An essential element of being human is an aspiration for a better tomorrow. Throughout history people have attempted to create change to improve their lives, the lives of the oppressed and our world. The focus of this How To guide is the role of practitioners in supporting children and young people to design, deliver and evaluate campaigns that bring about change. We will look at the legal and ethical considerations of campaigning alongside best practice in enabling children and young people to campaign. We do not focus on engaging children in adult-designed and led campaigns, but much of the advice given would also be relevant to those campaigns.

What do we mean by campaigning?

‘Making a change’, ‘getting active’ and ‘making a difference’ are all phrases associated with children and young people’s participation. They could equally be applied to campaigning. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations defines campaigning as:

Organised actions around a specific issue seeking to bring about changes in the policy and behaviours of institutions and/or specific public groups.

There are a number of key features of this definition:

- Campaigning is organised action – it is not just something that happens or expressing a view. It is a planned, coordinated and focused attempt to change something.
- Campaigns are specific – they have objectives and targets – something that someone needs to do differently.
- Campaigns aim to bring about change – to make something substantially different from what it was before.

The change that a campaign may make will vary. It might focus on a change in:

- **law or policy** – such as laws on children in prison or a policy of a local authority to close a local youth centre
- **an institution** – such as changing how a school operates or how a hospital deals with complaints
- **behaviour** – such as getting people to change negative attitudes towards children and young people or people from a minority group.

Successful campaigns by children

In 1995 Canadian Craig Kielburger read a newspaper article about the murder of 12-year-old Pakistani factory worker Iqbal Masih, who had spoken out against child labour. Outraged at the murder, 12-year-old Craig with a group of his classmates founded Free the Children. They went to Southeast Asia and had a brief meeting with then Prime Minister Jean Chrétien to persuade him to tackle international child labour. They drew huge media attention to a neglected issue. Free the Children continues today building schools and campaigning for change for children worldwide.

[www.freethetchildren.com](http://www.freethetchildren.com)
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What are the benefits and outcomes of campaigning for children and young people?

The process of campaigning can give children and young people opportunities to gain many new skills and learn about the community and wider world in which they live. Almost always they will be working with their peers. They will be communicating and making decisions together. Many will take on leadership roles. Success in campaigning can also dramatically improve the lives of children and young people and, often, society as a whole.

Campaigning and the law

Campaigning is central to a healthy and thriving democracy. It is founded on a number of human rights that are held by both adults and children. National legislation does, however, regulate campaigning for different types of organisations and in different situations.

Charities

The Charity Commission has set rules for campaigning and political activity. This is known as CC9 guidance. It says that campaigns must be undertaken by a charity only in the context of supporting the delivery of its own charitable purposes. It must not be the continuing and sole activity of the charity. When deciding whether campaigning is likely to be an effective way of furthering the charity’s purpose, trustees need to weigh up the possible benefits against the costs and risks.

A charity cannot further the interests of any political party. It should remain independent and ensure that any involvement it has with political parties is balanced. A charity must not give support or funding to a political party, nor to a candidate or politician.

This guidance applies whether a charity is doing the campaigning directly or if its staff and resources are enabling and supporting children and young people to lead their own campaign.

Human rights

The Human Rights Act 1998 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child protect children’s right to campaign. Children have the right to:

- freedom of thought, conscience and religion *
- freedom of assembly and association *
- freedom of expression *
- express and have their views taken seriously in matters that affect them
- access information from the mass media
- be informed about their rights.

Rights of different people need to be balanced against one another. While everyone has the right to protest, the government must ensure that this does not infringe on the dignity and right to protest of others. The government can curtail these rights where they significantly stop other people enjoying their rights, but, this can be challenged in the courts.

* These rights are part of UK law and contained in the Human Rights Act. This means that an individual can seek redress in the courts if their rights are breached. For further details see the Participation Works publication Listen and Change available online at www.participationworks.org.uk

Public authorities

A public authority is a general term for organisations that are set up by the government. It includes local authorities, schools, police and health organisations. The Human Rights Act 1998 states that any public authority must not act in a way that infringes on an individual’s human rights including those which enable them to campaign (see box).

