Communities Commissioning Framework Guidance and Good Practice (2010)
https://ipc.brookes.ac.uk/publications/Commissioning_framework_guidance_and_good_practice.pdf

- Theme days with children and young people
- Observing children in settings
- Using existing research/surveys or other participation project findings

Consultation questions to explore with young people and results of the consultation used to develop the specification (description of the service).

Case study - Lancashire re-commissioning of child and young persons' diabetes service.⁴⁴

In order to inform the re-commissioning of the service there was a need to understand the experiences and recommendations of children and young people and their families. A family event with children and young people, parents and carers was held which looked at the pathway children and young people (and their families) went on from diagnosis to self care and management. Members of the commissioning team were also actively involved in the event. An invitation was then extended to all children and young people to feedback their thoughts to a commissioning group. The reported benefit from this exercise was that the feedback from the young people was invaluable to the re-design of the pathway and service.

Examples of change that have resulted from the exercise include:

- children, young people and families having “ownership” of public noticeboard to promote support groups and activities;
- young people have identified educating peers, teachers, youth workers and other professionals would be of benefit to help reduce stigma and allow young people to share their experiences;
- one young person went on to train as a young verifier and continues to support the NHS to deliver the quality programme;
- one young person is now an active member of children and young people's health and wellbeing board

⁴⁴ Lancashire Children and Young People's Trust 'How to effectively involve Children and Young People in Commissioning'

Case study – Cambridgeshire schools⁴⁵

An identified group of children and young people put together a questionnaire for other children about the issue the identified group thought were important to them. The group put a link to the questionnaire on the website and sent out an invite to primary schools to request pupils go online and fill it out. They then allocated an afternoon to look at the results and prioritise the issues.

The young people presented their findings and concerns through a drama production to the local authority officers and members who subsequently agreed to giving them their own budget to purchase their own services. The group went on to become 'kids as commissioners' – a group of year 4 children selected to be involved in a one year commissioning project to allow children to make real decisions on how money is spent to combat bullying in schools using their own ideas.

- 4.2.3 The Participation Works guide on how to involve children and young people in commissioning⁴⁶ identifies the need to “find creative ways to introduce the money dimension of commissioning to young people (often one of the most fun parts of participation)”. The guide suggests that children and young people can understand large budgets through finance games and stimulations such as role playing a budget allocation meeting; using imitation meetings to balance sheets; giving examples of what different services cost and how much a local authority spends on essential services.

4.3 Plan

- 4.3.1 The planning stage is set in the context of the analyses stage and has as its main purpose the development of a commissioning plan to steer the future development of services. It should be based upon a detailed analysis of the information and intelligence gathered in the Understand/Analysis stage above⁴⁷.
- 4.3.2 There are a number of different examples of activities that have been used to support the involvement of children and young people in this stage of the commissioning cycle. These include:
- Looking at the design of buildings and services (location and opening hours etc)
 - Co-designed events to explore what services young people want, where, when and how services should be delivered
 - Designing new pathways into services
 - Delivering training to the workforce

⁴⁵ Cambridgeshire County Council 'A Guide to Involving Children and Young People in Commissioning and Purchasing Services

⁴⁶ Participation Works 'How to involve children and young people in commissioning'

⁴⁷ Welsh Government 'Fulfilled Lives, Supportive Communities Commissioning Framework Guidance and Good Practice (2010)

- Developing/ writing a strategy or training package
- Working closely with commissioners on specific projects exploring the design of services
- Young people as members of committees alongside adults in parallel structures or as an advisory/reference group
- Using their creative and artistic skills to support commissioners to visualise new types of service and ways to make existing services more accessible and appealing to young people
- Playing games (e.g shopping game – how much is it, do I like it, is there another choice)
- Roving reporters (interviewing parents, grandparents and other children about their experiences)
- Role play (acting out a good service and a poor one)
- Visits (look at projects in other areas and evaluate them – looking at good things, bad things and did it work)

Case study - London Borough of Merton – Substance Misuse service⁴⁸

Focus groups were held with young people to identify and shape the service specification. Young people visited providers who reached the final tendering stage to talk directly to service users and meet staff which provided an insight into the strengths and weaknesses of different organisations. The young people provided feedback to the formal interview panel using an agreed scoring matrix.

⁴⁸ National Youth Agency and Local Government Association 'A practical guide to commissioning services for young people - Part 10: Involving young people in commissioning'

Case Study - East Renfrewshire Council: Improving services for young people with disabilities⁴⁹

The staff and managers of services for children and young people with disabilities believed that young people were not always asked for their views and were committed to enabling young people to be actively supported to influence the provision and development of the services they received.

