

LEGGACY

The Croydon Children's Fund

Reflections On Participation

November 2007

Projects/Services which have received funding from The Croydon Children's Fund

THEME	PROJECTS	
	STATUTORY	VOLUNTARY
YOUTH CRIME	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Inclusion Support Panel (YISP), Youth Offending Team (YOT) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Junior Youth Inclusion Project (JYIP), Croydon Youth Development Trust (CYDT) Croydon Young People's Project (CYPP), SOVA RUOK, Victim Support
OUT OF SCHOOL ACTIVITIES/ PLAY/ PREVENTATIVE WORK		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Valley Park TOC H – Peppermint Centre Together in Waddon Croydon Community Bus
WITH BME CHILDREN		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beat the Street, Croydon Youth Development Trust (CYDT)
PARTICIPATION		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Croydon Xpress, Croydon Voluntary Action (CVA)
IN SCHOOL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reaching Out, Borough of Croydon (Education) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Place2be Voluntary Reading Help
WORKING WITH CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrated Therapy, Primary Care Trust (PCT) (Group A) ADHD Development Worker, Borough of Croydon (Ed Phyc) Willow – Bereavement, Primary Care Trust (PCT) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Garwood Foundation, Rutherford School Croydon Mencap, (Benefits programme)
PARENTING		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parentline Plus (PLP) PATCH Project at Croydon People's Housing Association (CPHA)

Notes:

- Many of the projects/services cross over these themes, but this gives some indication of their primary functions
- All of the projects/services above were funded from the outset in 2003/04 until 2007/08 unless otherwise indicated below
- Beat the Street, Parentline Plus and Voluntary Reading Help were funded from 2003/04 until 05/06
- Place2be was funded from 2003/04 until 06/07
- RUOK received a one off payment in 2004/05 and is being funded in 2007/08

Key Messages From Children's Fund Projects & Evaluators:

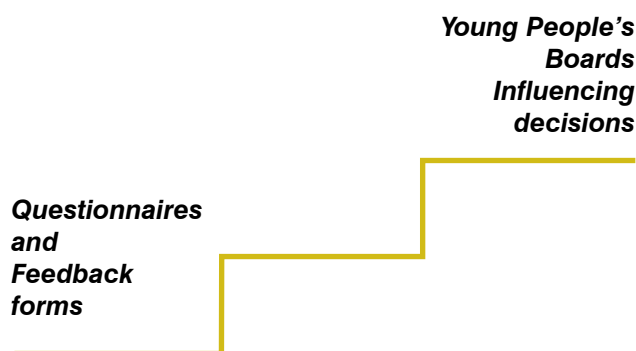
- Involve And Inform Children And Young People Throughout The Project: From Planning To Evaluation
- Obtain Consent From Children And Young People As Well As From Parents/guardians
- Set Goals With Young People In A Non-judgemental Way
- Recognise Children's Right To Be Heard: Make Sure Children And Young People Have Their Say
- Avoid Tokenism: Different Levels Of Participation Need To Be Understood By Workers
- Ensure A Support Plan Has Involvement And Agreement Of The Young Person: Especially In A Voluntary Agency Context, If This Is Not The Case They May Not Get Involved
- Be Creative In How To Overcome The Barriers
- Keep Methods Child Friendly And Fun
- Ensure Less Confident, More Excluded Children Are Heard - Some Processes End Up Only Hearing The Views Of The More Confident
- Active Ownership And Relevance Of Projects To The Lives Of Children And Young People And Their Families Leads To Success
- Recognise Worry And Scepticism Of Many Adults, Including Decision-makers: They May Not Take Seriously What Children And Young People Have To Say – Keep Working On This!
- Taking Learning Forward Depends On Capacity And Resources. Lack Of Resources And Funding Affects Management, Staffing And Time Spent With Children And Young People



*ADHD Development Worker with Croydon Xpress:
Working with children on film*

What Is Possible - Different Levels Of Children's Participation

Project workers discussed the importance of first recognising the different levels of participation, from having consultation with young people to having their opinions influencing decisions and children guiding decision-making bodies in organisations or projects. Workers expressed concerns that some of the activities sometimes referred to as participation were rather tokenistic, and also that due to different project contexts different levels of participation are possible.



The project workers depicted these ideas as a series of steps. This concept reflects the theoretical framework given in 'Hart's ladder of children's participation' that shows rungs of a ladder and runs from 'Decoration' and 'Tokenism' to, for example, 'Consulted and Informed', through to 'Adult initiated shared decisions with children' up to 'Child initiated shared decisions with adults'.

Star Examples From Children's Fund Projects

★ Community Bus

Young people define the ground rules and contribute to the issues that are covered by the bus. Young people also designed the outside of the bus.