Many public authorities have duties that would affect their ability to engage in certain forms of campaigning. For example, equality laws stop public authorities from discriminating between different groups of people and state that they should actively promote good relations between them. This means that they should not support campaigns that promote hatred or intolerance.
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The Local Government Act 1986 (as amended) prohibits local authorities from giving publicity to any political party or publishing any material that appears to be designed to influence public support for or against a political party. These restrictions extend to any organisations which receive local authority funding, including charities.

The law does not just say what public authorities should not do. The Local Government Act 2000 gives local authorities general powers to ‘promote well-being’. These general powers state that the local authority can undertake activities that would improve the social, environmental or economic well-being of a local area. If a campaign would meet one of these criteria, and is lawful in other respects, a local authority could in principle use its resources to engage in a campaign.

Schools
The Education Act 1996 bans the pursuit of partisan political activities by pupils under the age of 12 at a maintained school, both in school and when pupils are off the school site participating in an activity organised by a member of school staff or anyone acting on behalf of the school. The Act also forbids the promotion of partisan political views in the teaching of any subject in schools. In this context partisan means one sided rather than just party political.1

It also requires governing bodies, headteachers and local education authorities to take all reasonably practical steps to ensure that children are offered a balanced presentation of opposing views when looking at political issues.

Case Study One
UKYP campaign on sex and relationship education

Since 2006, the UK Youth Parliament (UKYP) has developed a successful campaign calling for a statutory basis for sex and relationship education (SRE) in schools.

The campaign was started in 2005 by Katrina Mather, a Member of the Youth Parliament (MYP) for East Sussex. Following her election by her peers she conducted a survey of local young people’s experiences of SRE. Interest in the survey grew and following selection as a national UKYP campaign, the survey was rolled out across the country.

In order to build a constructive relationship with the decision maker, in this case government, the campaigners decided to focus on establishing strong evidence of the need for change. They rallied young people from across the country to engage in the research, and over 22,000 responses were received. This evidence base gave the campaign significant status and respect and led to a series of meetings with government ministers and civil servants. Campaigners worked constructively alongside government to demonstrate why SRE needed to be improved.

In December 2007 the government created an Independent Review of Sex and Relationships Education in Schools, which was co-chaired by an MYP. Following the work of the Review, the government announced in October 2008 the principle decision to make Personal, Social and Health Education a compulsory part of the curriculum from ages 5 to 16.

The campaigners attribute their success to their strong evidence base and a receptive government. While there was considerable apprehension within government, ministers and officials continued to listen and engage with the evidence. The campaigners set clear and tangible goals as they went along and responded to changes in the government’s approach.

For more information visit www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk

1 R (on the application of Dimmock) v Secretary of State for Education and Skills [2007] EWHC 2288 (Admin)
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Keeping it ethical
While there are some legal restrictions on campaigning, there are broader questions for practitioners on how to work with children and young people to bring about social and political change in an ethical manner. Difficulties can arise when practitioners are supporting children and young people to campaign for change targeting the practitioner’s employer – in this instance, it is essential to be clear with your manager and the children and young people you are working with as to what are acceptable boundaries.

Start from the children and young people’s agenda
Always start from the views, interests and experiences of the children and young people you are working with. While it may be appropriate to start a conversation with children and young people about social or political issues you are concerned about, the decision to debate further and/or campaign should be made by the children and young people you are working with – not you.

Be a pro-campaigning organisation
Looking at political and/or controversial issues can seem difficult, but it is not in children and young people’s interests to be shielded from controversies and political discussions. It is far better to engage with these issues in a structured and balanced manner than for children and young people to be ignorant about them or hear a one-sided version. Discussing controversial issues in a balanced manner gives children and young people the opportunity to gain important skills and to develop their own opinions, and prepares them for being challenged about these issues in the wider community and in later life.