Two services were run for children and young people with disabilities to enable them to participate in a full range of leisure and social activities. One was a holiday programme, the other was a 52 week community based support service run in the evening and weekends. There was a continuous cycle of consultation and evaluation which integrated seeking the views of children and young people into all areas of work. Young people had been able to influence when, where and how activities took place and were given a say in which staff supported them. Activities and plans were all now much more focused on the interests, priorities and wishes of the young people. The service had dedicated time and resources to selecting, training and developing staff with the right skills and values.

A range of methodologies were used and included:

- activity diaries completed by workers, parents and young people to allow a continuous flow of information to make sure that young people were really enjoying what they were doing
- observations; where a young person may have more complex communication difficulties, regular observation records were kept to ensure that a wide range of feedback was included
- a wide range of communication formats such as pictures, storyboards, graffiti art, computer programmes, body maps.

4.4 Do (Delivery – also Procuring)

4.4.1 The purpose of the delivery stage is to “ensure that the commissioning plan is implemented, and that services deliver the commissioning intentions and outcomes”.⁵⁰

4.4.2 There are a number of different examples of activities that have been used to support the involvement of children and young people in this stage of the commissioning cycle. These include:

- Reference groups
- Dragons Den style activities
- Young people sitting in on provider presentations and asking questions and exploring different options

⁴⁹ Care inspectorate Scotland ‘Practice Guide Involving children and young people in improving children’s services’ (2012)

⁵⁰ Welsh Government ‘Fulfilled Lives, Supportive Communities Commissioning Framework Guidance and Good Practice (2010)

- Ranking/voting exercises
- Developing the specification
- Marking tenders
- Shortlisting
- Interviewing and selection of providers (through presentation and interview)
- Young people's panel
- Young people (with support) involved in the assessment of full tender documents
- Young people's assessment criteria within tendering specifications
- Delivery of training to the workforce
- Dot voting on options
- Anonymous ballots

Case study – Action for Children (formerly NCH) and Gloucestershire County Council Procurement Panel 'Getting involved in assessing tenders'⁵¹

Children and young people worked with the commissioning team to put together a young person friendly section of the tender application forms. Applicants tendering for the service were invited to submit evidence supporting their application such as photos, dvd and presentations.

A children and young people's panel (6-8 children) was put in place involving children and young people with relevant experience and appropriate knowledge relating to the tenders in order to ensure the panel had a greater understanding of the applications they were assessing and how these could support other children and young people. The panel members were provided with additional training provided to build relevant skills, specifically in relation to confidentiality and decision making.

The children and young people's panel developed assessment scoring sheets consistent with the questions asked in the young people's section of the tender application form and what other young people had said was important to them. For each tender there were eight questions with standardised scoring of 0-5 with clear reasons required for each score. Weighting was agreed with the lead commissioning agency so that the children and young people's panel children and young people panel had a clear influence on the tender process.

After the adult panel and the children and young people's panel had assessed the applications they both met to share thoughts and scores. There was a significant contribution from the children and young people's panel when the scores of the children and young people meant three projects which were not going to be commissioned by the adult panel were then upgraded in ranking and did receive funding.

⁵¹ Participation Works 'How to involve children and young people in commissioning'

Case study - Lancashire Children's Rights Service⁵²

A questionnaire was sent to the target group of children and young people to get an understanding of their needs in order for this to inform the specification for the service.

A young people's panel was set up as part of the tender process and it was allocated a portion of the decision making power (a portion of the 70% attributed to quality).

The panel devised their own questions and agreed that those applying would have to do an activity with them explaining children's rights and advocacy and what it offered children and young people. The panel asked a number of questions to the provider. After each interview young people scored the providers individually and shared with each other to come up with a group score and feedback. Young people rated all the providers from favourite to least favourite and discussed if there were any providers they would like to get the tender. Young people led their panel (supported by staff) giving out and collecting individuals core sheets, facilitating discussions after each provider had finished, keeping a record of the group score and comments, time keeping, and ensuring all young people had voiced their opinions and happy with the outcome.

The young people's panel provided feedback to the adult panel. The scores of the adult panel, young people panel and shortlisting were worked out and young people were informed about who the tender had been offered to as soon as the decision was agreed and accepted.

