This Framework provides guidance to help involve children and young people in the commissioning of services.

In June 2012, the Department of Education produced a paper entitled ‘Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities on Services and Activities to Improve Young People’s Well-being’.

In outlining the responsibilities of local authorities in commissioning services (para 3), the guidance stipulates that ‘local authorities must take steps to ascertain the views of young people and to take them into account in making decisions about services and activities for them’. The report goes on to say that arrangements should be made for young service users ‘to report at least annually on the quality and accessibility of provision.’

It is important that a range of young people are involved in the process, not just the young people who are existing or potential users of a new service.

Principles of involving young people in commissioning

The key principles for young service user’s involvement in commissioning are:

- **Understand** – assess need, identify young service users priorities
- **Plan** – Specification drawn up in consultation with young service users
- **Secure** – young people are involved in procurement
- **Deliver and review** – young people are involved in monitoring and evaluation

Why involve young people in commissioning?

**Benefits to young people:**

Commissioning Framework 2015 author Sarah McCluskey
• They feel valued for the positive role they have to play in the community
• It enhances their personal and social development
• They have a greater sense of ownership
• It will enhance their employability skills

**Organisational benefits:**
• More likely to commission the right service
• Needs-led, tailored service developed in co-production
• Improved deliver – outcomes are successfully achieved
• Better value for money

### Recognising and Rewarding Young People’s Involvement in the Commissioning Process.

Contract managers/holder must factor in any associated costs/time involved for supporting young people to be part of the process.

• Adults should ensure that young people’s involvement at focus groups and panel meetings is a positive experience and this includes using language that is clear and jargon free.
• Wherever possible, meetings should take place out of school times.
• After school works for consultations but the evaluation process is best done in school holidays.
• Where young people are involved in adult meetings, they are adequately supported.
• Food and refreshments are essential.
• Transport should be arranged for young people to attend meetings.
• Young people should receive feedback at each stage from consultation to evaluation and presentation to final outcome.
• There should a contact within schools/youth groups who will be notified of young people’s involvement.
• Commissioning Support Team to send certificates to young people acknowledging their contribution.
• Financial rewards in the shape of a voucher can also be provided.
• Individual records of achievement should be maintained by the provider of the involvement of young people.
Ways of involving young people
Young people should be involved, if possible, at every stage of the commissioning from consultation to evaluation:

Assessing need – consultation
Consultation with stakeholders to include key agencies, referrers, community members, parents to determine if there is a need for a new service, whether the existing model is the right one and what changes, (if any) should take place.

(Ideally this process should begin about a year before the new commissioning cycle takes place.)

Consultation questions:
What should the main purpose of the service be?
Is there an existing service/model that could be improved?
What other groups/activities/services/users take part in?
How does/could the service help service users enjoy and achieve more?
Are there any barriers to service users accessing in this?
Are service users actively encouraged to have a say in how the service is run?

Professional Panel
The group either drafts a specification or looks at the principles and key points of the existing specification, concentrating on the ‘Description of Service’ section, identifies gaps, strengths, weaknesses; how a service could be developed in the future, its key components and preferred priorities.
Results from the consultation are disseminated to the contract manager to the Panel so that the specification is informed by the findings from young people.

The panel feedback to the young people explaining whether their recommendations can be incorporated or not.

A representative from young people, with support from an appropriate adult, is invited to the provider open consultation event.

**Procurement**

When the specification has been finalised and is out for tender, it must be made clear to providers should be advised that the section of the application form relating to ‘Description of Service’ will be evaluated by young people.

Guidance, at the tendering stage, should therefore stipulate that this section should be written in clear, accessible language and to ensure impartiality, must be fully anonymised.

**The Young People’s Panel - Evaluating Bids**

Contract Manager and Commissioning Team, book a venue, plan the evaluation session, identify and engage with a range of young people, prepare resources, e.g. a simple scoring system (Appendix 1 Bullseye) and organise transport and refreshments*

*(Contract Managers must at this stage factor in the cost of covering refreshments, transport costs and financial reward for the young people e.g. vouchers from their service, as the participation budget does not cover this.

The young people’s panel meets in advance of the Professionals Panel.

To ensure impartiality, there should be a diverse range of young people on the panel to evaluate the bids not just existing services users.

Young people will assess the ‘Description of Service’ section only in each of the shortlisted tenders.

Young people’s aggregated score amounts to ONE vote overall at the professional panel.

One non-service user representative from the young people’s panel, supported by an appropriate adult, sits on Professional’s Panel giving feedback from their own panel meeting

One service user and one non-service user are invited to the presentation by providers.
To feedback through a variety of media the outcome of the adult panel to the young people’s panel

**Monitoring**

Contract holders should make provision for an annual feedback meeting between young people and the contract manager and to visit the provision at least once a year.

Young people’s involvement and engagement with the service needs to be built into the monitoring of the contract e.g., two young people per quarter give feedback on key points which could include:

- How is the service helping you with (outcomes?)
- Is there anything that hasn’t gone so well?
- Have you been able to contribute to any changes the project staff need to make in order to improve the quality or accessibility of the service?
- How do you feel your voice is heard in how the service is run?

**Evaluation**

Providers should include young people in evaluating the service and giving their views about whether it has delivered on outcomes. This can be both quantitative e.g. responding to an outcome question, from ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree’ and qualitative e.g. ‘what went well’, ‘what could have gone better.’

It should also include commentary documenting the journey travelled and whether the ‘Voice of the Young People’ has been heard and led to any service changes over the year. Young service users should also be encouraged to contribute to any Annual Report or review of the service.

**Recommendations**

Young people should be involved as much as possible in all relevant commissions.

The commissioning schedule should be further developed to which maximises the input of young people.

Whereas consultations can be more flexibly timetabled, the evaluation of tenders needs more dedicated time and should take place in the school holiday periods or at weekends. It is not advisable to take young people out of school for a whole day.
The Participation Lead could continue to support the involvement of children and young people in commissioning procedures either indirectly or directly as appropriate.

A kite mark could be a valuable way of recording the ways in which the various services, both voluntary and statutory recognise the importance of hearing the voice of children and young people and embed the principles and practice of participation.

**Useful Links**

**Participation Works**
http://www.participationworks.org.uk/

**The Participation People**
www.participationpeople.com

**National Youth Agency**
www.nya.org.uk

**Buckinghamshire Children and Young People’s Trust**
www.buckinghamshirepartnership.gov.uk

**New Economics Foundation**
www.neweconomics.org/publications/entry/fairness-commissions

www.neweconomics.org/publications/entry/commissioning-for-outcomes-co-production