

Tower Hamlets Child Rights Project Brief

Purpose: To provide an update on the Child Rights Project in Tower Hamlets

Date: January 2014

Author: Sheila Begum, Strategy, Policy and Performance Officer

Background

Tower Hamlets was approached by UNICEF UK in late 2011, with an offer to be one of the child rights partners in a project aiming to put children's rights at the heart of public services in the UK. The other participating partners are:

- Glasgow
- Derry
- Newcastle
- Leeds
- and Neath and Port Talbot.

After discussion at (then) Children, Schools and Families Directorate Management Team (DMT), and the Children and Families Partnership Board, it was agreed to accept UNICEF UK's offer and to establish a cross- partnership steering group to progress the work. Although there are no funds for being involved in the project, the Partnership Board was of the opinion that participation in the project would help to develop our focus on engagement and empowerment of children and young people, gaining the benefit of UNICEF's expertise.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child

The child rights project is based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) that sets out rights in 54 articles and two Optional Protocols. It spells out the basic human rights that children everywhere have: the right to survival; to develop to the fullest; to protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation; and to participate fully in family, cultural and social life. The seven core principles of the Convention are the right to dignity, a right to life, survival and development, devotion to the best interests of a child, non-discrimination, interdependence and indivisibility, ensuring transparency and accountability and participation of children and young people. The Convention protects children's rights by setting standards in health care, education, and legal, civil and social services. Equalities is at the heart of the Convention and our adoption of a child rights approach will enhance our response to equalities issues and will contribute to our One Tower Hamlets vision.

Although the Convention has not become part of UK's domestic law, the UK has signed the Convention (on 19 April 1990) and ratified it (on 16 December 1991) and the government is committed to the CRC and to its implementation. As state party, the Westminster

Government is responsible for the overall co-ordination of the CRC across the UK. The Department for Education is the lead department with responsibility for implementing the CRC in England. Examples of policy initiatives embedding a child rights based approach (CRBA) include Every Child Matters, which set out the national framework for local change programmes to build services around the needs of children and young people to maximise opportunity and minimise risk. The Department for Education is also responsible for co-ordinating UK-wide reports on the CRC.

The Convention can be accessed via: http://www.unicef.org.uk/Documents/Publication-pdfs/UNCRC_PRESS200910web.pdf

Tower Hamlets Pilot Project

UNICEF UK asked the child rights partner councils to identify a pilot project that would involve embedding a child rights approach to an area of practice. The goal of a child rights based approach is to promote and secure the full range of a child's social, economic, cultural, civil and political rights. The core tenet is that rights should provide the lens by which all issues impacting on children should be reviewed and resolved. Following discussion with the steering group and approval of the Partnership Board, Tower Hamlets put forward a pilot focused at developing a child rights based approach to commissioning, which was agreed by UNICEF UK. The pilot involves adopting a child rights based approach to commissioning for a substance misuse treatment service, and depending on the outcomes, use the learning from this to inform the development of a child rights approach to all commissioning across the partnership. Alongside the development of the commissioning framework, the Mayor's Office is developing a 'Mayor's Charter of Child Rights' setting out the Mayor's commitment to realising child rights across the borough. A Project Board exists to deliver this project and the steering group is monitoring and evaluating the pilot.

Various elements to the Child Rights Project, progress made to date and any identified associated risks

The table on the next page sets out the various elements of Tower Hamlets child rights pilot, the progress made to date in relation to each of the elements and any associated risks identified.

Project element	Lead	Progress made to date	Associated risks identified
<p>Joint commissioning framework- this sets out the process of specifying, securing and monitoring services to meet people's needs, and securing value for money in the use of resources</p>	<p>Karen Badgery-Children's Commissioning</p>	<p>Update as at October 2013: The framework has been developed to incorporate a child rights based approach to commissioning. As well as adopting a life course approach to the planning and commissioning of services for children, young people and families as set out in the Children and Families Plan (2012-2015), the framework aims to facilitate the development of a commitment to evidence based planning, using both a needs analysis and an analysis of rights as the foundation of this. The long-term vision is that the framework will apply to the development and delivery of services across the Children and Families Partnership.</p> <p>Update as at January 2014: The framework is currently being consulted on by colleagues from Health (Clinical Commissioning Group). This will ensure that the framework is shaped in partnership with key stakeholders and allow for opportunities for joint-commissioning in the future to help achieve the outcomes set out in the Children and Families Plan 2012-15 that are focused on the education, the safety, achievements, health, emotional wellbeing and future of children and young people.</p> <p>The framework will be presented at the Education, Social Care and Wellbeing DMT and the Children and Families Partnership Board later in 2014 for comments and consideration on adopting a child rights based approach to commissioning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slippage to implementing a child rights based approach to commissioning of services due to partner agencies not signing up to the framework collectively.
<p>Child Rights Based (CRB) Needs Assessment</p>	<p>Clare Skidmore-Corporate</p>	<p>Update as at October 2013: The assessment is a child rights based analysis of the needs of children and young people in Tower Hamlets who misuse substances focusing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None

	Research Team	<p>on the following principles embedded in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • participation- ensuring that young people’s participation in decision making is fully embedded in the delivery and development of the substance misuse treatment service • transparency and accountability- service provider is required to make children and young people aware of their rights and be accountable for enabling children and young people to realise their rights • holistic (interdependence and indivisibility) - realising that the rights of children are dependent on the realisation of the other rights set out in the Convention. <p>The CRB based needs assessment is now complete and currently informing the commissioning of the substance misuse treatment service. The assessment needs to be signed off and an executive summary produced by early 2014.</p> <p>The recommendations from the CRB needs assessment will also be used to review our current practice around areas such as partnership working.</p>	
Procuring and commissioning the substance misuse treatment service	Bola Akinfolarin-Children’s Commissioning	<p>Update as at October 2013:</p> <p>This is now underway with providers due to submit their bids for a substance misuse treatment service embedding a child rights approach. The evaluation on the pre-qualification questionnaires (PQQs) submitted by the providers has been completed along with the service specification and method statement informed by the CRB needs assessment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delay in setting up the new service due to slippages in meeting key deadlines • Lack of engagement

