



hear by right

# What's Changed

as a result of young people's participation

## Places to go, things to do



**C**HILDREN and young people have a right to be involved in the decisions that affect them, and to take an active part in shaping where they live and the services that they use. This is enshrined in international law through the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* and, in England, through the *Education and Inspections Act 2006*. This requires local authorities to provide a range of opportunities for young people (the 'youth offer') which must take their views into account. Most recently, *Aiming high for young people: a ten year strategy for positive activities*, sets out the government's commitment to increasing young people's influence over activities and provision, including direct control of budgets.

Opportunities for participation must be linked to achieving change and improving policy and services. This can take two aspects: changes within organisations, and changes in the lives of children and young people.

The government's *Every Child Matters* programme sets out five 'outcomes' for children and young people: being healthy; staying safe; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution; and securing economic wellbeing.

The National Youth Agency has developed a tool, *What's Changed for children and young people*, which records young people's own views on what's better for them as a result of their participation, linked to these five outcomes. The *What's Changed* tool accompanies other participation resources developed by The NYA,

including *Hear by Right*, which provides a framework for organisations to involve children and young people in decision-making, and *Act by Right*, an accredited workbook to help young people gain the skills they need to make change happen.

This collection of *What's Changed* case studies focuses on a key element of the youth offer – 'things to do and places to go'. They show how young people in five different areas have worked together to gain facilities and provision that respond to their needs.

Young people in Nassington, Northamptonshire wanted a place of their own without an adult presence. They achieved this through working with others and building their own shelter, the Nassington Eco Friendly Youth Shelter, to their own specification.

The lack of youth service provision in Sunderland South led to young people taking action to change this. Young people have led on all aspects of the the Box Youth Project, and the result has been the successful building of a youth centre.

In Birmingham, young people living on Druid's Heath estate had nowhere to go and were fed up with being moved on all the time. A group of young people consulted with other young people to find out their views. They have instigated the building of a range of facilities including a Multi Use Game Arena and a new shelter and bench area.

Young people involved in a popular after-school club in Brixham, Devon, identified a need for an outdoor play area. Deciding upon a free play style, Indigos Go Wild has created a safe space for adventure with a range of facilities including a peace garden, tyre swings, tree dens and a cabin.

In Newham (London), local youth centres were mainly faith based but young people wanted somewhere where all could mix together. Working with a range of professionals, young people have created a new youth centre, E13 Mix, for young people with shared interests that cross racial lines.

The young people in these five projects have created facilities providing 'things to do and places to go' for themselves and for others. They have succeeded in getting their voices heard and have brought about tangible change.

Lord Ouseley said in his report after the Bradford disturbances: *'If the people who are supposed to benefit from change do not know that it's happening, then it probably isn't happening'*.

It is clear from these *What's Changed* stories that change has happened and that young people made it happen.

For more *What's Changed* stories, visit the *What's Changed* archive section of The NYA website: [www.nya.org.uk/whatschangedarchive](http://www.nya.org.uk/whatschangedarchive).

## Organisation

Nassington Eco-friendly youth shelter

### What was the problem?

Young people in the village had been using a bus stop as an informal youth shelter. This had generated tensions with some residents living nearby. As a result of the tensions the parish council invited young people and local residents to a round table meeting. Young people at the meeting said they wanted a place and they did not want adults to be there. This established the need for young people to have a meeting place of their own.

*'We live at the top end of the village and all that's there is an old bus stop made of breeze blocks and a playing field. The playing field has a cricket pitch and some swings, but there isn't really anything for us. So we used the old bus stop as a sheltered meeting place. Behind the bus shelter there*



Young people involved in the project



### Work on the building of the youth shelter

*are some bungalows and I can understand why we, as a bunch of teenagers, could seem intimidating to some of the people living there.*

*In the local newsletter someone wrote a letter complaining about us. They accused us of being 'druggies', 'drug dealers' and called the bus stop a 'brothel'. This made me really angry, so I got together with some of my friends and wrote a letter back, which we sent to the editor. We basically said that we understood that there might be a problem but that we had nowhere else to go and that criticising us in the local newsletter was unfair. It was at that time that Sarah from the parish council got involved.'* Young Person

### What happened next?

Working with Connexions and Young Farmers the young people began developing their plans including the type of

meeting place that they wanted, what it was to be made out of, funding and location. They made a video in order to get funding by comparing surrounding villages facilities with their own facilities. The council meanwhile sought a suitable place to locate the youth shelter. The cricket club donated some land for the young people to use and the youth shelter has been built here.