4.5 Review (Monitoring/Evaluation and Learning)

4.5.1 This stage of the commissioning cycle is concerned with two fundamental questions:

- Firstly, are citizens receiving the services they need? Specifically, to what extent are services across the public, private and third sectors configured in the ways intended in the commissioning plan and are further changes needed?
- Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, what impact are services having on meeting the social care outcome needs of the population, and does this need to change?⁵³

4.5.2 There are a number of different examples of activities that have been used to support the involvement of children and young people in this stage of the commissioning cycle. These include:

- Online forums
- Suggestions boards
- Mystery shopping
- Project advisory groups
- Surveys, blogs and feedback from young people

⁵² Lancashire Children and Young People's Trust 'How to effectively involve Children and Young People in Commissioning'

⁵³ Welsh Government 'Fulfilled Lives, Supportive Communities Commissioning Framework Guidance and Good Practice (2010)

- Case studies
- Life stories
- Photos
- Young people reported distance travelled tools
- Videos
- Service inspections and monitoring visits
- Evaluating commissioned services
- Service user assessment
- Development of an evaluation template
- Children and young people develop an online evaluation
- Young people visit the contract manager to check services and use a checklist they have devised
- Triangulation approach involving observation
- Annual feedback meeting between young people and contract manager and visit provision at least once a year.
- Young people involvement and engagement with the service built into monitoring of the contract
- Young service users encouraged to contribute to any annual report or review of a service

4.5.3 Feedback and evaluation is important as it helps children and young people to recognise that their views have been considered and what action is being taken in response to their ideas and discussions. It enables children to express their ideas and feelings about the process and raise any concerns and provides an insight into what has worked well and what needs to be improved, in relation to the commissioning process itself but also in relation to the impact on service design and delivery. Feedback provided at each stage of the commissioning cycle should include information about how their views have made a difference, for example what action has/has not been taken and why; how their element of tender consideration/evaluation will be weighted.

4.5.4 Mechanisms to provide evaluation and feedback to children and young people can include:

- follow up meetings;
- verbal and/or written feedback
- surveys
- websites and emails;
- letters;
- posting information and copies of reports to them

4.5.5 It is recognised that feedback needs to be provided quickly and suggested examples in the guide to engaging children in decision making developed by the Ministry of Social Development in New Zealand⁵⁴ include:

- where appropriate at the end of meetings with a summary of discussion and decisions and information about next steps;
- once action taken follow up with information on how their participation has affected the project;
- if their contribution is acknowledged in a report/publication send them a copy;
- always keeping them informed about changes in policies, practices, structures or services as a result of their contribution

Case study - Buckinghamshire – Involving young people in tendering process⁵⁵

Buckinghamshire recruited young people who they had previously worked with either on staff interview panels (and who'd been trained in interviewing) or as part of grant panels where funding is distributed. These young people were identified as they would have had a good foundation to build on when training them about the commissioning process and it would also help to develop the skills and confidence they had gained when interviewing staff and distributing funding. Training was provided for the young people on what commissioning is (process, weighting, structure of commissioning interview day, staff and young people's roles).

Young people were involved in reviewing the service specification, discussing what they thought was important, asking questions to the commissioners and devising questions for the young people's panel presentation and interview. The young people chose to focus on the participation element of the specification as this was an area important to them and they felt comfortable assessing this aspect as they had knowledge about how young people want to be involved.

On the day of the tender interviews where organisations give presentations and are interviewed by young people took part in a briefing at the start of the day and the young people's panel had equal weighting to the adult panel and were fully aware of how the rest of the marks would be judged and why. The young people's panel also shared their observations with the adult panel.

⁵⁴ Ministry of Social Development, New Zealand 'Involving Children - A guide to engaging children in decision-making'

⁵⁵ Buckinghamshire Children and Young People's Trust 'Involving Children and Young People In Commissioning Guidance' (2009)

5 Training and support

5.1 Children and young people

5.1.1 In order for children and young people to be fully involved in the commissioning process it is essential that they receive training and support to fully participate. Building in sufficient time to prepare and skill up young people is critical, along with a flexible approach to the delivery of training and the activities associated with each stage of the cycle. This may involve delivery outside school hours and in the Bath and North East Somerset framework for involving service users and young people in commissioning arrangements⁵⁶ it is recommended that consultation activity takes place after school and evaluation activities take place during school holidays.