Challenge children and young people
All people make statements that upon reflection and after hearing an opposing point of view they may reconsider. This is a natural and healthy way for views to be formed and expressed. Part of the role of practitioners is to challenge children and young people to rethink their statements, assumptions and ideas. Challenging their view exposes them to alternative viewpoints. This may include you explicitly playing ‘devil’s advocate’ and showing alternative points of views – even when you do not agree with them yourself! Make it clear to children and young people that you are taking on this role to help encourage debate.

Avoid bias
If you have strong views on a local or national issue, there is a risk that you will bias the discussions with and campaigns led by children and young people. As a practitioner, you need to identify and reflect on your own values, attitudes and beliefs and be critically aware of not allowing these to directly or indirectly bias your work with children and young people. Sometimes sharing your views can spark discussion, but it should not be the focus of discussion. It is best to avoid forcefully sharing your views and you should never proselytise. You are there to talk with children and young people, not at them.

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Do not support discrimination and hatred
Freedom of expression and association are human rights. However, they are not absolute. These freedoms can be limited where they impinge on the rights and freedoms of others. There is no duty to support children and young people’s free expression where they are being manifestly discriminatory, inciting hatred or acting in a manner contrary to a
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healthy democracy. They have the freedom to do this, within the law, without your support.

The use of threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour with the intention of stirring up hatred on the grounds of race, religion or sexual orientation are prohibited by the Public Order Act 1986 (as amended).

If you work for a public authority, supporting children to campaign or express discriminatory views may also run counter to legal obligations under the Human Rights Act and various equality duties. For charities, it is questionable whether such activities would be permissible under the Charities Act 2006. You should consider the impact of supporting children and young people if they choose to engage in this activity. How will other children and young people you work with feel or be affected?

Stand up for human rights values

Human rights protect the freedom and dignity of all people. Practitioners have a key role in explaining to children and young people their human rights as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Human Rights Act. Sharing this information enables children and young people to reflect on their views and attitudes and how they fit into universal human rights values of fairness, respect, equality and dignity.

It is valuable to offer a safe space for children and young people to discuss human rights and how the rights of different groups should be balanced. This can also be an opportunity to state clearly the limits of the debate that you, as an organisation, are willing to participate in.

Be honest with children and young people

If you have limits on what you can, or are willing to, support children and young people to campaign on, tell them as early as possible. Phrases like ‘help you to have your say and get heard’ can give the impression that support for campaigning is unconditional. Usually there is more negotiation involved.
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Case Study Two

Young people’s campaign to get their families to walk more

A group of Year 11 pupils from Plashet School, an all-girls comprehensive school with predominantly Asian pupils in Newham, East London, formed a group to campaign to benefit the local community. They found out that Newham has one of the worst health records in the country and that their local area in Newham has the highest rate of cardiovascular disease in London. They also found that one barrier to exercising, which could help to improve people’s health, was its association with getting sweaty. Instead of pushing purely health messages, which seemed to have been ineffective, they decided to focus on a social incentive to exercise.

They used the concept of We Are What We Do, the idea that we can all change the world through our everyday behaviour, and set out to get people to walk more as part of their daily routine. They chose to target pupils in their own school and local primary schools and are encouraging them to take the message home.

The Plashet School group delivers presentations and runs sessions in schools in which they get pupils to draw a map of where they live with all their favourite places marked. The pupils then give this map to their family or friends as an invitation to come on a walk with them. A Family Pedometer Challenge in their school offers a prize to the tutor group that walks the most over a two-week period. The impact of their campaign is measured on posters in all the tutor groups, which show how much people are walking and encourage walking as everyday behaviour.

For more information visit www.wearewhatwedo.org

The process of supporting campaigns led by children and young people

If children and young people are going to launch a campaign, then they need to be clear why they are campaigning and what they want to achieve.

1. Identify the real problem

A campaign does not just start. It is usually started by people who are angry and outraged at an issue and who have a demand for something to change.

Sometimes, this can happen spontaneously – children and young people you are working with may speak to you about an issue that they are concerned about. It could be something that has emerged suddenly such as the forced deportation of an asylum-seeking friend or the proposed closure of a youth centre. However, it could also be in response to learning about something such as child labour or levels of child poverty in the area.

