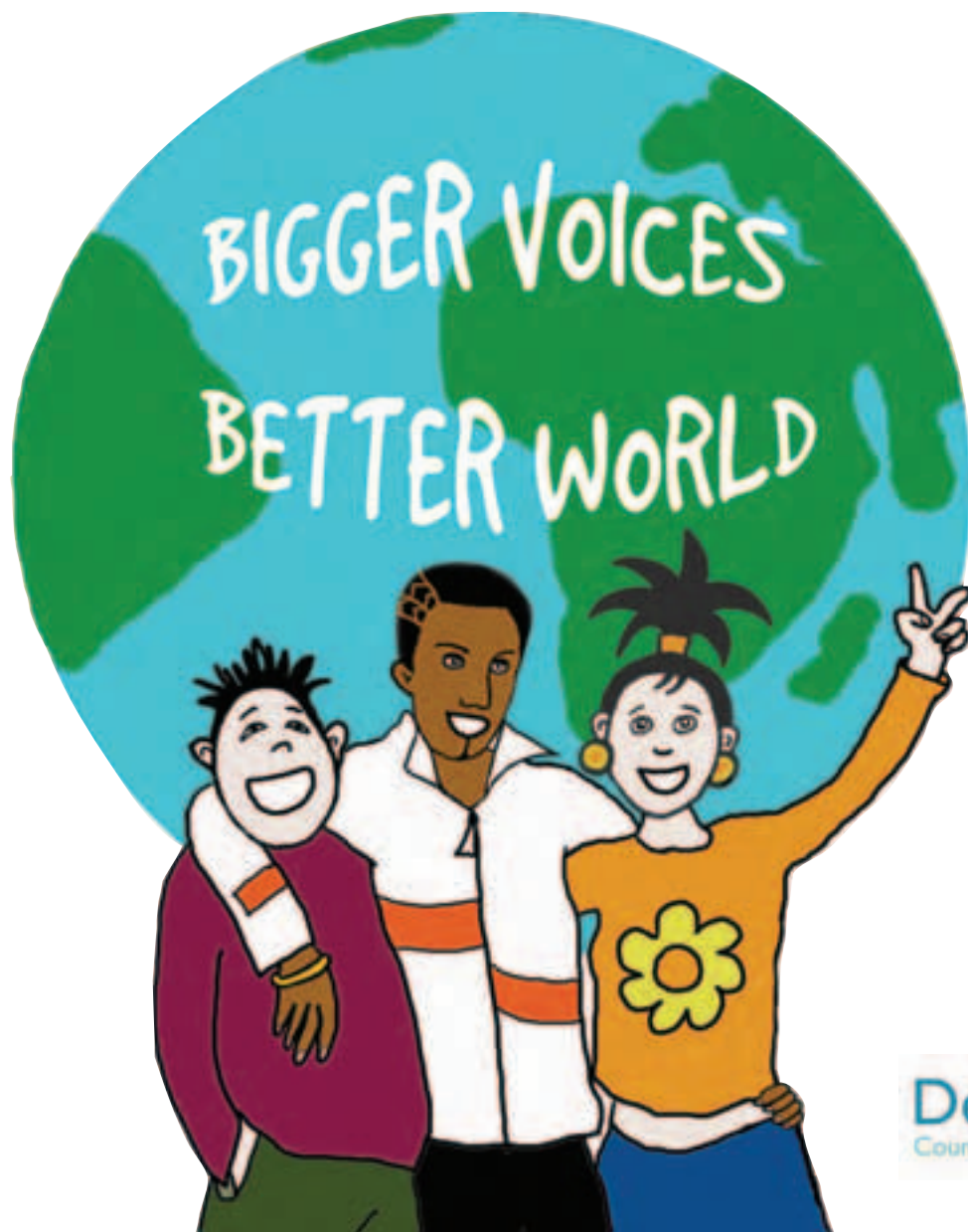


# BIGGER VOICES... BETTER WORLD!

## **Involving Young People in the Decision-Making of Devon**

A Strategy for Youth Empowerment within  
Devon County Council 2006-2008



# FOREWORD

When Devon County Council adopted Article 12 of the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* in October 2005, we gave a commitment to ensure children and young people have a greater say in the decisions that affect their lives. We strengthened that promise earlier this year when we made children and young people one of our top priorities in our Strategic Plan 2006-11.

We are pleased to have had the opportunity to work with colleagues and young people to create **Bigger voices...Better world!** which is a practical plan of action to help us deliver our commitments and make young people's rights a reality

We will know that we have succeeded if young people from all sections of the community:

- feel that their contribution is valued
- can see how services for themselves, their peers and the wider community are changing as a result of their involvement
- are proud of their work and are happy to tell others about it
- have confidence and trust in Devon County Council
- want to act as champions to encourage their peers to get involved.

This will build on what we are already doing by ensuring young people have their voices heard in Devon, through the **Young People's Shadow Executive**, nationally, through the members of the **UK Youth Parliament** and internationally through the **Association of European Regions Summer School**.

