

<p>LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT</p> <p>Executive – 12 September 2005</p> <p>Report the Director of Children and Families</p>	
For action	Wards affected: All

**Report Title: Children and Young People's Participation:
A Statement of Commitment**

Forward Plan Ref: C&F05/06-011

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report asks Members to approve the Statement of Commitment to children and young people's participation which is to be put forward for adoption by the Brent Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Board.

The Statement of Commitment outlines the vision and key principles for engaging children and young people in decision making about the development of services in Brent.

The Statement of Commitment is set out at Appendix 1 of this report.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to endorse this Statement of Commitment which will be used by the Council and its partner agencies to embed the participation and involvement of children and young people in Brent in the development and delivery of services. Each partner organization including the Council will adopt an Action Plan outlining key participation activities for the next 18 months.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 The active involvement of children and young people in shaping services is one of the key areas of the 'Every Child Matters change agenda. The Council and partners will be inspected on how they engage and involve children and young people in the Joint Area Review (JAR) scheduled for December 2005 – January 2006 and every three years there after. Progress in this area will also be assessed in

the Children and Families Department's Annual Performance Assessment (APA) of services delivered to children, young people and families in Brent.

- 3.2 Apart from the legal requirements for children and young people's participation, research undertaken by the DfES and a number of agencies promoting the welfare of children and young people, has shown that there are numerous benefits to be gained from the active participation of children and young people. The key benefits for the council, partner agencies and the local community include:
- More effective targeting of services.
 - The fact that children and young people are shown that they are being valued as young citizens and will foster better local democracy and effective citizenship.
 - The Provision of opportunities for socially excluded children and young people to be involved.
 - The opportunity for young people to learn new skills and increase knowledge. This enables them to make positive contribution to the communities in which they live.
 - The Provision of user information for on-going assessment, monitoring and evaluation of local services
 - Encourages inclusion in participation of a range of children and young people.
 - Improving access to the democratic processes for children and young people, including vulnerable young people and those with special needs.
- 3.3 Results of a recent mapping exercise of participation activities in Brent showed that the Council and its partner agencies have a good record of participation and consultation with children and young people. This exercise highlighted that there needs to be more joined up and focussed participation work to ensure children and young people's views are evaluated and used to improve services delivered to them.
- 3.4 The Statement of Commitment adopts the 'Hear by Right' standards which have been developed by the National Youth Agency in Partnership with the Local Government Association. These standards advocate a participatory model for the involvement of children, young people and families in the design, delivery and evaluation of services they receive.
- 3.5 This Statement of Commitment for children and young people's participation will be for three years and will be reviewed annually.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 Whilst there are no financial implications relating to this Statement of Commitment, finance will be required to implement the strategy and Action Plan. A strategy and Action Plan with full financial implications will be presented to members in November 2005.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 The Children Act 2004 is the legal framework for developing effective accessible services focused on the needs of children, young people and families. The Act places a duty on all agencies providing services for children and young people to agree joint arrangements which will improve the well being of children and young people. Plans must also be in place to ensure that service improvements are attained through involving children and young people and listening to their views.
- 5.2 The Rights of the child to be consulted is included in Article '12' of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- 5.3 It is a requirement under the Children's Act 1989, that Social workers seek the views of children and their families as part of the assessment process.

6.0 Diversity Implications

- 6.1 Implicit in this Statement of Commitment is that all children, young people and families receiving a service in Brent are empowered to participate, be consulted and involved in shaping services they receive.

7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)

- 7.1 There are no staffing implications contained within this report.

Background Papers

- Children Act 2004
- Children Act 1989
- The Un Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 12)
- Consulting and Involving Children and Young People – National Children's Bureau.
- 'Hear by Right', Standards for the active participation of children and young people – The National Youth Agency/ Local Government Association.
- Brent Council's Corporate Priorities 2002-2006

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