5.1.2 There needs to be a range of training and support activities to support young people to develop the required knowledge, skills and confidence to be involved. Examples of such activities and the areas to be covered that are referenced within the guides and toolkits reviewed include:

- Support to attend adult meetings
- Role plays
- Training that covers:
 - what commissioning is
 - the stages of commissioning
 - commissioning scenarios
 - confidence building
 - decision making
 - negotiation skills
 - legalities
 - competition rules
 - confidentiality of commercial information
 - how children and young people can influence decisions
 - interviewing skills
 - presentation skills
 - critical appraisal skills
 - collaborative working
 - assertiveness skills
 - equality awareness
 - GDPR
 - designing questionnaires
 - co-facilitating focus groups

⁵⁶ Bath and North East Somerset Council 'A Framework for involving service users/ young people in commissioning arrangements 2015/16)

- 5.1.3 Understandable and accessible information is essential in ensuring children and young people can take an informed role in the commissioning process. Explanations of specialist/technical language; information in special formats; plain English and jargon free information is required.
- 5.1.4 The literature considered in this review identify a range of activities that have been used to support children and young people can be supported include:
- Children and young people helping commissioners to make leaflets and information clear, friendly and attractive. Young people involved in helping commissioners present their information using visual infographics and online services such as Google Maps.
 - Supporting children and young people to engage with information creatively through workshops, exercises, mapping, interviewing and research activities.
 - Red Card system of engagement⁵⁷ in which children and young people raise a red card during a meeting if an adult is using too much jargon/acronyms and the adult then has to stop and explain.

Case Study – Northamptonshire toolkit for involving children and young people in commissioning⁵⁸

Northamptonshire have developed a toolkit for involving children and young people in commissioning which has been developed and written from a youth work perspective and has been trialled and tested with young people.

The toolkit provides a detailed interactive training programme to provide knowledge, skills and confidence to young people to ensure they are effectively involved. It involves a two-day training programme with tools including session plans, evaluations, ice-breakers, PowerPoints, handouts, trainer notes and certificates. It can be added to and adapted to suit young people's needs.

Northamptonshire also have a 'charter mark' in place that grades organisations on their level of youth involvement. All commissioned youth service providers are expected to sign up and providers are expected to achieve bronze standard within the first year of being commissioned.

⁵⁷ Participation Works 'How to involve children and young people in commissioning'

⁵⁸ National Youth Agency and Local Government Association 'A practical guide to commissioning services for young people - Part 10: Involving young people in commissioning'

Practice resources - Lancashire Children and Young People's Trust (How to effectively involve children and young people in commissioning)⁵⁹

The toolkit developed to support the involvement of children and young people in commissioning includes a range of resources including:

- example session plan for training children and young people
- example exercise to enable children and young people to understand the commissioning process
- guide on what training should include, methods and details on how to use
- hints and tips for preparing young person's panel

Participation Works – Consultancy Model to support local young people to participate in LA commissioning processes⁶⁰

Participation Works has developed a structured process that would build on local participation work and relationships which could be embedded in commissioning plans. The package was developed with young people to support them to develop their knowledge and skills of commissioning through a series of workshops and role plays.

Young people are able to explore a series of commissioning scenarios from the perspective of commissioners, providers, and young people who would use services.

This is followed by a whole system event where young people with adults from across the LA commissioning cycle (mixed groups of young people and adults) work around the commissioning cycle, stopping at each stage to explore ways that young people could be involved in the activities at each of the stages.

Young people able to present their views of commissioning priorities and ask questions of the commissioners and agree ways for young people to get involved.

5.2 Staff

5.2.1 Staff may also require targeted training and support to provide them with the knowledge and skills to actively and effectively engage with children and young people.

5.2.2 Examples of such activities and the areas to be covered that are referenced within the guides and toolkits reviewed include:

- commissioning training
- principles and strategies of participation of children and young people
- equalities training

⁵⁹ Lancashire Children and Young People's Trust 'How to effectively involve Children and Young People in Commissioning'

⁶⁰ National Youth Agency and Local Government Association 'A practical guide to commissioning services for young people - Part 10: Involving young people in commissioning'

5.2.3 In the evaluation⁶¹ conducted in February 2018 in relation to Young Minds - Your Voices Amplified professionals identified the following areas that they would most value guidance and support:

- Promoting individual participation around mental health
- Designing participation across local systems including commissioning
- Monitoring and evaluating participation
- Ensuring participation of young people experiencing vulnerabilities
- Involving everyone – overview of skills, knowledge and attitudes that all staff need to embed participation across the organisation

Professionals also identified the following type of participation resource that they would be most likely to use in their service:

- Information resources which could be shared with young people and their parents would be most useful
- Resources about mental health and services that can be shared with young people
- Good practice examples from other organisations around participation
- Case studies of how participation has impacted young people/ parent/ carer experiences around mental health
- Guides to practical activities to train other staff members in their organisation about participation
- Guides to practical activities to lead with young people and parents
- Information about national and local participation opportunities related to mental health that could be accessed by young people and parents in your service

Specific examples of training and support needs highlighted by professionals in the evaluation include:

- More training to build confidence and skills in participation
- More training to build confidence about how young people's involvement links to service improvement and local transformation
- More time and resources
- Support to engage groups of young people, to ensure young people are representative of everyone using the service

⁶¹ Young Minds 'Your Voices Amplified' (2018)

6 Benefits of involvement and participation

Whilst the evidence in relation to the impact of the involvement and participation of children and young people in decision making and commissioning is limited there are a number of benefits highlighted within the literature that has been reviewed. These are captured below.