We look forward to taking the next steps and sharing more of the decision-making about Devon with its young people.

*Councillor Brian Greenslade, Leader of the Council  
Phil Norrey, Chief Executive  
April 2006*

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is a challenging and exciting time for the young people of Devon. The establishment of the Children's Trust and the Children and Young People's Directorate is giving young people a once in a lifetime opportunity to be involved at the very start of the organisations which will have an enormously positive impact on their lives.

At the very heart of all these developments is the *Hear By Right* agenda which places the voice of young people at the centre of the services which operate on their behalf.

The commitment of Devon County Council has been demonstrated by its adoption, in October 2005, of Article 12 of the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child** which states:

*"Children and young people have the right to say what they think should happen, when adults are making decisions that affect them, and to have their opinions taken into account"*

and also by its stated intention to achieve the advanced *Hear By Right* standards by March 2008.

It will take time, energy and commitment from all who are involved to ensure that young people are able to access opportunities to be involved in shaping all the Council services which affect them, both currently and in the future. It will also challenge established methods of working and current practices throughout the organisation.

The Youth Service Participation Team carry the main responsibility for supporting and encouraging the Directorates of the Council to provide opportunities for young people to be involved at every level of the development of services which impact on them. The appointment of *Young People's Champions* throughout the Council is seen as vital to the success of this key development.

The young people of Devon and the National Youth Agency will constantly evaluate and feedback on the progress of this agenda and the changes which have come about as a result.

# WHAT IS DEVON LIKE?\*

Devon is a beautiful place to live. It covers an area of 656,704 hectares and is the only English county with two separate coastlines; it also has two national parks. It is the third largest county in the country but is one of the most sparsely populated with many areas having a very low ratio of people to land. There are large areas, such as Dartmoor and Exmoor, where people live in very scattered communities. Most of the population is based in the City of Exeter and its surrounding areas and the market and coastal towns. In Devon 81% of households own at least one car. Transport in the rural areas is limited and so getting to work, school or leisure activities is very difficult.

Approximately three quarters of a million people live in Devon, but every year nearly eight million visitors come to the County either on business or for holidays. Each year there are more deaths than births recorded, but the population is gradually increasing as about 4,400 people move into Devon each year. However many young people aged 20-24 leave to live in other places as they cannot find the kind of jobs which will give them a good career.

There are fewer unemployed people in Devon than many other parts of the country, with 1.8% being declared as unemployed. However, jobs are often low paid, and seasonal. Many jobs are connected with the tourist industry, which means long hours in the summer but nothing in the winter. There are only a few large employers in Devon which means that there are limited opportunities for good career progression. The majority of businesses (84%) are small and employ less than 10 people. The main employment areas are agriculture, manufacturing, wholesale, retail, repair, health, social care and tourism.



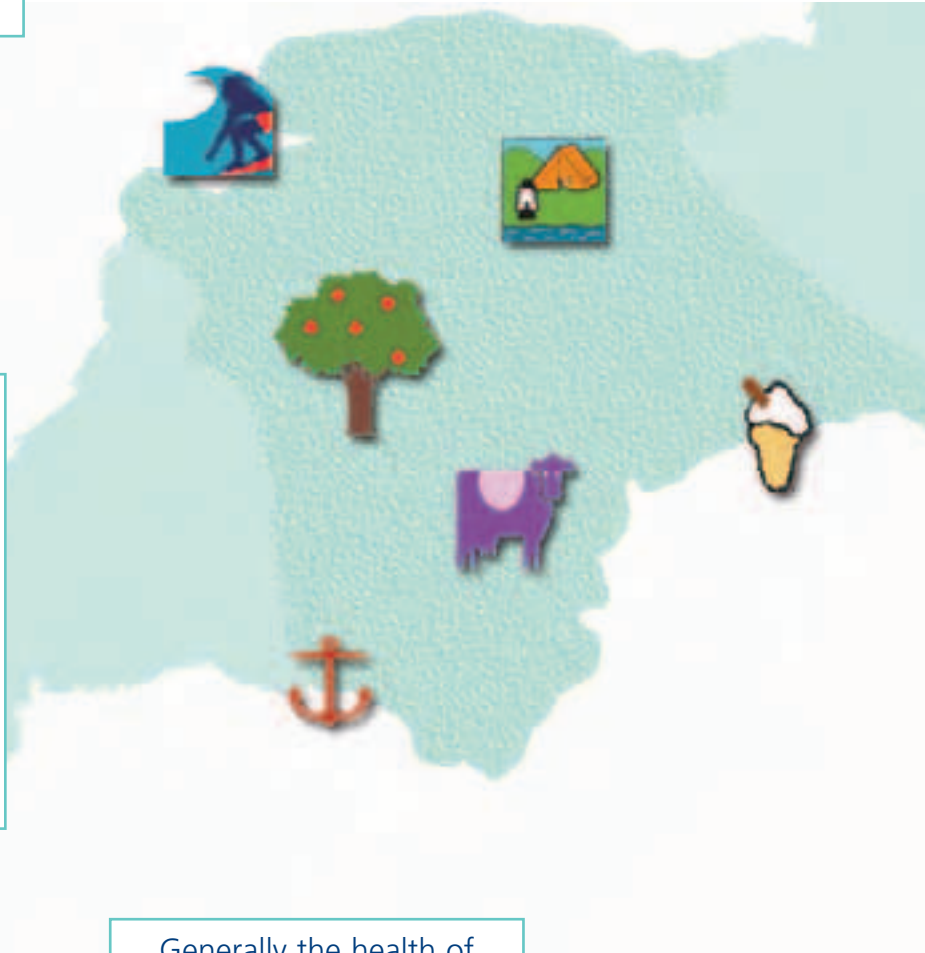
\* Information taken from *A Community Strategy for Devon*, Devon Strategic Partnership