Helping children and young people to debate and discuss the issue is critical. Anger, emotion and sometimes misunderstanding can taint people’s perceptions. An effective campaign needs to have a good understanding of the root cause of the problem rather than just the symptoms of the problem. A good activity is to challenge children and young people to respond to every statement with ‘why?’ to help them identify why an injustice is occurring. It is the root of the problem that needs to be addressed for long-term, positive and sustainable change to be brought about.
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Often this will require supporting children and young people to do some research. What are the facts of the situation? Is the perceived problem a real one? For example, news about a youth centre closing could be rumour or misrepresentation in the local press. Work with children and young people to research online, go as a group to visit the local library or look through newspaper archives.

Useful tools and activities

‘Problem tree’ analysis helps to identify the root causes of issues by mapping the various causes, effects and solutions around an issue. These are similar to mind maps, but have more structure. Go to http://bit.ly/8Mdpqu to find a campaign tree activity.

2. Plan the campaign

In order to plan an effective campaign, three key questions need to be answered:

• What needs to change?

Every campaign needs a clear and explicit campaign objective. This is a short statement that will ‘solve’ the problem that has been identified. This should be more no longer than one sentence and should encapsulate what it is that the campaign wants to achieve.

Challenge the children and young people to be clear whether they are interested in a particular outcome or output. Broadly speaking an output is something tangible – like a product or service. An outcome is what these things then achieve. It is usually better to try and think of the outcome that you want to achieve. Using our example of the proposed closure of a youth centre, the children and young people would need to decide whether they are campaigning for the centre to stay open (an output) or for the people who used the centre to have access to somewhere safe to go and socialise (an outcome). Campaigning for an outcome usually allows for more flexibility than campaigning for a particular output.

• Who can make that change?

After deciding on what you want, you need to consider who has the power to make this happen. This is your target.

Some children and young people will need further information on who holds the power to make these decisions. Is it the local authority, the national government or a private business?

Useful tools and activities

Democracy Live is part of the BBC website and offers video coverage of the UK’s national political institutions and the European Parliament, and helpful guides to how the different institutions work and who sits in them. Go to www.bbc.co.uk/democracylive

• How do you know when you have made a difference?

It is useful to consider what success will look like and what difference the campaign will make both to the children and young people involved in running it and the intended beneficiaries if the campaign is successful. This can help when setting the relevant evaluation questions for the work (see 4. Reflect and evaluate).
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Case Study Three

School council campaign to give children and young people a voice

Eston Park School, on the outskirts of Middlesbrough, has a very active and prominent school council. In 2008, the school council began a campaign to ensure that Redcar and Cleveland Council consulted children and young people on the roll-out of the Building Schools for the Future programme.

The council had initially neglected to run a full consultation with local children and young people on their plans to rebuild and remodel local secondary schools in the area. The school council worked with a children’s rights advocate to put together their case for why they should be involved in the planning process. Together they researched the issues and found clear government guidance stating that children and young people should be engaged in all aspects of the Building Schools for the Future programme.

Targeting their efforts at the local council, members of the school council attended a public meeting and called for further consultation with children and young people about what they want for their schools. After initially side-stepping the question, the leader of the council agreed to hold off any decisions until children and young people had been asked their views. This was a major concession from the local authority and a significant success for the school council. To pursue the issue, the school council organised a survey of over 900 pupils about what they wanted from any redesign.

3. Take action

Once children and young people know what they want to achieve, and who can help make this happen, the fun begins – they now need to persuade those people to make change happen. In this section we give an overview of some of the methods you can use to create change, and, of course, the more people who get involved the better.

Petitions

What’s involved? A petition is a short statement calling for your target to take action, which is then followed by a list of named supporters.

Legal restrictions? Within the normal limits of the law, a petition to anybody is legal. The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 creates a new statutory process for petitions to local authorities and will force local authorities to respond to petitions.2

Pros? Can draw the target’s attention to your issue and demonstrate mass support for your campaign.

Cons? Sometimes people can be pressured to sign a petition even if they do not have a strong view on the issue or fully understand the issue at hand. Also, you usually need to collect a lot of names for a petition to be effective.