		<p>A key crux of the child rights project is ensuring the participation of young people and so we have a group of young commissioners taking part in the tendering process for the treatment service so that they are able to voice their opinions about the commissioning of a service and play a key part in the decision-making process. The input of the young commissioners is reflected in the service specification for the contract.</p> <p>Update as at January 2014: Providers that have submitted their bids for a substance misuse treatment service have had to demonstrate how the child rights principles of participation, transparency/ accountability and holistic (interdependence and indivisibility) would be embedded in their approach to delivery. The service specification was written on the basis of these principles. The young commissioners took part in the evaluation of the bids thereby taking part in key decision-making as their right.</p>	<p>from the young commissioners due to other commitments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited engagement of young people during the evaluation bids due to procurement rules
<p>Mayor's Charter of Child Rights- making Tower Hamlets a Child Friendly borough</p>	<p>Ellie Kuper Thomas- Mayor's Office</p>	<p>Update as at October 2013: The Mayor's Charter, aimed at promoting children's rights across Tower Hamlets, is being developed in consultation with young people. This will help embed a child rights based approach in service areas across the council and other organisations in the borough that work with children, young people and their families. Such organisations, as duty bearers, will be encouraged to sign up to the Charter as a statement of their commitment to upholding child rights. Furthermore, through the Charter, children and young people will be educated about their rights.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of involvement by young people thereby young people not playing an active role in shaping the charter Lack of commitment to uphold the Charter in light of the elections next

		<p>In terms of progress, communication has taken place with some Rights Respecting schools to observe how they implement a child rights based approach. (NB: Rights Respecting schools are schools recognised for achievement in putting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child at the heart of a school's planning, policies, practice and ethos). The Youth Council has also been consulted with to start developing the Charter. Plans are underway to attend the Youth Service Event on the 8th November and meet with play providers and the play association in the borough to ensure that young people and play providers are shaping the Charter.</p> <p>Update as at January 2014: A separate Charter is being created for young people, as agreed by them, with a statement on the actions they can undertake to promote their rights. A range of children and young people have taken part in shaping the Charter and they are now involved in the design of it, with the help of the Communications Team.</p> <p>The Charter is due to be completed and launched on 11th March 2014 in the Council Chambers, Mulberry Place.</p> <p>The Charter is to endorse the practice of treating all children and young people equally without discrimination based on race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion/ belief and age.</p>	<p>year</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reluctance on part of the organisations to uphold the Charter
Youth Engagement	Youth Services	<p>Young people are key to the development of the child rights project. As well as taking part in the commissioning of a substance misuse treatment service and the development of the Mayor's Charter of Child Rights, young people are playing a role in raising the profile of child rights by training youth centres and schools around child rights.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slippages in the engagement of the young people due to other commitment

Value for money

As the council enters a period of further significant budget reduction, the importance of aligning resources more effectively to achieve outcomes has never been greater. A child rights based approach supports this as services are co-designed with young people (participation), are held properly accountable for effective delivery and are delivered in a holistic way. It is expected that involving young people in the design and procurement of services will result in services which better meet their needs, resulting in improved outcomes and a reduced need for further services. Our experience in commissioning young people's substance misuse services is a good example of this, since there is a strong evidence base that the adoption of these principles results in better treatment outcomes at no additional cost.

Child Rights Launch in Tower Hamlets

The Mayor's Charter of Child Rights will officially launch on 11th March 2014. The event will open with speeches and will be attended by children and young people, colleagues from across the Children and Families Partnership and colleagues from UNICEF UK. We will also hold a signing ceremony, which will involve key partner agencies signing their copy of the Charter. The launch will be an opportunity for all agencies working for children and young people to get together for the common cause of making Tower Hamlets a child-friendly borough.

Considering Phase 2 of the Project and the Child Rights Implementation Group

With the Tower Hamlets child rights pilot underway and due to be completed by the end of the financial year (March 2014), the Project Board has reviewed the purpose and Terms of Reference of the Tower Hamlets Child Rights Reference Group, which is the steering group set up to monitor and evaluate the pilot. This has now developed into an Implementation Group with membership reflecting all key stakeholders across the Tower Hamlets partnership such as Social Care, Early Years, Health services etc. The group will play a key role in raising the profile of child's rights, developing the workforce and embedding a child rights approach into the practices of services and teams across the Children and Families Partnership. Phase 2 will also involve evaluating and monitoring the pilot on the commissioning of a substance misuse treatment service and considering the relevant actions to be taken to officially embed a child rights based approach to all areas of commissioning of services across the Children and Families Partnership.

The Project Board is currently contributing to the development of UNICEF UK's child rights Outcomes Framework setting out the outcomes to be achieved for duty bearers and children and young people. The outcomes stem from the principles embedded in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (set out above).

What we want to see in the future

The long term aim is for all commissioners in the borough to consider a child rights based approach to commissioning and to develop and share local good practice and approaches between services and identify a hub for good practice. We will aim to ensure that this culminates into adopting a CRBA into the practices of all services and teams across the Children and Families Partnership. This will result in putting child rights at the heart of public services, a key change to our approach to how we commission, procure and deliver services. When delivering services, local authorities, organisations and agencies will not only look at the needs of children and young people, but also their rights.

