

## **Participation Report for Children Leeds**

The Leeds Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) has been eager to develop its own Participation strategy as a response to the City of Leeds Children and Young People's Participation Strategy. In order to move this work forward we have been working closely with "The Project" based at Chapeltown which focuses its work on developing young people's participation in a wide range of services across Leeds.

The purpose of this participation initiative is largely to gain young people's perspectives on Safeguarding issues and to see how young people's views might influence the Board's ongoing forward planning. There is a danger of us undertaking our work in isolation from the people we are seeking to protect if we do not seek out the views of young people. This is a two way process as young people can also benefit from a participation programme in gaining an adult perspective on what are seen to be Safeguarding issues

A secondary benefit on this process is for the young people themselves in that they can build up their skills with in working with adults in a statutory setting

Towards the end of 2008 the LSCB asked "The Project" if they would be instrumental in organising a one off participation event involving the entire Board.

A number of young people were recruited and arrangements made for them to meet in a series of sessions where they looked at various matters relating to Safeguarding building up to them meeting with the Board on the evening of the 27<sup>th</sup> April 2009. It was decided to meet in the Mayor's rooms at Leeds Civic Hall

The event was presented in the form of a mini Conference where Board members were split into small groups looking at various aspects of Safeguarding and Participation and how these might link in with young people participating more closely with the development of future Board policies. 10 young people were present ranging in ages from 13 to 18 and there was a good attendance from Board members

The young people were impressive in their professional approach to this subject and were able to organise and present the event by themselves with minimal assistance from staff from The Project. As part of their presentation they produced a series of Safeguarding posters .

Feedback forms were completed by both young people and adults and these were generally very positive. The young people said they would like to continue to be involved in the development of safeguarding policies. This view was shared by Board members and it was decided to move this forward by devising a programme over a few months rather than just a one off

The plan involves a series of 5 sessions with a group of young people meeting up with 2 or 3 LSCB members. It is envisaged that these sessions will enable participants to come together to explore and gain knowledge of Safeguarding looking

at topics chosen by the young people. The sessions are to be facilitated by “the Project” and again involves a group of about 10 young people aged 13 to 18 recruited by “the Project”

While it is envisaged that the group of young people will remain the same throughout, the representative’s from the LSCB may vary dependent on the topic and the expertise/ interest of LSCB members in a given area. Specialists not on the Board may in addition be invited, eg – bullying ambassadors or service representatives.

The sessions have now begun and will continue until July. The first session considered the area of ‘resilience’ - how young people protect themselves in a positive manner. Future sessions will focus on “safety in the school” including bullying, health issues and “knowing what to do in unsafe situations” including safety on the internet.

The programme will conclude with a final session with the young people and the full LSCB, when everything discussed/learned will be pulled together by the young people in the form of a presentation to the Board and some recommendations for future improvements in our policies and in the way we work with and involve young people within the LSCB,

It is envisaged that if this “model” is seen to be successful it could form the basis of further ongoing participation by young people in the activities of the LSCB on a regular basis

Tom Holden 31/03/2010