Best practice? Be clear on how many names you want to collect and when you want to collect them by.

Letters

What’s involved? The letters are sent to your target outlining what you want them to do. They can either be individually written or the children and young people can produce postcards which they encourage others to sign and forward.

Legal restrictions? The Protection from Harassment Act 1997 was established to protect people from stalkers but it has been

2 At time of writing, this duty is not yet in force but is due to commence in 2010.

www.participationworks.org.uk
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used to issue injunctions restricting campaigners. It is highly unlikely to relate to a letter campaign unless the letters are malicious and cause alarm or distress.

Pros? Helps your target see the strength of feeling on an issue. MPs and councillors who receive a lot of letters often assume that more people support the issue than those who wrote.

Cons? Similarly worded letters can get ignored; producing, printing and circulating postcards can be expensive.

Best practice? Keep it brief and focus on what you want your target to do and why it is in their interests. Always ask for a reply.

Use social networking sites

Social networking websites such as Facebook, Bebo and MySpace, are increasingly popular tools for raising awareness of a campaign. They are usually free and easy to use, and children and young people can create groups, petitions and fan pages.

See also the Participation Works publication How to use multimedia tools to engage children and young people in decision-making which offers advice on keeping children and young people safe online: www.participationworks.org.uk/resources

Councillor Call for Action

What’s involved? If your campaign relates to a local government matter, the Local Government Act 2000 (as amended) allows local councillors to pass the issue to the council’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC). The committee can then investigate the issue and scrutinise the local authority's actions. Children and young people could ask a councillor to do this on an issue they are campaigning on.

Legal restrictions? Councillors cannot refer planning and licensing decisions or any matter where an individual already has a right of appeal or review. Furthermore, they cannot refer anything vexatious, discriminatory or not reasonable.

Pros? OSC can investigate a local issue in depth, call for evidence and have dedicated staff to help them review the local authority executive’s decisions.

Cons? Just because you get the matter reviewed doesn’t mean you get the decision you want!

Best practice? Information on best practice can be found at the Centre for Public Scrutiny website: www.cfps.org.uk

Get press coverage

All of these methods can be accompanied by work to highlight the action to the press. Children and young people may need training on or resources related to giving an interview or writing a press release. See Find out more.

Demonstrations and marches

What’s involved? A demonstration is a gathering of people, usually with placards and banners, protesting about an issue; a march is a procession that moves between two places.

Legal restrictions? The Public Order Act 1986 (as amended) gives the police the power to restrict any assembly of more than two people in a public place on specified grounds. They can also break up the demonstration or restrict its size and length. It is an offence for a person who organises the demonstration to knowingly fail to comply with conditions imposed by the police, unless they can prove that the failure arose from circumstances beyond their control. Organisers must tell the police at least six days in advance about a march that shows support for or opposition to the views or actions of any person or organisation, publicises a cause or campaign or marks an event. It is an offence for the organiser of the march not to inform the police about the march or to change the details of the march from what they had informed the police.

Pros? Demonstrations and marches can be a lot of fun – they draw public attention to an issue and are loud and colourful. They make great media stunts and can produce good photos and videos. Sometimes small demonstrations can look powerful.

Cons? A demonstration of just a handful of people can look unconvincing to some and
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make the issue look a bit ‘small’. Depending on the length of the march, it can exclude some disabled people or very young children.

Best practice? As a support worker you could be seen by the police as the organiser of the event, so be clear on your legal liability. Have stewards along the route to direct people and keep the march safe.

4. Reflect and evaluate

Pushing for social change is no easy task – you are often challenging established power and social norms. This means that many campaigns may not fully achieve their target. However, the process of campaigning can give children and young people new skills and experiences and lay the ground for future campaigns on a similar issue.

It is important to reflect regularly on how the campaign is progressing, the effectiveness of your tactics and how much closer you are to persuading your target. Look at Evaluating Participation Work – The Guide for more information (see Find out more).

