



Tools to engage children and young people in the consultation on **Improving the Health and Wellbeing of Lothian's Children and Young People**, the draft NHS Lothian strategy for children and young people 2013 – 2020

## Facilitator Support Notes

NHS Lothian believes that every child should have the best start in life and grow up being healthy, confident and resilient. Earlier this year, NHS Lothian published a draft strategy for improving the health and wellbeing of children and young people in the four local authorities across Lothian.

This strategy sets out a clear vision, principles and approach for how NHS Lothian will work with children and young people, their families, the public, the voluntary sector and local authorities to improve the physical and emotional health and wellbeing of children and young people.

NHS Lothian has published a consultation paper that details the questions they want adults and organisations to consider when reading the draft strategy and how to respond. For more information, visit:

<http://www.nhslotian.scot.nhs.uk/OurOrganisation/Consultations/Current/Pages/default.aspx>.

Consultations are formal processes that are rarely accessible to children and young people. NHS Lothian is committed to ensuring that the voices of children and young people are heard in the development of this strategy. Therefore, to help you involve children and young people in this consultation, Children's Parliament is publishing a series of activities you will be able to use with/adapt to suit the children and young people with whom you work. You will then be able to submit their views to NHS Lothian.

We have developed these activities for children and young people aged 8 to 18 as an engaging way to involve them in the consultation on the draft strategy. They can be delivered as a series of linked workshops or lessons over a period of days or as a one-off process. From our experience at Children's Parliament, we have learned that creative activities, open-ended questions and discussions elicit a deeper level of thinking and response than achieved by other means. It takes longer, but we feel the end results are well worth the extra effort.

The activities included in this pack can be used with or adapted to suit all children and young people. While all children and young people should be able to

contribute during each activity, there may be sections where the discussions might go deeper depending on children and young people's experience with NHS Lothian services, e.g. long stays in hospital or regular treatments for an illness. **These activities are a guide** – they do not replace your knowledge of the children and young people with whom you work. Feel free to adapt them to suit the age, stage and needs of your group. We know that the extent to which you can use these ideas may vary; again, use your knowledge of the children to make the most of the approach, have fun and remember to represent the children and young people's voices as clearly and respectfully as possible.

Once these activities have been completed, please use the information you have gathered from your children and young people to fill out the NHS Lothian Consultation Response Form included with this pack. In addition, you may want to fill out a formal response to the draft strategy from your professional perspective by using the link provided above.

Deadline for responses: **Thursday, 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2014**

## **Some general hints and tips**

We have learned that the following points are useful guidelines to keep in mind during the consultation process with children and young people:

- It is vital to the quality of reporting that a scribing duty is designated to at least one adult during each session. Record exactly what children and young people say – do not make changes based on what you think they are saying. Accurately quoted words of children and young people are a powerful part of a final response to the consultation. It is through these quotes that their voices can truly be heard.
- It must be emphasised from the beginning that there are no wrong answers. Children and young people need to feel that they are in a safe place where what they say is respected and accepted.
- That being said, children and young people's initial responses can also be a starting point upon which to build. Taking time to gently delve further into their thinking can help them to clarify and refine their own thoughts. Questions starting with 'why...' and 'how...' can be productive.
- The creative activities are not just the frills – they are an integral part of children and young people's responses. There is often significant thought and discussion involved in making artistic decisions. Being busy at a creative task can be helpful and relaxing to most children and young people. Most importantly, remember the truth in the old saying that 'a picture is worth a thousand words' (whilst at the same time being aware that you need to 'translate' that image back into a consultation response).

- As well as the formal response to the consultation, you might consider exhibiting the children's work (with some consideration given to not using material which is sensitive or private to the child).
- Finally, relax, have fun and trust that children and young people really do have important things to say.

As we will not be involved in your consultation sessions, we would like to know what you think of this resource – how you've used it and if it's been helpful. Please fill out the evaluation form included in this pack once you have completed your sessions with children and young people.

Children's Parliament will also be engaging with children directly. We will work with 30 children between the ages of 8 and 14. The responses of these children will be included in a report which we will publish on our website and we will use the findings to complete a formal response to the consultation. All participating children will receive feedback on the results of the consultation.

Please contact Chelsea Stinson with questions or for more information.

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