Croydon Community Bus

★ Junior Youth Inclusion Project

Children are given an ongoing opportunity to influence the project's support plan in the following ways:

- Young people have a say in the activities that they are going to be involved in at the beginning of term and these are then incorporated in the delivery programme.
- Each child also contributes to their own individual goal setting from which a document is jointly written and agreed by the child and worker.
- Children are also involved in feedback and evaluation.
- In the JYIP graduation ceremony the children choreographed their own dance and set up the room how they wanted it to be.
- Children take individual responsibility to ensure a clean and safe environment for everyone.

★ Croydon Xpress

Croydon Xpress works with young people of 5-13 years actively involving them in decision making in Croydon. Young people are recruited and trained to facilitate in the planning of the events and activities.

Regular consultations are held with young people to encourage them to show their concerns and get feedback and input on different issues through conversation and different participatory techniques. Some of the methods they have used include solution walls, growth trees, peer support and voting systems.

Croydon Xpress also works with other agencies, including projects funded by the Croydon Children's Fund to organise consultation with children and young people on different issues, such as extended school activities, gangs and bullying, special educational needs and attitudes to refugee children.

The most successful events have been involving schools and getting children to plan the events and help out on the day. These events are called Xpression Zones. Croydon Xpress also hope to have a web presence as part of the newly launched Talk2Croydon website.

★ Children And Young People's Project

The project includes mentoring and running drama programmes. There is a Junior Steering Committee where young people are given the opportunity to influence the drama projects that they want to do. Mentors believe that it is important for children to learn how to make their own decisions. Children are therefore encouraged to make suggestions regarding activities done with the mentors or to choose between a number of options open to them.



Croydon Xpress: 'Have your Say' at Xpression Zone Events

★ Toc H Valley Park -
The Peppermint Centre

Children are involved in producing a regular newsletter, setting ground rules and planning upcoming activities. Boys and girls that attend have membership cards – helping to evoke a sense of ownership and cohesion. The ‘Just Chillin’ Club’ set up at the centre has helped children to feel happier and calmer, healthier, and more confident and has encouraged them to make their own decisions.

★ Beat The Street

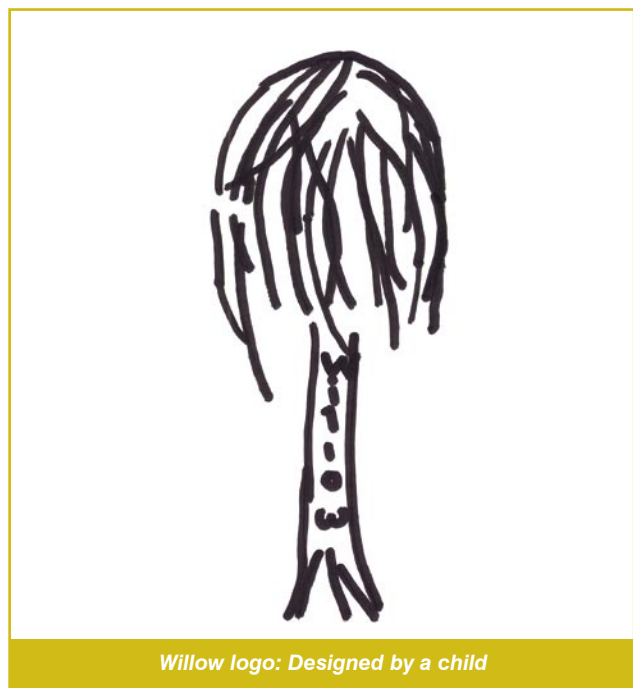
The workers ran sessions with children to explore barriers to learning and bullying issues that the children are facing. The project, now no longer running, reached a high proportion of BME children, mainly from Black British, Black Caribbean and Black African ethnicities and used lots of games to work with the children, for example Bulldog, Easter egg hunts and dance mat, which the children enjoy. Children in the evaluation said that the project had made them feel safe to discuss sensitive issues in the Beat the Street Plus sessions.

★ Willow

The bereavement service when it was originally set up did not have a name so was referred to as the bereavement project. The current name ‘Willow’ was chosen by a bereaved child and he designed the logo below.

Work with children is tailored to meet the different needs of individual children and they are involved in decisions about the different approaches and activities used in the sessions.

Children have participated in making a DVD of the work of Willow, which will be used to help newly referred children understand how Willow will support them through their loss and change and help them work with their grief.



Willow logo: Designed by a child

★ Together In Waddon

The Project seeks to empower, educate and raise the confidence of young people through diverse activities that include drumming, poetry writing, playing games and going on outings. This chart shows what a difference the project has made to children's lives. The comments give examples of how children saw themselves before they started joining the project and what has changed since.