Housing in Devon is more expensive but wages are much lower than other parts of the country. An average house costs something like eight times the average annual salary. This means that it is difficult for first time house buyers to find a house where they want at a price they can afford.

The Black and Minority Ethnic community has doubled in the last 10 years but with only around 8000 people it still only represents about 1.1% of the population. Many are able to describe experiences of prejudice and discrimination. Racist incidents (relative to the population) are higher in the South West of England than anywhere else in the country.

Young people in Devon are achieving very similar numbers and grades of GCSEs to those in the rest of the country with 51% gaining 5 or more GCSEs at grades A\*-C. 89% of 16 year olds remain in full-time education and 71% of 18-24 year olds are either in full-time education or employment.

Generally the health of people in Devon is good but there are concerns about young people's health particularly in regard to obesity, binge drinking and smoking (some 22% of young people smoke regularly at age 15).





## WHAT IS THE PARTICIPATIVE INVOLVEMENT OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE?

### What do we mean by children and young people?

Definitions of children and young people vary considerably depending on the legal, social or political context in which they appear.

The *Hear by Right* standards do not define an age range in the belief that all views matter and that children and young people of any age should be taken seriously and responded to.

**Bigger voices...Better world!** focuses on work with young people within the age range of 13-19 years as this corresponds with the age range defined in the *Transforming Youth Work Agenda* and partner organisations such as *Connexions*.

Good practice also exists in Devon with children aged from 5 plus through *Early Years*, *Sure Start* and the *Children's Fund*. Where appropriate this will be included in our overall goals for youth participation, consultation, citizenship and democracy through partnerships.

## THE PARTICIPATIVE INVOLVEMENT OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN DECISION-MAKING

There are many opportunities for children and young people to take an active part in shaping many of the decisions made for and about them. These decisions may impact on them now or in their future.

Children and young people have strong opinions, clear views and lots of skills but they may struggle to make their voices heard. Adults and organisations need to enable young people to develop the skills and responsibilities necessary to share their views effectively. Organisations, and the adults within them, also need to develop their skills in supporting and helping children and young people to have their views heard.

Effective participation produces all sorts of positive outcomes and benefits for children and young people, services and the wider community.



## **It is a basic human right to be heard**

Devon County Council has adopted Article 12 of the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child** which says that all children and young people have the right to say what they think about decisions that affect them

### **benefits to the wider community**

*for example*

- more respect for children and young people
- better community relations
- more trust between generations
- active citizens

### **benefits to children and young people**

*for example*

- learning new skills
- building self confidence
- feeling more valued and influential