Useful tools and activities

The National Council for Voluntary Organisations has released a set of National Occupational Standards for campaigning. They are designed for use by anyone who manages and runs campaigns in the voluntary and community sector and have been approved by the Skills Awarding Body UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES). However, they can also be used to think about the knowledge and skills needed by children and young people when they campaign. Go to http://bit.ly/1SXaxp
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Find out more

This list of resources and websites should help you find more detailed information and follow up areas of interest. (All websites checked 8 February 2010).

http://bit.ly/5CXHdE

Teachernet (2007) Teaching about controversial issues

http://bit.ly/7YHJdS

Useful books

A short book that covers many of the practicalities of running a local campaign, with details of writing press releases, managing simple accounts and working with other organisations.

More detailed handbook setting out theory and strategy for effective campaigning. Very good overview of influencing the legislative process and choosing the right campaign tactics.

Jones, Dan (2003) Banners & dragons – The complete guide to creative campaigning Amnesty International UK
A very practical guide to making tools for campaigning – information on making banners, masks, posters and even cakes!

This book focuses on creating plans and running campaigns when opposing planning decisions but includes a number of good tips for any campaign.

Resources for adults supporting children and young people to campaign

National Youth Agency
A workbook and accredited training programme to support children and young people in developing the skills for making change happen. Includes activities and session plans on skill building for children and young people. Learn more at www.hbr.nya.org.uk

A guide to accompany the highly successful YouthAct programme which supports groups of 11–18 year-olds to identify issues of concern to them and their communities and to develop campaigns to tackle them. Learn more at www.citizenshipfoundation.org.uk/youthact

Participation Works (2009) Evaluating Participation Work
Evaluation is a process of finding out what has been achieved during or after an activity/ intervention. Our guide and toolkit shows you the best ways of evaluating children and young people's participation work. Learn more at www.participationworks.org.uk

Resources for children and young people

This informative guide is crammed with information on how children and young people can influence decision-makers at all levels. From local government to national politicians and European decision-makers, this guide has it all for children and young people to be successful in their lobbying. Learn more at www.byc.org.uk

This guide for children and young people explains children's rights and how to take action. It includes a series of activities that children and young people can use with their peers to lead sessions on campaigning. Go to www.getreadyforchange.org.uk

www.participationworks.org.uk
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Useful websites about campaigning

www.campaigncentral.org.uk
Lots of useful and helpful hints on running campaigns, with especially good and up-to-date overview of the law.

http://handbook.battlefront.co.uk/
Website for children and young people that has a lot of videos and text about effective campaigning. Also includes videos from 20 young campaigners who ran their own campaign and were featured on the Channel 4 Battlefront TV show.

www.louder.org.uk
Website that draws together a range of online activist tools enabling anyone to create and run their own campaigns and connect up with others, either campaigning on similar issues or in the same area.

www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/campaigningeffectiveness
Website with detailed information on effective campaigning, tools and resources.

www.schools.wearewhatwedo.org
Free how-to-campaign videos with tips for making posters and doing presentations. Children and young people can also set up their own groups to track their action.

Useful websites when campaigning

Find your MP and Councillor
www.writetothem.com allows you to find and write online to councillors, MP, MEPs or London AMs for free.

Find your local youth council
The British Youth Council has a listing of local youth councils across the country – http://bit.ly/3sxzpq

Freedom of information
www.whatdotheyknow.com allows you to make a Freedom of Information request to a public body and gives tips on finding out non-public information.

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Case Studies:
Eston Park School, Middlesborough
Year 11 students from Plashet School, Newham, London
UK Youth Parliament

Please note
Information contained in this publication does not constitute legal advice and should not be solely relied upon.

Participation Works enables organisations to involve children and young people effectively in the development, delivery and evaluation of the services which affect their lives.

The Participation Works How To guides are a series of booklets that provide practical information, useful tips and case studies of good participation practice. Each one provides an introduction to a different element of participation to help organisations enhance their work with children and young people.

Participation Works is an online Gateway to the world of children and young people’s participation. Visit www.participationworks.org.uk to access comprehensive information on policy, practice, training and innovative ideas.

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