Before	After
I was bored	I'm more active and alive (Girl, 8-10)
Shy and sad	Confident, lively, more friends (Girl, 8-10)
Because I was in the house more I was getting into more trouble	Don't get into trouble as much (Girl, 8-10)
Friends ignored me	People like me more (Girl, 11-13)
Never put my hand up at school even when I knew the question	Now I put my hand up a lot (Boy, 8-10)
Used to swear and say 'shut up' quite a lot	Now I'm quite polite with my friends (Boy, 8-10)

Other examples were given throughout the Children's Fund programme. These included the **ADHD Development Worker** where young people were involved in making a DVD about ADHD and also in developing an information booklet for young people. Staff from **Integrated Therapy**, a project working with children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity

Disorder (ADHD), get children, where possible, and their parents to contribute to individual goal setting and contracts are jointly written.

Projects, such as **Parentline Plus**, address key issues around child/ adult relationships. Parents talking in the evaluation about learning positive parenting skills raised benefits, such as "how to give praise to my child" and "not to label my child, and approach their behaviour in a more positive way."



Together in Waddon: Interacting with clay

Tips For Project Workers And Managers

The following analysis was carried out by project workers from a range of Projects funded by the Croydon Children's Fund about what helps and hinders the process of children and young people's participation.

What Hinders Meaningful Participation?

- Not putting what children and young people are doing into context, that is, understanding the barriers and potential for participation.
- Being Tokenistic, for example carrying out a consultation with children and not taking on board their views, or feeding back to them about what cannot be implemented and why.
- Not making resources accessible to young people.
- Methods of engagement not being appropriate to skills, for example, using lots of writing with children with low literacy skills.
- The non-engagement of a child/ young person or groups of young people.
- The results taking too long to come out after working with children and young people.
- Lack of capacity and trained staff.
- Lack of time, resources, funding.
- The image of an organisation and the expectations of young people.
- Negative images of young people in the media and visa-versa.
- The conflict between children's participation and their protection. Participation needs to be carried out in the context of a safety and ethical framework, however there are situations where child protection concerns mean that workers have to take decisions in the 'Best Interest of the Child'.

What Helps?

- Empowering children and young people by giving them ownership and involving them in something that they want to do. Young people need to believe in and support the cause or project they are part of.
- Recognition of a young person's Right to be heard as stated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by the UK Government and acknowledged in recent Government policy.
- Understanding what participation means – it has to be fun and relevant to children and young people and feed into decision-making that affects their lives.
- Gaining the child's as well as parent/ guardian's informed consent. Informed consent needs to be obtained from children and young people from the beginning of the process, signed in the same way as parental consent. This also needs to be revisited if activities and conditions change
- Involving children and young people from start to finish in a process.
- Methods need to be age appropriate, child friendly and fun. Using varied and child friendly forms of communication.
- Rewards and incentives, such as providing vouchers for young people's time can work well. Even providing refreshments and simply acknowledging the importance of their views can be enough.
- Feeding back to young people the results and outcomes of the work they have been involved in.
- Good communication and team work with children.
- Experienced, well-trained staff.
- The positive participation of parents and carers, as well as relevant local service providers and people in the community.

Acknowledgements:

This document was written by Vicky Johnson with Robert Nurick, the local evaluators for the Croydon Children's Fund and was based on information from the full evaluation of the Croydon Children's Fund, available from Croydon Voluntary Action, and a workshop run with the following projects:

ADHD Development Worker, Croydon Young People's Project, Croydon Community Bus, Croydon Xpress, Integrated Therapy Project, Junior Youth Inclusion Project, Together In Waddon, Willow, Youth Inclusion Support Project

In addition, information was included from:

Beat The Street, Parentline Plus

For more information please contact:

The Croydon Children's Fund
020 8683 0353
christine.cleveland@cvalive.org.uk

Or

Development Focus Trust
(01273) 700707
devfocus@devfocus.org.uk



children's fund

What is the Children's Fund?

The Croydon Children's Fund programme was introduced in 2003. The fund was primarily set up to develop services for children at risk of social exclusion in all local areas, aiming to provide better increased co-ordinated preventive services. Funding is targeted at children and young people aged 5-13 years old and also their families.

The fund is part of the Government's strategy to tackle disadvantage and inequality arising from child poverty and social exclusion, through addressing national priorities including improving school attendance and attainment, improving health (including mental health) and reducing crime and anti social behaviour.

A key element of the programme is that services are locally determined according to local need and planned in consultation with children and families from the outset. In Croydon a comprehensive mapping and consultation exercise was undertaken to find out the views of children, young people and their families and this was used in the development of the initial three-year strategy for the Croydon Children's Fund.

This report was commissioned by the Croydon Children's Fund,
and written by Vicky Johnson with Robert Nurick from Development Focus Trust