



May 2018

Message from Chris Robson, LSCB Chair

Welcome to the latest edition of the LSCB newsletter. I wanted to talk about an event I attended last week at Kingston University. Oxygen, a local charity, hosted an event for 13 and 14-year-old children that was aimed at raising awareness and combating knife crime. I'm sure there are those out there who will be thinking 'Knife crime, not really an issue in Kingston and Richmond'. Whilst I appreciate we are in two of the safest London boroughs, the threat that arises from the current culture involving knives has to be addressed if we are to keep our young people safe. Raising their awareness and challenging them to make the right decision has to be a positive move. There was some real passion in the room and I am sure that each young person was touched by some part of the day. In a week when our thoughts turn to the tragic death of Stephen Lawrence 25 years ago I know you will join me and continue to challenge our young people to make the right choices and change culture. As always thank you for your continued support and commitment, Chris

Upcoming LSCB Training

The LSCB offers training courses to all working with children and their families. Here is a list of available courses in June;

- Safeguarding Children: Child Protection Process Level 3 (Richmond) - 02/06/2018
- Child Sexual Abuse (Level 3) - 05/06/2018
- Young People Missing from Home and Care (Level 3) - 07/06/2018
- **Conference - Child Exploitation: Risks and Safeguarding Responsibilities - 12/06/2018**

If you work within education and are interested in going on any of these courses and you can apply here: <https://www.afccpdonline.co.uk/earlyyears/courses/bookings/default.asp?curpage=2>
Otherwise you can apply for any here: <http://kingstonandrichmondscb.org.uk/training.php>

Participation & the voice of the child

In this newsletter we are focussing on participation and the voice of the child.

At Kingston and Richmond LSCB we want to promote the participation of children in the decisions that are made about them and the services that they are offered. All agencies have a duty to get user feedback from children and young people.

What do we mean by 'voice' and why does it matter?

Having a voice means that children and young people have the opportunity to participate in decisions and activities which shape and influence policies or services that can impact on their lives. It contributes to their sense of belonging, it helps communities become stronger, and increases the likelihood that services have the best chance of making an impact.

Every child has the right to a voice on matters that affect them and to have their views taken seriously – in accordance with their age and maturity. (UNICEF, 2009)

Participation means that it is my right to be involved in making decisions, planning and reviewing an action that might affect me. Having a voice, having a choice. (Welsh Assembly Government, 2004).

There is a legal requirement for local authorities to provide effective mechanisms for children and young people to influence policies, services and decisions that affect their lives (The Children Act 1989). This right to a voice in matters that affect them is supported by many organisations and is protected by bodies such as the Children's Commissioner and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Legislations/Acts for Participation

Local authorities must take steps to ascertain the views of young people and to take them into account in making decisions about services and activities for them, in line with Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). They should establish and maintain structured arrangements for doing so. To inform continuous improvement, these arrangements should enable young people to inspect and report at least annually on the quality and accessibility of provision. As appropriate they should also be involved actively in service design, delivery and governance.

(Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities on Services and Activities to Improve Young People's Wellbeing, June 2012)

Ensuring children and young people have a voice contributes to their sense of belonging and ownership, it helps communities become stronger, and increases the likelihood that services have the best chance of making an impact. Making sure that voice activities are embedded in service evaluation means that voice is planned and structured rather than an 'add-on'.

The Ladder of Participation

This ladder was first published in *Children's Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship* by UNICEF and was designed to enable professionals working with children to reflect upon their practice. The ladder is a metaphor to depict the degree of participation of children and young people in decision making. The lower three levels

(manipulation, decoration and tokenism) describe non-participation; at these levels, children have little or no voice, or are given a voice but have no choice regarding how their voice is communicated. Hart (1992) suggested that adults working with young people commonly mistake these lower levels as meaningful participation. The subsequent upper five rungs of the ladder are categorised as degrees of participation. Ideally, an adult working with a child should be working towards the top of the ladder (child-initiated, shared decisions with adults). *The voice of the child: learning lessons from serious case reviews Ofsted April 2011*, found the following 5 main themes:

1. the child was not seen frequently enough by the professionals involved, or was not asked about their views and feelings
2. agencies did not listen to adults who tried to speak on behalf of the child and who had important information to contribute
3. parents and carers prevented professionals from seeing and listening to the child practitioners focused too much on the needs of the parents, especially on vulnerable parents, and overlooked the implications for the child
4. agencies did not interpret their findings well enough to protect the child.

All agencies should be thinking about creative ways of engaging children and young people to get feedback, hear about their experiences and enable children and young people to be involved in decision making and the development of services.

The Ladder of Participation