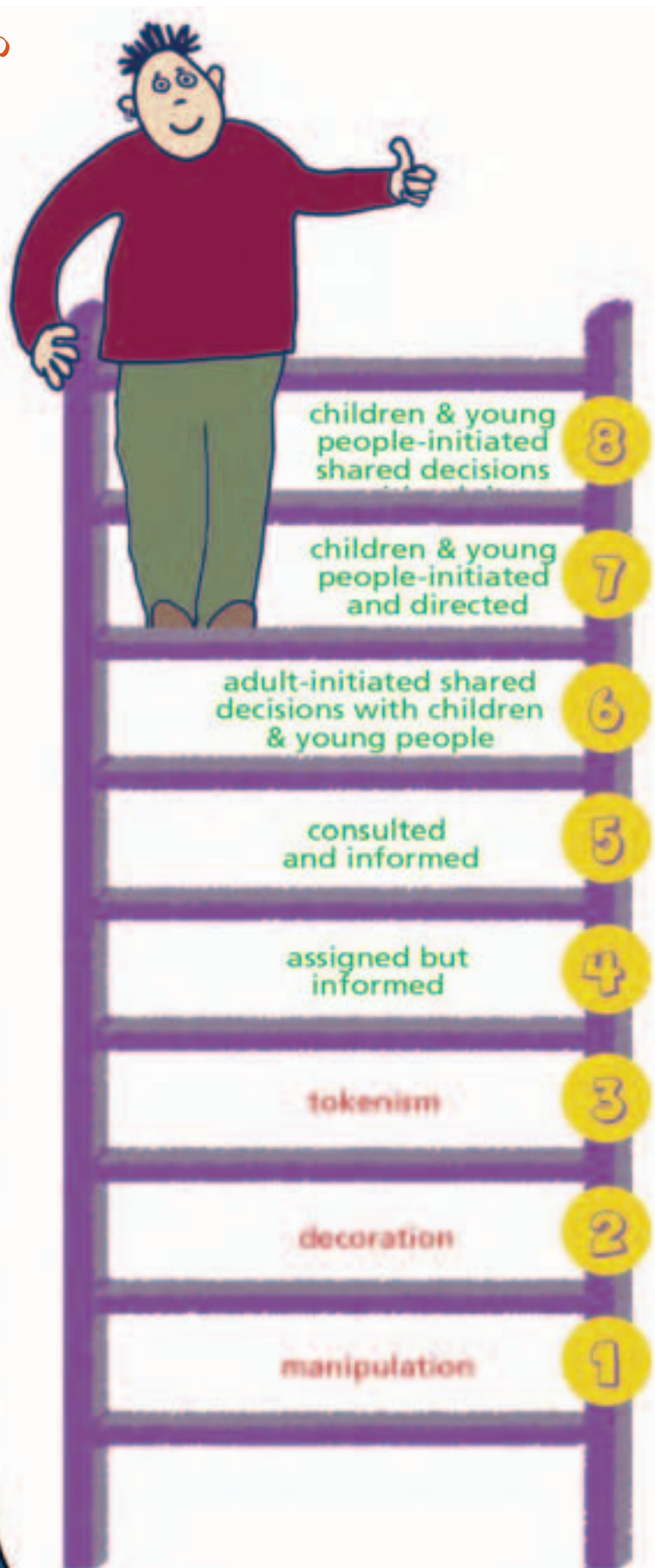
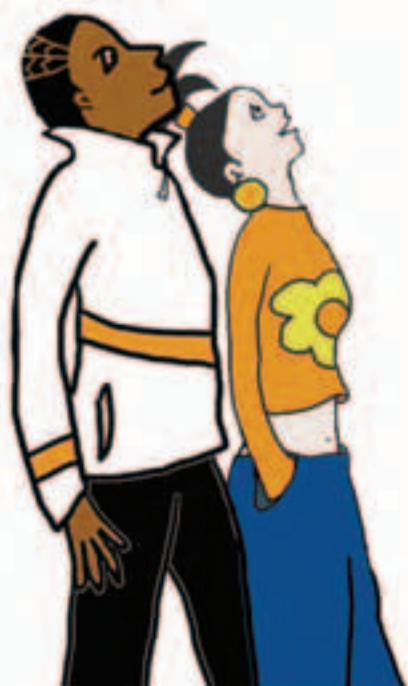
### **benefits to services**

*for example*

- more effective services for all citizens
- helping organisations to be innovative, inclusive and responsive

# HOW CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE CAN TAKE PART AND BE CONSIDERED, USING THE FOLLOWING MODEL:

**'Eight levels of children & young people's participation'**



DEGREES OF PARTICIPATION

NON-PARTICIPATION

# WHAT ELSE IS GOING ON AND WHERE DOES ALL THIS FIT?

**Bigger voices...Better world!** is designed to take Devon County Council, a four star authority, to the advanced standards of *Hear by Right* as agreed with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in the 2005 Local Public Sector Agreement (LPSA). By 2008 Devon County Council will have children and young people actively involved in the decisions on services provided to the communities of Devon. This will mean participation, consultation, citizenship and democracy for young people in Devon, and will build a relevant council fit for the future.

The Devon County Council *Strategic Plan for 2006–2011* lists its values which are repeated here to illustrate how **Bigger voices...Better world!** endorses and satisfies best practice.

## OUR VALUES

The following values are at the heart of everything Devon County Council does:

### Putting the people of Devon first

We are here to achieve the best for the people of Devon and identifying and addressing their needs is at the heart of everything we do. In working with people we aim to listen; to be fair, open and honest; and to do what we say we will do.

### Improving and Innovating

We want to be a modern and improving local authority providing efficient, cost effective services in touch with people's needs. This means grasping opportunities for change and being innovative in finding the best solutions for the present and the future.

### Valuing everyone

One of Devon's strengths is its diverse people and communities. We will celebrate and harness this diversity by demonstrating respect, understanding and fairness. We want Devon to be a county for everyone and we are committed to tackling discrimination and exclusion, promoting social justice and good community relations and ensuring fair access to our services.

### Working together

We need to work in close partnership with local communities and organisations to achieve our vision for Devon. Effective partnership working means building trust, developing a common understanding of the needs of our communities, agreeing joint priorities, taking collective action and pooling our resources where this will improve services.



