



## **The Voice of children and young people...**

- **improve children's and young people's participation in Barnardo's work**
- **create opportunities for young people to say what they think about the services they use and how they can be improved**
- **share their opinions and views on any issues that effect them**

## **Code of practice - The Voice of young people in Barnardo's**

1. Barnardo's believes that services, policies, practice and research concerning children and young people are best developed by involving children and young people in their development.
2. Barnardo's is working towards children and young people who use Barnardo's services to always be considered the first choice in speaking out, lobbying, campaigning and disseminating about matters in public areas.
3. Barnardo's undertakes to listen and take into account in any decision making, the views and attitudes of young people.
4. Children and young people will only be asked by Barnardo's to be involved in such activities when there are clear benefits for themselves or other children and young people in taking the issue forward.
5. Children and young people who take issues into the public arena will only be asked to take part in such activities when they have reached an age that they can give informed consent. Parents and guardians, civil or statutory, will also need to give consent when the young people are below sixteen years of age.

6. Barnardo's undertakes to inform young people as best it can of the likely impact of speaking out in the public arena, and to assist young people in making informed judgements about taking part in such activities.
7. Barnardo's will ensure that young people know that they can decide not to take part in any activity at any time, and will be fully supported by Barnardo's in making such a decision.
8. Barnardo's has a duty of care, and this means that Barnardo's has to ensure that children and young people are not exploited or victimised in the activities that they undertake, and on every occasion responsible staff, in consultation with young people, must assess any risks in these and other areas.
9. Barnardo's undertakes to provide support, preparation and training to young people, ensuring that young people are properly equipped for the tasks including the payment of reasonable expenses.
10. Barnardo's undertakes to use positive images of children and young people in such activities, and will aim to ensure that children and young people are not presented in discriminatory or stigmatising ways.

### **Why do we want children and young people to participate in Barnardo's work?**

At the core of Barnardo's Values is the desire to respect the unique worth of every person. We believe every child and young person has the right to participate in society, and has a right to be heard and involved in decisions that affect them – and other children and young people. Children's services and children's organisations have been dominated by the voices of adults, determining what they think is best for children. Too little attention has been paid to giving young people a voice and a means of communication to influence services and policies that affect them and future generations of children.

It is important that Barnardo's has a children's rights perspective in our work to ensure that the services that we provide are meeting the needs of the children and young people we are caring for and working with. And that when we are campaigning and lobbying about external policies and legislation that we have involved and taken account of young peoples views. How do we know what their views are, whether their needs have been met, unless we ask them, unless we involve them in the decision making processes?

## **What does the Voice project aim to achieve?**

There are provisional outcomes we hope to achieve. Others may emerge as we develop ways to work alongside children and young people.

- To create opportunities for the views of children and young people who use our services to be heard – so they can influence the service, the region and the organisation nationally, in ways that empower the young people and help to develop self confidence and self esteem.
- To enable children's and young people's voices to influence external policy and legislation, and to give opportunity for young people to be involved in campaigning and lobbying.
- To enable Barnardo's policies to be developed from more direct links with the views and experiences of children and young people.
- To give young people the means to communicate their opinions and views directly (to each other and to adults). So they have control and direction of what is said and how it is said without this being channelled or filtered. This could be a newspaper, video, internet, etc. The form of communication vehicle will be decided by young people, with assistance from Barnardo's.

To raise the overall profile and visibility of involving young people throughout Barnardo's, either as employees, volunteers or as members of reference groups.

## **Is there a danger of exploiting young people?**

Yes, Barnardo's recognises a 'duty of care' to children and young people involved in this project – a Code of Practice has been devised to try and minimise the risk of exploitation.

We also recognise that induction, support, training and preparation will be needed in order for employed young people and the reference groups to operate effectively. We will be looking at appropriate accredited training courses for the young people wherever possible. There will also need to be work with Barnardo's staff to engage as much support as possible both for this pilot and the development of effective children's rights focused services.

**Shelly Eades-Jones Tel: 0113 2677913**  
**email [shelly.eades-jones@barnardos.org.uk](mailto:shelly.eades-jones@barnardos.org.uk)**  
**Joanne Rhodes Tel: 0113 2677913**  
**Email [joanne.rhodes@barnardos.org.uk](mailto:joanne.rhodes@barnardos.org.uk)**