6.1 For children

6.1.1 The benefits for children and young people of being involved in decision making and commissioning can include:

- personal and social development such as increased confidence, self-esteem and understanding of their rights in society
- improving understanding of decision making processes and how organisations work and an increase and development of opportunities for children and young people to be actively involved in decision making about services that are commissioned
- improved access to services and a reduction in inequalities
- social inclusion and citizenship
- feeling valued for the positive role they have to play in the community
- greater sense of ownership
- enhanced employability skills
- their views are valued and influence the services provided for them
- encouraging them to get involved in other areas which affect their lives
- empowering young people and giving them a voice
- increasing young people's awareness of local government and the relevance to their lives – greater interest in democratic process and increasing levels of young people voting at local elections (JRF)
- getting more effective and appropriate services and policies that address young people's needs
- considering the effects of their decisions and deciding which alternatives are best
- learning to debate, negotiate and communicate with groups and act as facilitators and leaders
- developing relationships with other children as well as adults
- feeling they "own" the service
- bringing about changes that are good for children

6.1.2 An evaluation of the scale and effectiveness of participation activities in the 'Young Minds Your Voices' programme (an NHS England funded programme to support and build participation in every part of children and young people's mental health services) in February 2018⁶² identified that 72% of the young people involved in the evaluation agreed that getting involved in decisions

⁶² Young Minds 'Your Voices Amplified' (2018)

about how their services are run will help make them better for themselves and other young people. 87% of the young people agreed that they want to make decisions about the types of support available. *“We believe we can improve services we use by getting involved in planning and designing processes. We want more chances to take part in these decisions, and to get clear feedback on how our input has made a difference” (feedback from young people).*

6.1.3 The work undertaken by East Renfrewshire Council⁶³ on improving services for young people with disabilities. The reported benefits of the approach taken include:

- understanding what children and young people thought about the services that they received was integral to everything that the service provided
- children and young people experienced a strong sense of ownership and connection to the service
- children and young people were supported to make real choices in a safe setting
- friendships were formed around shared interests, and new skills were developed
- children and young people developed confidence in communicating their views and wishes
- children and young people had opportunities to have fun and improve their emotional wellbeing

6.1.4 The benefits highlighted by Buckinghamshire County Council for involving children and young people in the tendering process⁶⁴:

- some young people going on to take part in other panels;
- some young people working with the commissioned organisation on other participation projects;
- the professionalism of the young people and the confidence they developed throughout the process;
- young people have meaningfully shaped the direction and delivery of services to young people;
- young people were listened to and valued;
- young people with experience have gone on to mentor other young people to support them to be involved;
- a key outcome for young people is that they have been able to share things they all had in common and gain greater understanding of the similarities as well as differences in each other's lives;

⁶³ Care inspectorate Scotland 'Practice Guide Involving children and young people in improving children's services' (2012)

⁶⁴ Buckinghamshire Children and Young People's Trust 'Involving Children and Young People In Commissioning Guidance' (2009)

- the organisation is providing what service users feel are important;
- it challenged stereotypes of key groups (e.g young offenders);
- young people emerged as leaders and support peers who previously have been shy;
- converting adults who had previously been sceptical to the added value involving children and young people can bring

6.1.5 An evaluation of the Youth4U Young Persons Inspection Programme ⁶⁵ a two-year project funded by the Department for Education (DfE) to employ a local support worker to recruit and train teams of disadvantaged and marginalised young people (aged 13–19, and disabled young people aged up to 25) to inspect and report on services in their area as ‘young inspectors’. Findings identified in the evaluation include:

- nearly three-quarters of young inspectors were successfully retained in the programme;
- overall, young inspectors reported positive experiences of conducting inspections and particularly valued the team-working involved in inspecting services: this was felt to facilitate learning, mutual support and a widening of social circles. The follow-up inspections where they found evidence that their recommendations had been implemented were particularly enjoyable for the young inspectors;
- Service providers reported a very high level of overall satisfaction with both the initial negotiation process and the actual conduct of inspections. Service providers were also satisfied with the length and quality of inspection reports provided by the young inspectors; and generally agreed that the recommendations were relevant and useful, although they did not always tell them something new about their service.
- Young Inspectors had helped some young inspectors make decisions about their futures. This was supported by feedback from local support workers who described instances where young inspectors had, through their involvement with the programme, made decisions to re-engage with education.
- a consistent message from young inspectors that the Youth4U - Young Inspectors programme had helped them to develop skills in many areas including communicating and presenting information, working in a team, setting and achieving goals; and to develop general skills that are useful for employment. Evidence also suggested that being a young inspector led to greater use of local services. All survey respondents felt that their Youth4U - Young Inspectors experience would help them in securing employment.
- Supported marginalised young people to take the lead and have a voice, develop skills and confidence, and become more fully engaged in their community.

⁶⁵ <http://comminit.com/global/content/youth4u-young-inspectors-final-evaluation-report>

6.2 For organisations/commissioners

6.2.1 The benefits for organisations and commissioners of children and young people being involved in decision making and commissioning can include:

- Consistent standard of participation and involvement
- Cultural change improving participation levels
- System of promoting and embedding best practice
- Needs led, tailored service developed in co-production between children, young people and local authority
- Commissioning of the right service
- Improved delivery – outcomes successfully achieved
- Better value for money (deciding where to use resources more effectively)
- Promotes positive attitudes towards children and sends out a clear message to all that the views of children and young people are valued and have a real impact
- Better understanding of children's issues and needs because children and young people bring new perspectives and knowledge
- Development of more effective policies, services and programmes by including children's perspectives in their design, planning and delivery/ implementation
- Builds a more positive, democratic organisation
- Services and programmes created for children will better reflect their needs

6.2.2 In Lancashire County Council⁶⁶ the engagement of a young people's panel in the commissioning of a children's rights services has been identified positively by commissioners as indicated in the feedback provided them below:

- the young people's panel was instrumental in the outcome of the tender (with the highest score from the young people's panel winning the tender);
- the young people were highly professional in their approach;
- their involvement added another dimension to the process;
- the commissioner was happy to offer the tender to a provider that had been 'quality checked' by young people who would be future users of the service

6.2.3 An evaluation of the decommissioning and recommissioning process of developing a new commissioning model of services for young people in

⁶⁶ Lancashire Children and Young People's Trust 'How to effectively involve Children and Young People in Commissioning'

Surrey⁶⁷ brought together evidence on how relationships between young people, commissioners, service providers, partners and local communities have changed in the recommissioning process and what improvements have been achieved to outcomes for young people and service efficiency for Surrey County Council and its partners. One of the themes explored in the evaluation was co-production and the findings were established through interviews with staff around a number of key questions on 'your views on co-production'. The strengths identified in the evaluation included:

- young people involved throughout the process to shape the new service model and the recommissioned services
- significant commitment to and some real enthusiasm for the concept of co-production across Surrey County Council and partners (although not a fully shared understanding of what co-production means for young people and how it can be translated into everyday working relationships)
- courage to involve young people in the commissioning process of rather complex services (however different views on the extent to which young people have been involved)
- co-design of services is relatively widely practiced (in youth centres in particular)

The benefits of involving children and young people in the process identified in the evaluation included:

- young peoples' involvement helping to develop ideas for commissioning;
- young people involved in task groups were very frank and open and elected members respected their views in the commissioning process
- young peoples' involvement allows a reality check on the process

6.3 For providers

6.3.1 The benefits for organisations and commissioners of children and young people of being involved in decision making and commissioning can include⁶⁸:

- An opportunity to interact with children and young people who they will be working with or providing services for
- Strengthens relationships with children, young people and families

⁶⁷ INLOGOV The New Commissioning Model of Services for Young People in Surrey: Evaluation of achievements and implications'
http://www.govint.org/fileadmin/user_upload/publications/The_New_Commissioning_Model_of_Services_for_Young_People_in_Surrey.pdf

⁶⁸ Buckinghamshire Children and Young People's Trust 'Involving Children and Young People In Commissioning Guidance' (2009)

6.3.2 An evaluation of the Youth4U Young Persons Inspection Programme ⁶⁹ a two-year project funded by the Department for Education (DfE) to employ a local support worker to recruit and train teams of disadvantaged and marginalised young people (aged 13–19, and disabled young people aged up to 25) to inspect and report on services in their area as ‘young inspectors’. Findings identified in the evaluation include:

- local authority interviewees felt that the Youth4U - Young Inspectors programme provided a way in which they could raise the profile of young people's participation and strengthen communication between services and service users;
- the role of the local support worker in creating positive relationships and 'selling' the idea of improving young people's participation in the service was key to securing inspection opportunities and in overcoming initial reluctance on the part of some service providers.
- service providers reported a very high level of overall satisfaction with both the initial negotiation process and the actual conduct of inspections. Service providers were also satisfied with the length and quality of inspection reports provided by the young inspectors; and generally agreed that the recommendations were relevant and useful, although they did not always tell them something new about their service.
- follow-up inspections (carried out for a quarter of all initial inspections) found that three-quarters of the services they revisited had improved to some degree. Just over half of the recommendations made in the initial inspection reports were found to have been fully or partly implemented. Overall, a large majority of service providers who responded to the survey suggested that being inspected would have a positive impact on the way the service was delivered in the future.
- just over half of the service providers considered that the inspection process would likely have a positive impact on the wider local authority as well as on inspected services and their users.
- an increase in the profile of young people's participation. It was felt that the programme had encouraged service providers and senior managers to think about how they could involve children and young people in planning or designing services in the future. It had also provided local authorities with a vehicle through which to deliver their existing requirements to consult with young people.

6.4 For society

6.4.1 The benefits for society of children and young people of being involved in decision making and commissioning can include⁷⁰:

⁶⁹ <http://comminit.com/global/content/youth4u-young-inspectors-final-evaluation-report>

⁷⁰ Ministry of Social Development, New Zealand 'Involving Children - A guide to engaging children in decision-making'

- Encourages cooperation between different age groups in society
- Reinforces the benefits of participation and the value of contribution
- Builds a positive democratic society

Case Study: Northamptonshire County Council (Children First Northamptonshire) 'You Said We Did': Outcomes and responses to children and young people's participation and engagement – Annual report 2018/18⁷¹.

The report describes the participation and engagement with children and young people and how it's informing strategy, service planning, commissioning, service outcomes and workforce practice and development.

In relation to the commissioning of services the following table taken from the report summarises the feedback provided by young people, the response of the Council and action taken and also the impact of this and the next steps.

You said	What we did and how we are taking it forward	Impact and Next steps
Young people from the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Council have been involved in evaluating responses to re-tendering of the East Midlands Regional Children's Framework for residential accommodation. The questions cover how well the organisations take account of the views and wishes of young people including connection with advocacy and complaints process.	The Young people have evaluated the responses from 20 bidding organisations. The evaluation has taken 3 days for each of the young people. These will be considered within the overall evaluation of the tender responses with a view to decisions being made by Commissioners within the Regional Framework participating authorities. The young people gave feedback that the process was too long. The young people suggested using a	Young people have developed skills in evaluating responses and understanding more about procurement processes. We are going to work with procurement colleagues to develop training for young people to support them when working on commissioning and tenders

⁷¹ Northamptonshire County Council (Children First Northamptonshire) 'You Said We Did': Outcomes and responses to children and young people's participation and engagement – Annual report 2018/18
<https://cmis.northamptonshire.gov.uk/cm5live/Document.ashx?czJKcaeAi5tUFL1DTL2UE4zNRBcoShgo=1xVTijuQSLa4fG1kJaxqW6AaLhrdMhsD1dhFSM50g%2fc%2fMcHsHVvtOw%3d%3d&rUzwrP%2bZ3zd4E7lkn8Lyw%3d%3d=pwRE6AGJFLDNIh225F5QMaQWctPHwdhUfCZ%2fLUQzgA2uL5jNRG4jdQ%3d%3d&mCTIbCubSFfXsDGW9IXnlG%3d%3d=hFfIUdN3100%3d&kCx1AnS9%2fpWZQ40DXFvdEw%3d%3d=hFfIUdN3100%3d&uJovDxwdjMPoYv%2bAjvYtyA%3d%3d=ctNJFf55vVA%3d&FgPIIEJYlotS%2bYGoBi5olA%3d%3d=NHdURQburHA%3d&d9Qjj0ag1Pd993jsyOJqFvmyB7X0CSQK=ctNJFf55vVA%3d&WGewmoAfeNR9xqBux0r1Q8Za60lavYmz=ctNJFf55vVA%3d&WGewmoAfeNQ16B2MHuCPMRKZMwaG1PaO=ctNJFf55vVA%3d>

	one page profile for each provider.	
The Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Council were involved in the commissioning process for the Belinda Ferrison House provision, this is a property and support service providing 'moving on to independence' support for young people leaving care.	Young people reviewed the plans, developed questions and were involved in the evaluation.	Young people have developed skills in evaluating responses and understanding more about procurement processes.
During a 'Wellbeing activities' event with Young Carers, organised by Northamptonshire Carers, you have told us of some things need improving and things that work well. This is being used in recommissioning of support for young carers.	This information is being included in the development of the specification for Young Carers services that are to be commissioned.	The specification for the service will include the views of the young carers from the event and young people will be involved in the commissioning processes and evaluations.