The Devon County Council Strategic Plan for 2006–2011 has five priorities with the theme of '**Greener Devon**' running through all.



The priorities include

**Giving children and young people a better start in life**



**Giving children and young people a bigger say in the decisions that affect their lives**



**Being valued members of the community who contribute positively**



**Encouraging children and young people to actively contribute to improving their local environment**

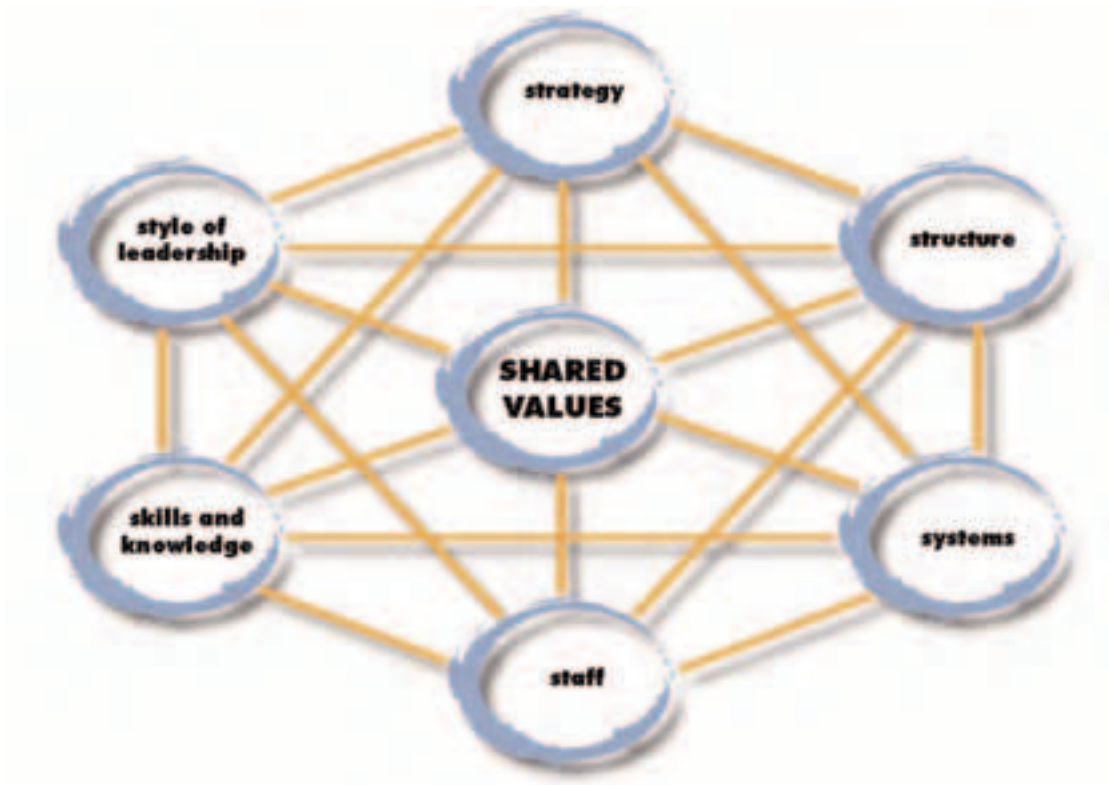


**The whole county council is affected by Bigger voices...Better world!**



## HOW WE WILL DO IT

We are using *Hear by Right*, which is a list of standards for the active involvement of children and young people. Making this happen is like building a house; everything has to be done right and come together. It's no good having big ideas and plans but not having the skills to build soundly and there's no point having the skills if there's no plan that's going to work properly.



# 1. SHARED VALUES (what everyone believes)

Throughout the involvement of children and young people there will be clear shared values where everyone is respected and is treated equally, with honesty, openness and sharing of information	What will we achieve?	By when?	Who will do it?	What differences will you see?	Where are we now?
	The county council will adopt Article 12 on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which says that all children and young people have the right to be involved with decisions that affect them	October 2005	The County Council, partners and MYPs	Children and young people will have the right to get involved with having their say on anything that affects them	We have adopted the statement but that's the easy bit! <b>Bigger voices...Better world!</b> is the plan that will make this happen
	There will be a Charter on the Rights and Responsibilities of Children and Young People in Devon	October 2006	Youth Service Participation Team with support from schools, young people, the Children's Trust and the Youth Service	You will have a card, which gives you information. There will be information in schools and youth centres and Devon County Council public buildings telling you about it	Consultation with young people at Kongomana – Summer 2005
	All organisations that Devon County Council works with will have shared beliefs	January 2007	Elected members; directors; service heads and any organisations with whom we are partners	Many of the organisations that young people and children come into contact with in Devon will have a similar approach and want to ensure that young people and children are valued citizens	Development by YPSE – Autumn 2005