### What has changed?

The eco friendly straw bale youth shelter has been built and is used by the young people.

*'The whole thing has taken about three nearly four years. So I feel relieved that we have stuck it out and have got something.'* Young Person



The completed eco-friendly youth shelter

### Organisation

The Box Youth Project, Sunderland

### What was the problem?

There was no youth service provision for Sunderland South when the project started five years ago. Young people wanted to develop a youth centre and identified a disused community building that would be suitable.

*'We all got involved so that young people don't have to hang around on the streets and have somewhere to go for help and guidance if they need it'.* Young Person

### What happened next?

Young people formed a campaign group and have led the project throughout the last five years. They have been involved in all aspects of the project including consulting



Young people working on designs for the centre

the local community, visiting other youth projects, applying for funding and designing the youth centre.



Working on the building refurbishment

The disused building was leased from the city council.

*'We went into our learning room and decided what colour we would put on the walls. When the paint came, we worked as a team to get all four walls painted. We also helped in the rest of the centre where other groups of young people were doing their bits'.* Young Person

### What has changed?

The youth centre has been built, through the modification of the disused community building. The centre is popular with local young people.

*'We have created a chill-out area with sofas, a TV, playstations, a dance mat, table tennis table, a football table, leaflet racks, notice boards and a few magazine racks where we get information from'.* Young Person

*'I have become a different person while working on the Box*

*Youth project, if it were not for the staff and the committee of the project I would not be where I am today – a professional youth worker. Before I got involved I did not know where I was going in life'.* Young Person

*'We knew it wouldn't happen overnight and that it would be hard work. We had a lot of criticism from people saying it would never work, but we never stopped believing that we would have a youth project in our area. I think the success of the project is because we were treated like adults from the start which we have never had before and also we had staff members that were behind us 100 per cent, although we had never done anything like this before'.* Young Person

The Box Youth Project now holds the tender for youth provision in the South of Sunderland.



The completed youth centre

## Organisation

The Maypole Centre, Birmingham.

## What was the problem?

Young people from the Druid's Heath estate had nowhere to go and were fed up with being moved on all the time. Through their involvement in the Maypole Action Group, a group of young people decided to discover what other young people thought about the estate where they lived. They devised a questionnaire and asked nearly 150 children and young people their views of the estate. It was discovered that respondents thought the estate was a dirty and boring place to live.

*'They say "go and play on the fields", but they're covered in dog mess. You can't play there.'* Young Person

*'Its stupid. We want to be active, but there's nowhere to go.'* Young Person



Work beginning in the park



Maypole Action Group members

The survey also found that 90 per cent wanted to see more facilities for young people, in particular an adventure swing, a multi-purpose sports area, a skate park and more seating areas and shelters.

*'We got ideas for different facilities from going round Birmingham and taking photos of things like seating areas, skate parks, football and basketball pitches, adventure swings and floodlighting.'* Young Person

## What happened next?

The young people presented the results to a group of local decision makers including the parks officer, the district officer responsible for community facilities, housing providers and police. A bid for NRF funding was successful. The funding was used to build the facilities requested by the young people.

## What has changed?

A Multi Use Game Arena, letting young people play basketball and football has been built. A new shelter and bench area have also been created. The facilities attract young people from all over the estate. Young people organise their own matches.

*'Young people now have a place to call our own.'* Young Person

*'It's great to finish a game with out being moved on by residents and police.'* Young Person

*'It's great to have a place to play football.'* Young Person

The police have reported a reduction in anti-social behaviour since the facilities have been in place. The group received a Record of Achievement Award from the Council House and the Lord Mayor.



The completed Multi Use Game Arena

### Organisation

Indigos Go Wild, Brixham, Devon.

### What was the problem?

Originally an after school club, Indigos had grown in popularity. Young people were saying that they were getting into trouble for playing on the local streets. Recognising a need for an outdoor area for children and young people to play, the club approached a local school to use their fields. They visited an adventure play park for ideas. The young people liked the free play element of the park and decided that was what they wanted.

### What happened next?

The school agreed that Indigos could use and develop a disused and overgrown plot of land. The project then contacted Torbay Council to see if they could use the LEA owned land. After negotiations, the lease was agreed. Funding was also secured.