7 Conclusion

7.1.1 Whilst the evidence in relation to the impact of the involvement and participation of children and young people in decision making and commissioning is limited there are a number of intended benefits for children and young people, organisations/commissioners, providers, society highlighted within the literature that has been reviewed. These include:

For children and young people:

- personal and social development such as increased confidence, self-esteem and understanding of their rights in society
- social inclusion and citizenship
- feeling valued for the positive role they have to play in the community
- enhanced employability skills
- their views are valued and influence the services provided for them
- encouraging them to get involved in other areas which affect their lives
- empowering young people and giving them a voice

For organisations/commissioners:

- Cultural change improving participation levels
- System of promoting and embedding best practice
- Needs led, tailored service developed in co-production between children, young people and local authority
- Commissioning of the right service
- Promotes positive attitudes towards children and sends out a clear message to all that the views of children and young people are valued and have a real impact
- Better understanding of children's issues and needs because children and young people bring new perspectives and knowledge
- Development of more effective policies, services and programmes by including children's perspectives in their design, planning and delivery/implementation

For providers:

- An opportunity to interact with children and young people who they will be working with or providing services for
- Strengthens relationships with children, young people and families

For society:

- Encourages cooperation between different age groups in society
- Reinforces the benefits of participation and the value of contribution
- Builds a positive democratic society

- 7.1.2 Participation and engagement needs to be based on clearly defined principles, a co-productive approach to working with children and young people and in line with an identified model of participation where possible. These should be clearly linked to existing Charters and/or participation strategies.
- 7.1.3 There needs to be a clear purpose for the involvement of children and young people in the commissioning cycle with identified benefits for children and young people first and foremost but also for the commissioning organisation and associated service providers. The aspiration should be to involve children and young people in the commissioning cycle (where appropriate) however there needs to be flexibility in the range of approaches used in order to ensure the maximum engagement of all identified children and young people.
- 7.1.4 Support and development is essential in supporting children and young people to feel enthused, positive and empowered within the commissioning process. This includes an agreed process for rewards and incentives, comprehensive training and support and ongoing feedback. Training and support to staff involved in the commissioning process is also essential.
- 7.1.5 Findings from the research undertaken highlight these additional aspects that need to be considered when planning engagement and involvement processes:
- barriers young people report can get in the way of taking up an opportunity locally, which include feeling unclear about what participation will involve, being nervous or anxious about a new situation and lack of time to take part;⁷²
 - young women reported that they feel less confident and less involved than young men do in both decision making within services, and in decision making processes at a local/ national level⁷³;
 - the most common methods of young people involvement were in the recruitment of staff; youth participation group; evaluation of services. The participation activities undertaken the least frequently include: governance of the organisation including setting organisational priorities and operational plans; development of care pathways; delivering mental health awareness workshops or other activities to young people⁷⁴;
 - young people who were most likely to volunteer their time for participation opportunities were not representative of service users as a whole⁷⁵;

⁷² Young Minds 'Your Voices Amplified' (2018)

⁷³ Young Minds 'Your Voices Amplified' (2018)

⁷⁴ Young Minds 'Your Voices Amplified' (2018)

⁷⁵ Young Minds 'Your Voices Amplified' (2018)

- building on longstanding experience of co-production in other services (youth restorative justice in this case) to draw upon more in designing the new way of co-production⁷⁶;
- some young people take on a leadership role in their network and provide advice to other young people on an ad-hoc basis but there is not often an emphasis placed on the development of peer support (such as peer training/ education and peer mentoring)⁷⁷;
- co-assessment with young people needs to be developed further using potential of social media and other creative forms of assessing outcomes and service quality⁷⁸;
- there needs to be a more systematic approach to user and community co-production, embedded within both commissioning and contracting (such as a shared understanding and language; production and implementation of co-production toolkits and guidance for different programmes; training for staff and commissioners in the use of co-production tools and methodologies)⁷⁹;
- there can be a strong reliance on young people providing feedback through surveys and assessment forms which many young people don't like to fill in⁸⁰.

⁷⁶ INLOGOV The New Commissioning Model of Services for Young People in Surrey: Evaluation of achievements and implications'

http://www.govint.org/fileadmin/user_upload/publications/The_New_Commissioning_Model_of_Services_for_Young_People_in_Surrey.pdf

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