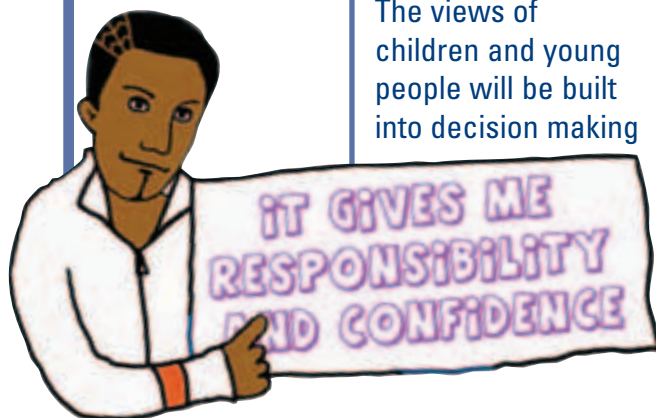
## 2. STRATEGY (the Plan)

	What will we achieve?	By when?	Who will do it?	What differences will you see?	Where are we now?
<p>There will be a strategy for the active involvement of children and young people that is simple, easy to understand, that works for the children and young people involved, is exciting and challenging and is young people-friendly</p>	<p><b>Bigger voices...Better world!</b> is the main plan for how Devon is involving children and young people in its work. However, each directorate, service and also our partners will also be looking at how they are going to enable children and young people to be actively involved here in Devon, regionally and nationally</p>	<p>April 2006 and ongoing</p>	<p>Devon Youth Service; chief executive and directors; young people; elected members</p>	<p>Copies of <b>Bigger voices...Better world!</b> will be available if you want to have one. You will also be able to see it on <a href="http://www.devon.gov.uk">www.devon.gov.uk</a> and <a href="http://www.ukypdevon.co.uk">www.ukypdevon.co.uk</a></p> <p>We expect young people and adults to ask us how we are doing</p>	<p>By the time <b>Bigger voices...Better world!</b> is finally published many groups of people will have looked at it and said they agree with it</p>



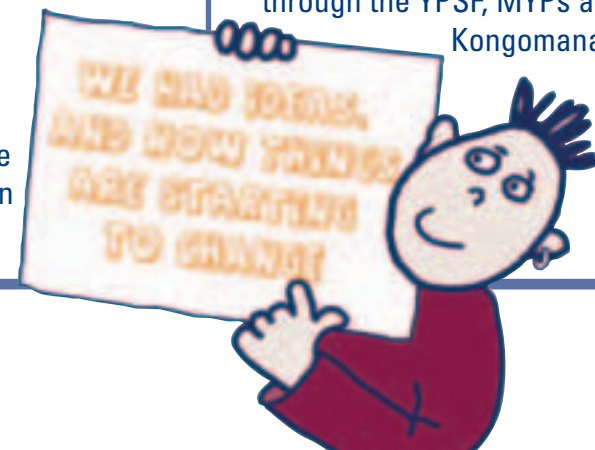
### 3. STRUCTURES (the scaffolding)

	What will we achieve?	By when?	Who will do it?	What differences will you see?	Where are we now?
<p>There will be effective structures for hearing ideas and helping a wide range of children and young people take part, which are useful, reliable and simple</p>	<p>Every time we talk with adults about their views we will make sure that there is an opportunity for young people and children to also have their views heard</p>	<p>Summer 2006</p>	<p>Youth Service Participation team with support from directorates, services, communication, consultation and the Children's Trust</p>	<p>The county council website will contain relevant surveys and questionnaires. There will be visits to places where young people meet to talk with them. There will be meetings with elected young people and the YPSF</p>	<p>Already there is some consultation with young people through events such as Kongomana (Summer 2005), Youth Councils, local youth projects, the YPSF and the UKYP Devon Team. There has also been specific consultation done with young people on education and transport</p>
	<p>There will be more ways in which children and young people can get their views across</p>	<p>Summer 2006</p>	<p>Children's Trust; Youth Service; Youth Service Participation Team; schools; young people; customer contact centre; Kongomana 2006</p>	<p>There will be a greater range of ways in which children and young people will be able to get information and have their views heard. This will mean a wider range of children and young people can also get involved</p>	<p>We already involve young people in a range of consultation events, meetings and surveys</p>
	<p>The views of children and young people will be built into decision making</p>	<p>January 2007</p>	<p>All decision-makers; young people</p>	<p>All plans and decisions that affect children and young people will take into account their views. This will mean that we will be able to see what has happened as a result of consultation and involvement of children and young people</p>	<p>The Children and Young People's Plan, the 2006/7 budget, Your Devon, the changes to school meals, various pieces of work in schools and the environment already involve children and young people</p>