Raising a hand-carved wooden totem pole

Young people cleared the land together with many local residents who turned up on the day as a result of word of mouth.



Working on the cabin for the park

The group established clear ground rules from the start: respect yourself; respect others; and respect the land. Indigos Go Wild has continued to grow and develop by experimenting and listening to what children and young people want.

*'When it's finished I know that I've done some of it and I feel proud of myself.'* Young Person

### What has changed?

Over 18 months the children, young people and local residents have developed a safe space for adventure play, with many facilities including a peace garden, community area, shed, cabin and tyre swings. Children and young people can learn about trees, knife carving, fire building and outdoors cooking through the Forest School.

The space also offers a resource for the community as a whole – community barbeques and bonfires are often

held on the land. Indigos has also invited other local groups of children and young people to use the space.

*'Everyone makes trouble on our street but if you come down here there's no trouble. You can't really get hurt and you can have loads of fun.'* Young Person

*'People from six to adult age come here to play.'* Young Person

*'The complaints against children playing in the streets, and being a nuisance and running in and out of people's gardens have virtually gone. The only reason I can see for the change is Indigos; this is where they all are, enjoying themselves.'*



Building a den

*'You've got a whole group of children who wouldn't normally play together.'* Local Policeman

The project has won two government awards because of the positive impact on the local community.

## Organisation

EI3 Mix and Newmartin Community Youth Trust, London

## What was the problem?

Before EI3 Mix was built the local youth centres tended to be faith based. Young people wanted a place where everyone could mix together. Building on the popularity of a club night run by REIN (Racial Equality in Newham), a bid was made to develop a purpose built facility for local young people.

*'We wanted a centre that anyone could come to, regardless of race, religion, colour.'* Young person



Breakdancing lessons

## What happened next?

Following a successful bid for funding, young people worked alongside a range of people including architects, builders and a project manager to help design and equip the new centre.

*'We met a couple of companies and they showed us lots of drawings. In the end we went for the one that was willing to work alongside us and not just tell us what they wanted.'* Young Person

*'We've been involved in every stage of the process... This is a club designed by young people for young people.'* Young Person

## What has changed?

EI3 Mix was officially opened in March 2007. Facilities include a space to practise performance arts, a chill out room, computer facilities and a garden and patio. Other activities include pool, table tennis and Nintendo wii. Group projects have also been developed. One



The new IT suite

project, GLOBE (Global Learning Opportunities Beyond Expectation) saw a group travel to Japan to meet young people there, with a reciprocal meeting planned for December. A Youth Media project is engaging young people in all aspects of publishing and is enabling them to make their own music and films.

*'I'm happy that we have a bigger and better space, it's different from other centres, it's not dingy it's unique and it is just how we want it.'* Young Person

*'We don't have to walk far to the youth club. It's safe because it's not a normal youth club; you have to come for a specific activity.'* Young Person

*'I think knowing you have made a contribution to society is important.'* Young Person



EI3 Mix's main room

What's Changed stories are collected using the What's Changed tool. The What's Changed tool is a template that can be used to map and show evidence of participation outcomes. It records, measures and reports the results of children and young people's participation where a tangible change has taken place. This helps to demonstrate meeting the Every Child Matters five outcomes. Any example of participation will show 'making a positive contribution' but most show one or more of the other ECM outcomes too. Examples of What's Changed for children and young people are a crucial part of evidencing an adequate level of participation for any organisation.

What's Changed tool and downloads – [www.nya.org.uk/whatschangedtool](http://www.nya.org.uk/whatschangedtool)

Full collection of What's Changed stories – [www.nya.org.uk/whatschangedarchive](http://www.nya.org.uk/whatschangedarchive)

General information about What's Changed – [www.nya.org.uk/whatschanged](http://www.nya.org.uk/whatschanged)

Information and downloads about Hear by Right – [www.nya.org.uk/hearbyright](http://www.nya.org.uk/hearbyright)

Information about Act by Right – [www.nya.org.uk/participation](http://www.nya.org.uk/participation)

The Participation Team at The National Youth Agency collects and showcases What's Changed stories. If you wish to showcase your participation practice please complete a What's Changed tool with young people and return it to [Lisas@nya.org.uk](mailto:Lisas@nya.org.uk)

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