## 4. SYSTEMS (the machinery)

	What will we achieve?	By when?	Who will do it?	What differences will you see?	Where are we now?
<p>There will be strong and reliable systems in place (like transport and money) that make it possible for children and young people to get involved easily and safely and which use technology in a friendly way</p>	<p>There will be an adequate budget, or funding found in other ways, to make sure that the active involvement of children and young people is properly resourced</p>	<p>December 2005 and ongoing</p>	<p>Principal Youth Officer; directors; elected members; young people; Youth Service Participation Team</p>	<p>There will be more opportunities for young people to get involved if we have more resources to achieve it</p>	<p>We have £60k over 3 years to support the work during <i>Hear by Right</i>. We have a Youth Service Participation Team funded by Devon County Council Chief Executives' Department, the Youth Service and Connexions</p>
	<p>We will celebrate the achievements of children and young people</p>	<p>March 2006 and ongoing</p>	<p>Youth Service Participation Team; Youth Service; schools; communications, marketing &amp; media; anyone in contact with young people; the press and media in Devon</p>	<p>There will be more positive stories of young people achievements in the media, there will be an Awards Evening for Young People who have been actively involved (2007). There will be opportunities for young people to accredit their involvement</p>	<p>There are regular stories about young people's achievements but these are not always printed. There is an Awards Night for young people looked after by the county council. There is an Achievements Night for the elected young people annually</p>
	<p>Children and young people will be involved with reviewing and updating relevant policies and systems</p>	<p>January 2006</p>	<p>Youth Service Participation Team; elected members; young people and children; directors; service leads; policy team</p>	<p>Each new or reviewed policy will show how it has involved children and young people in its creation</p>	<p>There has been involvement through the YPSF, MYPs and Kongomana</p>



## 5. STAFF (the workers who build)

	What will we achieve?	By when?	Who will do it?	What differences will you see?	Where are we now?
<p>All staff who have contact with children and young people will be good at their jobs and hard working, but also understanding, trusting and friendly to children and young people. In particular they must be fair and not patronising</p>	<p>Children and young people will be involved with recruiting and selecting relevant staff in the county council and partner organisations</p>	<p>April 2007</p>	<p>Youth Service Participation Team; all directors; personnel and performance; service heads; elected members</p>	<p>There will be trained children and young people involved in recruitment and selection processes in a wide variety of ways</p>	<p>There are some parts of the organisation that already involve children and young people in interviews such as the Youth Service and schools. Young people were also involved in selecting the new Chief Executive and the Director of Children and Young Peoples' Services. Connexions also involve young people in some interviews</p>
	<p><i>Hear by Right</i> will be a Corporate Strategy. The directors have agreed to lead or find ways of ensuring that <i>Hear by Right</i> will be achieved in each directorate with the support of the Youth Service Participation Team</p>	<p>September 2006</p>	<p>Chief executive; directors; service heads</p>	<p><i>Hear by Right</i> and the <b>Bigger voices...Better world!</b> strategy will be owned by all services</p>	<p>The CMB has met and committed itself to the achievement of <i>Hear by Right</i> advanced standard by March 2008</p>



## 6. SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE (the workers' skills)

	What will we achieve?	By when?	Who will do it?	What differences will you see?	Where are we now?
<p>Staff will have skills that are varied and useful, including teamwork and getting on with children and young people. Young people and children will also have the chance to develop their skills as well</p>	<p>There will be training for staff and councillors in how to involve young people</p>	<p>January 2006 and ongoing</p>	<p>Youth Service Participation Team; young people; staff; councillors</p>	<p>The county council will increase understanding of the needs and skills involved with getting on with children and young people and the involvement of young people. Young people will be able to develop their skills by planning and delivering training</p>	<p>There has been training offered for Youth Service and Connexions staff on skills for involving young people. There has been training offered to elected members by young people in Involving Young People. Young People and CMB have worked together to develop a shared understanding of <i>Hear by Right</i></p>
	<p>There will be appropriate information available to all children and young people to help them make decisions</p>	<p>Summer 2006 and ongoing</p>	<p>Youth Service Participation Team; Children's Trust; media, communications &amp; marketing; all directors; all relevant services; customer contact centre</p>	<p>There will be more information that is relevant to young people. Information that is produced will be accessible. Young people and children will be involved with checking information and seeing if it makes sense</p>	<p>There are examples of information being written with young people or checked by them, e.g. Devon and Cornwall Police worked with young people to develop their ASBO leaflet</p>



## 7. STYLE OF LEADERSHIP (the boss)

	What will we achieve?	By when?	Who will do it?	What differences will you see?	Where are we now?
<p>There will be a simple, fair and friendly style of leadership. There should not be just one leader and everyone should be able to get involved in decisions</p>	<p>There will be trained champions for children and young people in every relevant service</p>	<p>June 2006 and ongoing</p>	<p>Youth Service Participation and Democracy Worker; all directors; all service heads; young people; elected members</p>	<p>In every service that has any relevance to children or young people there will be at least one trained senior person who understands the importance of active involvement. This person will spread the information around their service</p>	<p>We have a county councillor who is a Champion for Young People and works to a job description developed by children and young people. There are many services and individuals who also have informal champions</p>
	<p>Managers and leaders will publicly acknowledge and celebrate the active involvement of children and young people and take an active part in a range of consultation and participation events</p>	<p>January 2006 and ongoing</p>	<p>Directors; elected members; young people; Youth Service Participation Team; teachers; youth workers; champions; Children's Trust</p>	<p>There will be a more positive attitude to children and young people; there will be a more active flow of information directly between young people and those that make the decisions. It will empower children and young people and enthuse adults</p>	<p>Directors and young people meeting, Dec 2005 Kongomana, Summer 2005 YPSF, January 2006</p>





## THANK YOU TO

The young people of Devon  
Devon County Council  
Devon County Council Corporate Management Board  
Devon Youth Service  
National Youth Agency and particularly Becky Sharpe  
The Participation Workers Network England and particularly Abi Carter  
Angela Welch  
Claire McMahon  
Lesley Smith  
Sally Yeo  
Zelda Heney



## DICTIONARY

**PARTICIPATION** is the process of involving children and young people in decision-making at increasing levels of control and autonomy.

**CONSULTATION** is a process that requires the commitment to take on board young people's views and present detailed information back to them.

**DEMOCRACY** means government by all people. Citizens have the rights and the power to influence and act upon issues that concern them.

**ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP** means understanding your rights and responsibilities as a citizen in a democracy and having the skills and confidence to put them into practice.

**MYPs** are members of the UK Youth Parliament. In Devon there are three MYPs elected every year. They each have a Deputy (DMYP). The MYPs represent the young people of Devon at a regional and national level. If you want to know more then look at [www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk](http://www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk) or [www.ukypdevon.co.uk](http://www.ukypdevon.co.uk).

**UKYP – THE UNITED KINGDOM YOUTH PARLIAMENT** aims to give the young people of the UK, between the age of 11 and 18, a voice, which will be heard and listened to by local and national government, providers of services for young people and other agencies who have an interest in the views and needs of young people. In Devon there are 3 MYPs (Members of the UK Youth Parliament) elected every year. They each also have a Deputy (DMYPs). All the information about them and the work they do can be found on [www.ukypdevon.co.uk](http://www.ukypdevon.co.uk).



**YPSF – THE YOUNG PEOPLE’S SCRUTINY FORUM** is an unelected group of young people aged 11 – 19. Anyone can join for as long or as little time as they like. Their role is to advise the County Council on pieces of work they are doing and to give a young persons view and also to suggest things that they think that the County Council should do. You can see their Minutes on [www.ukypdevon.co.uk](http://www.ukypdevon.co.uk).

**YPSE – THE YOUNG PEOPLE’S SHADOW EXECUTIVE** is a group of young people who have previously been elected as MYPs or DMYPs. Additionally there are 3 new members elected every year. This group looks at what the County Council Executive is discussing and comment on things that are relevant to young people. They are also the group of young people that make sure *Hear by Right* is running smoothly. You can see information relating to this group on [www.ukypdevon.co.uk](http://www.ukypdevon.co.uk).

**CMB – THE CORPORATE MANAGEMENT BOARD** is the group of people employed by the Council to lead it. These are the people who are ultimately responsible for making sure that all that Devon County Council says it will do happens.

**DIRECTORS** are the people who sit on the CMB.

**HEAR BY RIGHT** is a set of standards written by the Local Government Association and National Youth Agency which helps an organisation to make sure it involves children and young people in every aspect of its work.

**ARTICLE 12** refers to Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This says that all children and young people have the right to be consulted and to have their opinion heard on any decision that affects them. Devon County Council said it would do this on October 13th 2005. **Bigger voices...Better world!** is the plan for making sure that this happens.

**CUSTOMER CONTACT CENTRE** is a new centre that is being built in Tiverton. It will be the place where all contact with the County Council and the public takes place through email, text and phones. It will make sure that the people of Devon are able to communicate with the Council better.

**CHILDREN’S TRUST** is a partnership between lots of different organisations. They are all working together to make sure that life in Devon is even better for young people and children and especially those who, because of a disability or their personal or family circumstances, need ‘that little bit more’ if they are to realise their full potential.

**SURE START** is a Government programme for supporting children aged under four and their families living in deprived areas.

**DEVON YOUTH SERVICE** is part of Devon County Council. It has Youth Centres all over Devon and offers chances for young people to get involved in all sorts of things as well as supporting young people. If you want to find out more then contact **01392 382049**.

**KONGOMANA** is a festival run by the Youth Service for young people. If you are interested in attending then contact your local youth worker.

**YOUTH SERVICE PARTICIPATION TEAM** is the group of Youth Workers that support young people specifically in having their voice heard. They work with the YPSE, YPSF and MYPs. They also train and support adults to make sure that they can hear what you are saying effectively and include you in what's going on.

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**Bigger voices...Better world!** was written and compiled by Devon Youth Service, in particular Rahila Henderson, and young people from Devon.

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